



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 1

God Loves Freely

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson focuses on Jesus' conversation with Peter on the beach after the resurrection where Jesus asks Peter 3 times if Peter loves Him, and three times tells Peter to feed His sheep and follow Him.

Read the last two paragraphs,

- However different our circumstances may be from Peter's, in many ways the principles is the same. That is, the question that Jesus had asked Peter is really the ultimate question that God poses to each of us in our time and place: *Do you love Me?*
Everything depends on our answer to that question. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 4).

Does this sound right to you, or is something off? Is something not quite right?

Did Adam and Eve in Eden, prior to their fall, love Jesus?

Did the 1/3 of the angels that rebelled with Lucifer love Jesus?

Was the love that Adam and Eve have for Jesus before their fall an impure love a corrupted love, a love that loved Jesus only for what Jesus could do for them? Or was their love prior to their fall a pure love—even more pure than our love for Jesus today?

Then if the only question that everything depends on is do we love Jesus, how was it that Adam and Eve could fall into sin if they loved Jesus with a pure love?

Because, while the restoration of love is required, essential for salvation—there is another divine attribute that is also required in addition to love and everything depends on it also—and it was this that was breached and it caused the breakdown of love.

- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV84).

Jesus said,

- “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32 NIV84).

The Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of both truth and love—the power that everything depends upon is the combined power of truth and love, not love alone—why?

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationships—a terminal condition

The bonds of love can and were broken by lies that were believed.

Love alone, or prioritized over truth, can lead people to betray the truth in order not to hurt the feelings of someone they love, under the falsehood that they are being loving.

Love without truth is not kind—it's cruel; Truth without love is not healing—it's destructive.

Our minds, our thinking, our beliefs, our understanding must be settled into the truth, the objective reality-based truth of who God is, how His design law functions, and what happens when one breaks God's design laws. Our minds must be so settled into the truth that we cannot be moved by lies.

But our hearts, our affections, our emotional drives to action, our spirits, the animating energy the moves us must be changed from fear and survival drives to love for God and others. This is spiritual renewal, our hearts, our affections, our spirits must be sealed, so settled into love for God that we would rather die than betray Him.

This is what the sealing of the people of God actually is, being so settled into the truth both intellectually—that is our minds being settled into the true beliefs, comprehension, reality-based understandings of God, His kingdom, methods, principles, design laws, ourselves, the sin problem, God's solution. We know reality, the truth. And also being settled spiritually—that our animating energy, drives, motives have settled upon the truth that love is life, that not only is God love, but love is imbued within us and we align, prefer, choose, and have settled our hearts affections upon love for God and others and how love functions.

Thus everything depends on the truth and love of God being reproduced in us.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the events at Sinai after God's deliverance and they chose to worship the golden calf.

Read second paragraph,

- All seemed lost. Not long after God's amazing deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel had rebelled against God and worshiped a golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw what they had done, and he threw down the tables containing the Ten Commandments and shattered them. Though the people had forfeited any right to the covenant privileges and blessings that God had freely bestowed on them, God freely chose to continue with them in covenant relationship anyway—despite their unworthiness for the covenant blessing. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 5).

Any concerns about this paragraph?

Did the people have some right to forfeit? What was the right the lesson is suggesting they forfeited?

What is assumed or implied by the statement "the people forfeited any right to the covenant privileges and blessings"?

Does this suggest some legal process?

Was the covenant made with these people? With whom was the covenant made?

Adam—who is the head of all humanity—the covenant promise of salvation was made in Eden after Adam sinned when God promised to be the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent. The covenant is the covenant of grace that is for the species human. That promise to bring the Seed, Messiah, Savior, to save humankind was repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the world learns that the promise to humanity will come through this branch of the human family.

The covenant blessing is Jesus—that is the blessing. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

One can refuse to participate, to accept, to believe, to receive the promise—but all humanity is included in the covenant promise. Not by some legal right, but by God's initiative, so we don't forfeit a right, we forfeit an opportunity, reject a remedy, refuse a cure—we still have the right to the cure even if we reject it. Like we have the right to remain silent even if we reject it and talk; or the right to breathe even if we choose to hold our breath. So while we have the right to salvation even if we reject it, we will not have the right to life if we reject it! Why? Because life exists and operates in harmony with the laws of life built into reality by the Creator.

So, this idea of forfeiting the right to the privileges and blessings seems to misconstrue the problem and the solution.

What of the idea that they were unworthy of the covenant blessing?

What does that even mean? Does it mean that there are other people who are worthy of it? Does it mean they were worthy of it before the golden calf but unworthy after it? And if they were worthy before what made them worthy and unworthy? Were they somehow righteous and deserving before the golden calf and unrighteous and unworthy after the golden calf?

These statements create a falsehood in the minds of people—they focus on human behavior and make human behavior the metric, the standard, the element of right and wrong, deserving or not deserving—it is the idea that comes from believing God’s law functions like human law and we are worthy or deserving of the rights and privileges when we behave well, follow the rules, do what we are told, but forfeit the privileges when we are disobedient and break the rules.

But when we return to design law and recognize that sin is a condition of being that we were born with and did not choose to have, that is as terminal condition that without partaking of God’s remedy causes symptoms of all kinds, then we realize that God has chosen to provide the solution, the remedy, the cure to all humanity, all descendants of Adam, and none of us deserve the cure by our works, our actions, our attitudes, our initiative, or anything we do, we have right to the cure freely because God is love and God provides it without anything from us. Our only obligation is to trust Him, surrender our hearts to Him and follow His prescription, which returns us to operating in harmony with His design laws for life.

The lesson quotes Exodus 33:19 where God says,

- “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Exodus 33:19 NKJV).

And then goes on to say,

- What, then, is God proclaiming here? Essentially, God is proclaiming that, as Creator of all, He has the right and authority to grant grace and compassion freely to even the most undeserving of people. And He is doing so in this situation, even after the golden calf rebellion, by granting mercy to His people, Israel even if they didn’t deserve it. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 5).

Is there anyone, human or angel, to whom God is not gracious and will not have compassion upon?

Will God have compassion and mercy and grace upon Satan and all the lost in the end?

Does the law model a person holds impact their understanding of this question?

If one believes God's law functions like human law, made up rules that when broken require the ruling authority to use of power to inflict just punishments. If one believes this, and one is dealing with an unrepentant, unruly, guilty criminal and sinner and one offers that sinner, criminal mercy—what is one offering? Pardon—recently the outgoing president of the USA showed his son and then others mercy, he pardoned them. What did the president's pardon do? It removed the legal punishment—the criminal can no longer be punished for their crimes. But did the president's pardon make any of the one's pardoned trustworthy?

If we believe God's law functions like human law then we believe mercy is legal pardon, somehow constructing things so that the guilty do not get the punishment they deserve. And if that is what mercy and compassion mean, then God cannot show mercy and compassion to the wicked in the end because that would mean pardoning them when they are unrepentant. So, the penal/legal models, based on the lie that God's law functions like human law, will teach that God will not pardon, but will have a legal judgment followed by the use of divine power to inflict just or proper amounts of punishments upon the wicked. God has mercy and compassion on who He wants and He doesn't choose to be merciful and compassionate to the wicked in the end, not that He wouldn't want to, but because the law restrains Him, that it would be unjust to pardon them when they are unrepentant and haven't asked for the blood of Jesus to pay their sin debt.

But fortunately, that entire construct is fantasy, it is make-believe, false, not how reality works. It is the mental construction of people who are trying their best to comprehend things, but their ideas are twisted by believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we return to worshipping the Creator we realize His laws are the laws reality is built upon, the laws of life. And breaking those laws causes pain, suffering and death unless healed by our Creator. And for those who refuse healing their unremedied sin condition causes pain, suffering, torment, and torture and God loves them too much to use His power to cause them to suffer without any hope of healing. Thus, God, in the end has mercy and compassion on them and gives them what they have insisted upon, respecting their choice, setting them free to reap what they want, separation from Him and eternal non-existence which is an act of compassion and mercy.

Thus God has mercy and compassion on everyone always and the outcome difference is not because God has mercy and compassion on some and anger and wrath on others, but because some respond to God's mercy and compassion by opening their hearts in love and trust and are healed, whereas others would prefer to die than to repent. And God for them does the only thing love, mercy, and compassion can do—He let's them go.

One Bible commentary provides a very colorful description of this mercy:

- God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin.** [what do you think that declaration is?] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [What do you hear? What is His method? Why will God not clear the guilty? What law lens do you see it through, imposed

or design?]

Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The **power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.** (The Great Controversy 541.2) [What does this mean? Do you hear retributive justice and think using power to inflict harm, pain, punishment? This would be human law, imposed law, Satan's view. So, let's keep reading and see how this author applies these words to God, what law is applied in bringing about this retributive justice, how it works exactly.]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes **no pleasure in a slavish obedience.** He desires **that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love.** [If this is true, can God then be the source of inflicted suffering, punishment and death? If you understand how reality works, you recognize that the human imposed law understanding of retributive justice with inflicted pain and death is incompatible with this very next statement. It is impossible to get anything other than slavish obedience from inflicted punishment; inflicted punishments do force the will, and it is impossible to get love and trust by threatening to kill people who do not love and trust you. Thus, immediately this author is calling every person who is still capable of thinking for themselves, every person who is not blinded by the lies of Romanism and the imposed law system, to stop, think, and inquire—how can God apply retributive justice and at the same time not be forcing people? And that is only possible when we understand design law.] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence.** [What reason would God have us obey? Not fear of punishment, but appreciation of His character of love, which cannot exist if God is the source of inflicted punishment. It is Satan's view that God must punish sin because it undermines love. DA761] And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. (The Great Controversy 541.3)

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. [What are the principles of God's character? Do these principles coerce, compel, or torture?] Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [Does love seek to inflict pain and suffering to torture and punish? But notice what is describe next as love for our enemies] **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What is justice? Doing what is just or right, and what determines what is actually just or right? The law—so it comes back to how one understands God's law functions. Those who accept the Roman lie that God's law is like human law believe the lie that God's execution of justice is the infliction from God of pain and death. But, when we return to worshipping the Creator and realize His laws are design laws, such as the law of love, liberty, worship and more, we realize that God uses power to heal, to save, and when people refuse Him, then God uses power to minimize pain, minimize suffer, and to stop the torment of those who won't allow Him to heal them. Thus, God's justice is like

the parent whose child is in liver failure and refuses to be healed, the parent does not seek to prolong and protract the suffering, but allows the suffering to end. Notice what is described next.] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't God make them happy? Because they refuse to participate in His methods, they refuse to allow Him to heal them. Love cannot be forced and thus God cannot use might and power to make them happy.] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. [How do they make void His law? By replacing it with a false law—imposed law. Think how sad it will be for those legal Sabbath keepers who wouldn't enter Pilates house while they sought to kill Jesus. Law keepers, but the wrong law, how many today are in the same situation?] While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided.** [Who determines their destiny? Is it a heavenly judge making a legal ruling in a heavenly court, or the decision that of the sinner who permanently hardens their heart to the work of the Holy Spirit?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** [These are rhetorical questions, meaning that God will not do this, God has the power to do this, to artificially keep people alive and chain them to His side. But He won't use power in this way, why? Because it would inflict torture and pain and God is the source of healing and life. Note what comes next...] (The Great Controversy 541.4)

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why are they not prepared? Is it that they don't have the right blood, don't have the right legal payment, don't have the right robe to hide behind so the Father won't see their true self? Or is it that they don't have the right heart, mind, character, within them?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** [How did it become fixed? Who fixed it there? If God "judges" their characters as fixed in sin and beyond saving, does that mean God's judgment is what makes their characters fixed in sin or is God's judgment simply the accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to do to themselves?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? (The Great Controversy 542.1)

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; [Why not? Because God uses divine power to prevent them, to torture them, to inflict harm upon them, or is their**

condition incompatible with God's design for life?] years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** [Why are they unfit? Is it that they don't have the right legal payment in record books, or is it something actually incompatible with life within them? Notice why they are not fit] **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** [This is huge, what do they experience as torture? Purity, holiness and peace! Is this God using His power to cause pain, to inflict suffering, is there something coming out from God other than goodness, mercy, love and truth? It is their condition which experiences goodness as pain, purity as torment, holiness as suffering. The torture happens because of sin in them, not as an infliction from God!] **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What do the wicked actually want? Separation from God! Why do they want it? To be at peace, to stop their suffering; So, in this situation what is the just action for God to take, what is the merciful action for God to take? Is there a difference between justice and mercy? Notice the next sentences] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** (The Great Controversy 542.2)

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [This is design law, this is justice and mercy, and justice and mercy rightly understood is always an expression of God's character of love and does the same thing] (The Great Controversy 543.1)

Notice God has compassion and mercy on every single person, the outcome is not determined by God, it is determined by every person.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God's striking instance of His love for fallen humanity is found in the story of Hosea. God commanded the prophet Hosea, " 'Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.' " (Hosea 1:2 NKJV). Hosea and his unfaithful wife were to be a living object lesson of God's love for His people, even despite Israel's unfaithfulness and spiritual harlotry. That is, it is a story of God's freely bestowed love on those who do not deserve it." (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 6).

What this reveals is what adultery truly is—it is betrayal of trust. Adultery is more than physical contact with someone not your spouse, it is when you betray the trust of your spouse, not make mistakes, but in heart betray them, give your affections, loyalty, and love to another, or turn against them and seek their harm rather than their good.

The lesson asks, after reading Hosea 14:1-4 where God promises to heal their backsliding and love them freely the following:

- “What do these verses reveal about God’s steadfast love for His people?”

Thoughts about this question?

Who are His people? Does God not have steadfast love for the Egyptians, Babylonians, Syrians, Chinese, Eskimos?

Does God have steadfast love for the entire world so much that He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, not the Savior of only one ethnic group?

So, when we think of the chosen people—what are we thinking? God’s love is only for them—or God’s love is for all people and He is working through them to bring His healing love to all people?

Israel was chosen for mission, to be the avenue through whom Messiah would come and be the repository of the inspired record and teaching tools—but they were never chosen to be the exclusive recipients of the promises or covenant or the love, mercy, and blessings of God.

God’s love, mercy, blessings are for all people.

Read the last paragraph,

- Throughout Hosea, and throughout the narratives of Scripture, God shows amazing commitment and compassion to His people. Even though they repeatedly went after other lovers, breaking the covenant relationship, seemingly beyond repair, God of His own free will continued to bestow His love on them. The people did not deserve God’s love; they had rejected and forfeited any rightful claim to it. Yet, God continued to bestow love on them without any compulsion, moral or otherwise. Here and elsewhere, Scripture constantly displays God’s love as free and voluntary. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 6).

Is God, throughout human history, displaying amazing commitment and compassion only to the Jews or to all humanity? Again, to whom did God promise to save, to send the Messiah to deliver, to restore to righteousness? Just the Jews or all humanity that partakes of His plan? And isn’t God in showing amazing patience with the Jews showing amazing patients with humanity through whom Messiah is coming to save the world?

Adam and Eve, Seth, Noah, Enoch, Methuselah, Melchizedek, Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar and many others are not descendants of Abraham but are included in the promises as is every single human being who accepts Jesus as their Savior because the promise was given in Eden and is the promise to save humanity and that promise is accomplished through the children of Israel—and that promise is Jesus.

So we must resist having our understanding of God's love, mercy, compassion restricted to the Jews, it is for all humanity and the heavenly beings as well.

As we consider the rest of this paragraph, let's include the first paragraph of TUESDAY's lesson:

- God not only continued to bestow His love freely on Israel, despite repeated rebellions, but God also continues to bestow love freely upon us, even while we are sinners. We do not deserve God's love, and we could never earn it. Conversely, God does not need us. The God of the Bible does not need anything (Acts 17:25). God's love for you and for me and for all persons is entirely of His own volition. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

Thoughts? What do you think of the idea that we don't deserve God's love, that we could never earn it and that the Israelites had rejected and forfeited any right to it?

If we believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules where actions cause reward or punishment, like our systems of meritocracy, then this is what one concludes. But this is not the way reality actually works in God's kingdom, a kingdom operating upon design law.

Consider, does a newborn baby *deserve* their parents love? Why? What has the baby done? The baby cries, demands attention, makes stinky messes that the parents must continually clean up.

Do babies *do* anything that merits or earns love? Then do they deserve love or do they deserve to be rejected and abandoned?

If they deserve love, from where does the worth or value come that merits they be loved? Why is it expected that babies are to be loved if they haven't done anything to earn it?

And as the child grows into the terrible twos and has willful rebellion and temper tantrums and breaks things, do they deserve love? How can they deserve love if their behavior is defiant and unruly and even threatening of the parent—"I hate you mommy. If you don't let me have candy I am going to hold my breath."

Does such a child deserve love? And what action does love take with such a child? Love disciplines, disciples, teaches—but what might the child conclude? That they are not loved, that they don't deserve love because they have been bad and that they are being punished for their bad behaviors.

Do you think we have churches that are being led by children, by infants, by those who don't understand how reality works? Hebrews 5-6 would say yes.

Do we deserve love, not because of what we have done, not based on human meritocracy, but based on our creation—that the Creator has made us in His image and endowed us with abilities akin to that of the Creator and we are loved for who we are, not for what we do. There is nothing we can do that will

cause God to love us more and there is nothing we can do that will cause God to love us less. God is love and God always loves.

But, what we do does cause us to change to either receive and grow in God's infinite love and thereby receive and experience and grow in God's love thus more of God's love flows through us, transforms us, and thereby God functionally loves us more if we are receptive to it or we cut ourselves off from God's love and wither and die in fear, selfishness, guilt and shame. God's love never changes, we change based on our reception and participation in that love or rejection of it.

Read the second paragraph,

- God freely created this world. And, because of this, God is worthy of all glory, honor, and power. God did not need to create any world. Before the foundation of the world, God already enjoyed the love relationship that existed within the Godhead. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

What are they saying is the reason God is worthy of all glory, honor, and power?

Is it because He is Creator? Isn't that basically saying because God is powerful—omnipotent? But is that the question in the Great Controversy? Is the question over who has the power? Did Lucifer start his rebellion by alleging God isn't powerful? Is a display of might and power what is required to win the war?

In fact, what does the Bible reveal about the use of might and power? Whenever God has used it what has He gotten?

- Flood—followed by tower of Babel
- 10 plagues of Egypt—followed by golden calf
- Water from rock, daily manna—followed by longing for fleshpots of Egypt
- Fire and Mt Carmel—followed by more rebellion and idol worship

Thus the Bible teaches

- “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

God cannot get what God wants by the use of might and power. The war is not over God's might and power, but by whether we can trust the One with the power. The question raised, is: if God is all powerful, are we really free? And if we are not free, then not only are we not able to love, but God is not love. Thus, the allegations of Satan were never over God's power, but God's trustworthiness, God's character. And that was called into question when Satan alleged God's laws are made up rules that require infliction of punishment by the rule-giver. In other words, undermining God as Creator whose laws are design laws built into the fabric of reality, and teaching God functions like a creature,

making up rules and hurting rule-breakers. This causes people to believe that God must use power to punish, which functionally has God saying love me or else I will have to kill you—which violates the law of liberty and causes more rebellion.

Yes, God is all powerful, God is Creator, but that is not the reason He is worthy of glory. God is worthy of all glory because despite having all power He NEVER uses that power to coerce, to force, but gives us real freedom—even the freedom to kill Him.

This is why despite the second temple being so small and inferior to Solomon's temple that when the elders who had seen Solomon's saw the plans for the new temple at the end of the 70 years they wept, but despite its smaller status it is described in Scripture as more glorious than Solomon's—why?

Some will say because God's presence was there when Jesus walked in the Temple. But if you remember when Solomon's temple was dedicated the priests could not enter because God's fiery presence came into that temple. So God's presence was at both, but the Bible says that Jesus, with His heavenly glory veiled made the second temple more glorious—because Jesus revealed the character of God in action.

But isn't the Sabbath a memorial of Creation? Yes, and what did God want emphasized, recognized, realized, promoted, believed, understood by the creation of the Sabbath? What did God do, what action did God take, what is it that makes the Sabbath holy, that God did to set it apart from all the other days that we are to remember when we remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? That God RESTED, that God CEASED using power, that in the face of Satan's rebellion and despite having all power God refused to use power to put down the rebellion, God did not force Satan into compliance, force him to bow, kneel, or admit wrong, he did not imprison Satan or torture him or execute him. God instead, after the demonstration of incredible power, creating a new world with life of all kinds, shared power with created beings—gave Adam and Eve dominion over the Earth and shared creative power where we can procreate beings in our image. And then God RESTED, demonstrating, revealing, proving that power is not what wins the war, it is truth, presented in love, while leaving people free.

Jesus demonstrated all of this, that despite having all power (John 13), that He would rather die than use that power to take the freedom of those who were acting in the most cruel and unjust ways. And after His resurrection, when the Biblical record focuses on heaven, we see over and again, "Worthy, worthy, worthy" is the Lamb who was slain. He is worthy to have all power because He has proven He is safe with all power. He will not abuse us with power. He does not use power to inflict artificial punishments for sin. He is not the source of pain, suffering, and death. He uses power to heal, to save, to hold at bay the natural consequences of what sin would do if He wasn't interceding to stop it. But in the end, when there is no one left to save because everyone is either sealed to God and cannot be moved or sealed in rebellion, having destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love and therefore no amount of mercy, grace, love or truth will have any redeeming impact—what that happens, God stops interceding, stops holding at bay what sin does, stops using power and lets the wicked receive what they have chosen and they suffer terribly from their terminal sin condition and die eternally.

Read last paragraph,

- After the Fall in Eden, Adam and Eve had no right to continue to live and receive God's love. But God, who upholds "all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3, NKJV), in His great love, mercy, and grace sustained their lives and has made a way to reconcile humanity back to Himself in love. And that reconciliation includes us, as well. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

Do you notice how the lesson continues to insert the concept of "rights" into the discussion? What does this way of phrasing things lead your mind to think? Does it suggest a legal system of right and privileges? Does it smack of human systems of law and order, of imposed law?

Why not say instead, *After the Fall in Eden, Adam and Eve had no ability to continue to live, no ability to respond, appreciate, understand, respond, or harmonize with God and His love?*"

Did Adam and Eve have a right to be created in the first place? Did they have a right to exist at all? Isn't all life a manifestation of God's love and grace?

Was the problem after Adam's sin one of rights or one of condition of being?

What is the natural attitude, drive, motive, ability of the carnal heart?

- The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8 NIV84).

What is being described? Is this a legal problem a rights problem or a state of being problem?

The natural sinful heart is in harmony with Satan and does not submit to God, our hearts must be converted, reborn, regenerated and this is an act of God's power working to first cause enmity between us and Satan to convict, draw, put a desire for love into our hearts, and then to recreate us in righteousness when we do surrender in trust.

Consider this historical quote:

- The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." The enmity does not exist as a natural fact. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship. {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5}

The issue for Adam and Eve and every one of us is not about rights, it is about reality, about our state of being, about being infected with a spirit of fear and selfishness and our need to die to that old motivational drive and be reborn with the spirit of love and trust.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the parables of the wedding and wedding feast.

The king is having a wedding and invites guests but they do not come so he sends out more heralds to invite everyone from everywhere.

Who is the groom and who is the bride?

When does the wedding take place and when does the wedding feast, the wedding celebration, take place?

Does the wedding take place before or at the second coming? Does the wedding feast take place before or after the second coming?

What happens at a wedding? Jesus said,

- Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:4-6 NIV84).

What happens at a wedding? Two individuals join together in the bonds of love and trust and become "one."

Jesus is the groom the church is the bride, and we, the church, the saved, to become united with Jesus, we are to enter into a union with Him!

And is there another symbolic reference to this wedding ceremony in Scripture, a ceremony in which alienated believers become united into oneness with God?

The Day of Atonement—when two become one.

This parable is about the cleansing of the sanctuary, the cleansing of the bride, the union of Christ with His people, when we become one. This is taking place right now, as we, the bride of Christ, through our love faith relationship are being purified, cleansed, and united with Jesus such that nothing will shake us out of it.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Yet, Christ went to the cross for these people and for us. Amazing love! While human sin merits death, God Himself (in Christ) paid the price and has made a way to repair the ruptured relationship between heaven and earth. Meanwhile, He continues to bestow His love on us, though He is under no obligation beyond His own free commitment to do so. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 9).

How would you explain the purpose of the death of Christ?

To pay a penalty? To whom? What was the nature of the price? Why was a price required? Does the law one holds impact the answer?

What is the problem sin caused that the plan of salvation fixes?

Is the problem legal or lethal? Is it a problem with God or God's attitude? Did sin change God or change the sinner?

Did sin change God's law?

No, sin changed human beings and the solution must be effective in humanity in order to fix what sin has done. And thus Jesus became human to eradicate the cause of sin, the fear, selfishness that severs our connection with God, breaks His protocols for life and causes. Jesus destroys death and brings life and immortality to light.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 2

Covenantal Love

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

- Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23 NIV84).

What does this mean?

- Does it mean that the Father doesn't love us unless we obey?
- Or is this exposing the difference between God's heart of love and God's functional love, God's ability to act in love, pour His love into our lives and have His love heal and transform us?
- Doesn't God love everyone whether they obey or not?
- But for those who don't obey, does their disobedience obstruct God's love from living, functioning, working in their lives?

So while God loves everyone in heart attitude, motive, desire, the way love functions, it cannot be forced, coerced, mandated, and if people disobey, which is breaking God's design laws of love, they cut themselves off from God's love and thus God's love, while poured out freely from Him, doesn't do them any good. It would be like a person who hides in a cave from the sun—the sunlight is still shining just as bright as always, but by going into the cave one cuts themselves off from its warming rays.

Read the last paragraph,

- Scripture also teaches that God's love is not unilateral but deeply relational, in that it makes a profound difference to God whether or not humans reflect His love back to Him and to others. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 12).

Is there something off about this paragraph? There is one word used in this paragraph that immediately struck me as not quite right, at first I thought, maybe an innocent word choice, but it comes up multiple times in the lesson:

In the second paragraph in **WEDNESDAY's** lesson we read,

- God's love always comes first. If God did not first love us, we could not love Him in return. While God created us with the capacity to love and to be loved, God Himself is the ground and Source of all love. We have the choice, however, whether we will accept it and then reflect it in our lives. This truth is exemplified in Christ's parable of the unforgiving servant (*see Matt. 18:23-35*). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 16).

And in **THURSDAY's** lesson the second paragraph we read,

- However, what we can and should do is to reflect God's love to others as much as we possibly can. If we have received such great compassion and forgiveness, how much more should we bestow compassion and forgiveness on others? Recall that the servant forfeited his master's compassion and forgiveness because he failed to bestow them on his fellow servant. If we truly love God, we will not fail to reflect His love to others. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 17).

Did you notice the lesson repeatedly takes the position that we are to be reflectors of God's love. What do you think of this idea? Does this sound right or does it introduce a corrosive and destructive element that if embraced sets loving people up to be deceived by God's enemy?

Jesus said,

- **"You are the light** of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people **light a lamp** and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let **your light shine** before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14–16 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is there a difference between a reflector and a light? What is the difference?

Does a reflector have any light to shine? Or does it, like a mirror, only reflect the light from another source?

Is this what Jesus taught? What did Jesus teach?

Consider this historical quote:

- Every human being, created in the image of God, **is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do**. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train **the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought**. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are

masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. (Education p. 17, emphasis mine).

What is the difference between a reflector and a light?

What is that difference when the metaphor is applied to the reality of our hearts and minds?

Reflectors have no light of their own, they have no experience of their own, they don't have knowledge that they know for themselves, they only reflect the light, experience, perspectives, knowledge of others. Does God want us only to reflect His truth, or to experience Him, His love and truth so that it becomes our experience, our understanding, our individualized method, mode, and principle of life that we share God's love and truth from our experience, from what it has done in and for us, that our love for God is individualized, we really love Him? Or does God want us to merely reflect His own love back at Him?

What happens in a person who is a reflector?

When Paul wrote in Romans 14:5 that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind, is he recommending people be indoctrinated, be taught the right things to think, or be taught how to think and then having understood why the truth is the truth they agree?

In Hebrews 5-6 when the Bible talks about the mature being those who have developed by practice the ability to discern right from wrong does that sound like reflectors or lights?

Does a reflector, someone who reflects, have their own thoughts, their own perspectives, their own understanding and individuality, or do they become a drone, a lemming, a blind follower? And are blind followers vulnerable to following blind guides?

What is the sealing? It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings a person to the point that by their choice and agreement they surrender themselves to God and by humbly, actively, intelligently, following the leading of the Holy Spirit they become so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that they cannot be moved.

Can a person be sealed into God's kingdom if they are only a reflector? Or does the sealing require a person to be settled both intellectually and spiritually such that they actually comprehend, understand and agree in heart and mind?

Is brainwashing that cults do the same as the sealing of God? Would cult members be more like the lights Jesus described or more like reflectors of the cult leader? What does God want for us?

But some might argue that, via the law of worship, which is that by beholding we are changed (2 Cor 3:18), that we are to fix our eyes upon Christ and by doing so we become more like Him and thus reflect His character and glory—what do you think about that?

It is absolutely true that by beholding we become changed, transformed into the image of Christ, and as *we become more like Christ* does our mind, our heart, our faculties become more like His or less? And was Christ a thinker and a doer, someone who did what He did because He understood, agreed, and freely chose to do it, or was Jesus a person who simply asked the Father what to do, you tell me and I will do it, I don't need to agree or understand, I only need to obey and reflect?

What about us, as we behold Jesus do we become less capable of thinking and comprehending and simply end up mindlessly reflecting what Jesus said, or do we actually become like Him and come to understand God, Jesus, their designs and methods and choose to do what is in harmony with Their will, methods, purposes because we prefer it?

When Jesus said to His disciples,

- I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15 NIV84).

wasn't He contrasting two types of minds, two types of attitudes, two types of responses to Him? Could we describe the friend who understands as a thinker, a person with their own light, their own thoughts, their own individuality and the servant as a reflector, one who doesn't question, one who simply follows the rules and does what they are told?

Which type of follower does Satan want? Does Satan want followers that will question and think or followers that will mindlessly reflect and obey?

I find real danger in suggesting that we are to be reflectors of God's love. No, we are to be recipients of God's love which transforms us and wells up inside of us and becomes living water that flows over to others. We are to be the lights of the world, not reflectors to the world.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The verse after John 3:16 adds: " 'For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.' " (*John 3:17 NKJV*). If it were up to God alone, every human being would accept His love and be saved. Yet, the Lord will not force His love on anyone. People are free to accept or reject it. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 13).

The lesson says "Yet, the Lord will not force His love on anyone." Thoughts about this? I wonder how many around the world read this and said, "Praise God!"

But is this the same as saying, "The Lord *cannot* force His love on anyone"?

What is the difference in the two statements?

Does the way the lesson states it, contain a suggestion that it is possible for the Lord to force His love on people, but He simply chooses not to?

Is that actually true? Can the Lord force His love on people? Can love be forced ever, by anyone, even God?

If God could force love, then why hasn't He done so? Why the long history of sin and rebellion? If love can be forced and God hasn't done so, then what would that say about God?

Consider this historical quote from the Bible commentary on the life of Christ called *The Desire of Ages*, do you agree with this?

- The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority.** Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. (The Desire of Ages p. 22, emphasis mine).

What kind of law is imbedded in the statement "Yet, the Lord will not force His love on anyone"?

It is another subtle infection of human law, the idea that God makes up rules and imposes them on people, that because He is all powerful He runs His universe by imposing His will and making things happen and in this case God simply chooses not to force His love—but He could if He wanted to.

But this is false, God *cannot* force love, because love cannot be forced. To use force violates the laws of love and liberty and always destroys love and incites rebellion.

And this leads to another question that those who hold to the human law model always get wrong, and that is what does God do to those who reject His love?

If we say that God is required by law and justice to use His power to inflict appropriate legal penalties upon those who reject His love, then we say that in the end God uses His power to cause them pain and death, to torture and execute. And if that is what God were to do then are we really free to reject Him and His love or are we being coerced?

If one believes that God's law functions like human law, then people are, in fact, not free to reject it; they are punished for rejecting it. And external inflicted punishment destroys love and incites rebellion and thus sin spreads. This is how Satan has advanced his kingdom through false Christianity. How Satan has set himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God as Paul warned in 2 Thessalonians 2:4; how Christianity has been suborned such that it has a form of godliness with no power; it is why the rate of child abuse, spouse abuse, addictions, pornography use are no different in Christian homes than non-Christian homes.

Whenever Christians teach that God's law functions like human law, and justice is the use of power to inflict punishments they are obstructing the kingdom of God, undermining love and trust and delaying the gospel from going to the world and thus delaying the second coming of Christ.

Love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom and God cannot get what God wants by the exercise of might and power. God cannot get love, trust, friendship, loyalty, devotion from people by threatening to punish them if they don't give it.

Does that mean there is no punishment for those who reject God's love? No it doesn't mean that at all. There is a punishment for the unrepentant, but the reality is, under design law, under the laws God built into the fabric of the cosmos, the punishment does not come out from God, the punishment comes from unremedied and unremoved sin from the heart/mind/soul of the sinner. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction (Galatians 6:8) or James wrote sin when full grown brings forth or gives birth to death (James 1:15).

The punishment for sin occurs when God stops using His restraining and protective power that has been holding at bay what unremedied sin does. This is reality, this is the truth that the devil does not want people to comprehend and it is the truth denied by all those who stubbornly hold to the lie that God's law functions like human law.

MONDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- “Deuteronomy 7:9 describes a special kind of love that God has with His covenant people, a relationship that is partially dependent on whether or not they remain faithful. God's love is not conditional, but the covenant relationship with His people is. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 14).

Any concerns, anything confusing?

I found this paragraph had a lot of ideas that were imprecise and could easily be misconstrued.

Who are the covenant people? Is this referring to the nation of Israel in the OT times and God's calling for them to be a kingdom of priests, representatives, to share the gospel to the world, protect the inspired record and be the branch of the human family through whom Messiah would come? Or is this speaking of the covenant of grace given to the entire world, to all people, in Genesis 3:15 when the Messiah was promised?

Did God have a covenant relationship with Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Enoch, and many others who were not descended from Abraham?

Does God have a covenant relationship with every human being who surrenders their heart to Him in trust (Hebrews 8:10)?

So the term covenant people seems imprecise and could lead one to think that only the Jews are included in the covenant of grace, but was the covenant intended only for the Jews, or were the Jews called for mission, evangelism, to take the promised covenant of grace to the entire world because the covenant relationship is for all human beings descended from Adam?

Second, the lesson states that the covenant relationship is "a relationship that is partially dependent on whether or not they remain faithful."

This doesn't make sense to me, perhaps I am simply failing to comprehend, and if so, can someone explain how this statement makes sense?

I guess the lesson could mean that a covenant relationship couldn't exist if God didn't offer it, so it is partially dependent upon God offering the relationship and partially dependent upon our response. If that is what they meant I wish they would have said that because the way it is written it leaves open the possibility for misunderstanding.

Understand that God is love, and that God does offer us salvation through a covenant relationship, is that covenant relationship, once God took the initiative to offer it to us, partially dependent upon our response, or it *is* dependent upon our response?

Can God have a covenant relationship with anyone who rebels, rejects Him won't talk to Him, runs from Him, gives their heart to other gods? While God can continue to love them, pursue them, call after them, send messengers to them, if they refuse to engage with God, can God have a covenant *relationship* with them?

God could use His power to capture them, imprison them, punish them, and have a master/slave relationship or a warden/prisoner relationship without their cooperation, but can God have a covenant relationship with people who refuse Him?

So is having a covenant relationship *partially* dependent on their response or simply dependent on their response?

The reason my mind asks questions like this is because I am thinking how reality works, and reality works on design law. You cannot have a covenant relationship without two individualities actively participating. You cannot have a healthy marriage with only one person who loves and values the other. If the other partner is selfish and deceitful the marriage will not be healthy even with one mature healthy partner. One can have a dysfunctional relationship with a dysfunctional and rebellious person, but one cannot have a healthy relationship with a dysfunctional and rebellious person—and that includes God.

Consider the relationship Jesus had with Judas—was it a saving, covenantal, relationship? No, it was not, because Judas rejected the truth and love coming from Jesus and chose fear and selfishness.

So, when we understand design law, we understand how reality works and then statements like the lesson sometimes uses don't make sense or insinuate concepts or ideas that are imprecise, confusing, or false.

The lesson describes that the English words “lovingkindness” and “mercy” are from the Hebrew word *hesed*.

Read the fourth paragraph,

- God's *hesed* shows that His loving-kindness is extremely reliable, steadfast, and enduring. Yet, at the same time the reception of the benefits of *hesed* is conditional, dependent upon the willingness of His people to obey and to maintain their end of the relationship. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 14).

Why are the benefits of God's loving-kindness and mercy dependent upon our obedience?

Does the law model have any impact on how we answer?

Do we hear obedience like obeying human law, behavioral conformity doing bad deeds is law-breaking that justice requires must be punished? That God uses power from heaven to deny us blessings we would merit or earn if we were obedient?

Or do we hear obedience like the laws of health, and realize that you cannot have health while breaking the laws of health? And thus we cannot benefit from God's healing power and presence while continuing to disobey the protocols He built life to operate upon—even if we pray for it!

What happens to the lungs of the smoker who smokes two packs per day—even if they pray every day for healthy lungs?

What happens to the vision of a welder who welds without eye protection—even if they pray for good vision?

What happens to the health of a person who eats burgers, fries and milkshakes every day—even if they pray for good health?

What happens to the reception of God’s love and mercy into the heart of the authoritarian Christian husband who diligently prays for a happy and healthy marriage while he dominates, controls, and takes freedom away from his spouse, all under the name of obeying God and citing the Bible claiming that husbands are to rule over their wives?

Does our understanding of God’s law, character, methods and principles directly impact our understanding of why things happen and that understanding impacts our ability to both trust God and the subsequent choices we make in governance of ourselves.

When we believe the lie that God’s law functions like human law then with all desire to obey, to do what is right and good, we will be led to injure and harm whenever the rules don’t fit the objective realities of how life is built to operate. Like the Pharisees in Christ’s day who refused to help or heal on the Sabbath—they obeyed the law as they understood it because they thought the law was imposed and **obedience was restrictive and behavioral**, rather than understanding God’s laws are the laws of life and obedience is intelligently living in harmony with how God built life to operate. But, **when we replaced design law for imposed law, we always end up doing things that are unjust and unrighteous under the guise of obeying the law.**

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- In these and other texts, enjoying the benefits of a love relationship with God is repeatedly depicted as conditional upon the human respond to His love. Yet, we should not make the mistake of thinking that God ever actually stops loving anyone. As we have seen, God’s love is everlasting. And, although Hosea 9:15 includes God saying of His people, “I will love them no more,” it is important to remember that later in the same book God declares of His people, “I will love them freely” (*Hos. 14:4 NKJV*). Hosea 9:15 cannot mean that God entirely ceases to love His people. It must refer, instead, to the conditionality of some particular aspect or benefit of a love relationship with God. And how we respond to His love is crucial for this relationship to continue. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 15).

What do you think? What do you understand the Bible means when it records God as saying, “I will love them no more”? Is God talking about His heart, attitude, character, desire? No, it isn’t about God’s heart attitude, longing, affections, or method, mode, or action, it is about function. I will love them in function no more because they have closed themselves off from receiving my love—despite the fact I love them with an everlasting love I cannot act with my love in them because they won’t receive and respond to my love.

Understanding love as more than God's attitude, affection, intentions, to being living protocols upon which reality functions and that God cannot force love, that He cannot love within a person who doesn't freely surrender in love and trust, despite loving them in His heart, gives understanding to texts like this:

- Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Romans 9:13 NIV84).

God loves all people with an infinite love, but only those who open their hearts to Him receive His love and thus God can love in action, in function, in healing presence and power only those who respond positively to His love. Those who close their hearts to God do not receive His healing love and God hates it when His children are cut off from Him—He doesn't hate them, but He surrenders them to their freewill choice to cut themselves off from Him and thus He doesn't functionally love, but while His heart breaks in love for them He loves them enough to give them freedom to reject Him who is the source of life and therefore God hates to let go for it results in the loss of His children, but He ultimately does because love cannot be forced. Love will, after all efforts to redeem, reconcile, and save, surrenders those who refuse to their choice and allow the sinner to divorce themselves from His love.

The lesson describes this in the last paragraph,

- These and other texts teach that maintaining the benefits of a saving relationship with God depends upon whether we will accept God's love (which involves willingness to be vehicles of that love, as well). Again, this does not mean that God's love ever ceases. Rather, just as we cannot stop the sun from shining but can cut ourselves off from the rays of the sun, we cannot do anything to stop God's everlasting love, but we can finally reject a relationship with God and, thus, cut ourselves off from what it offers, especially the promise of eternal life. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 15).

There are a lot of good things in this paragraph, like God's never-ending love shines freely like the rays of the sun and there is nothing we can do can change that. And the metaphor of the sun, which operates upon design law is an excellent illustration for we either put ourselves in its rays or remove ourselves from it and we benefit or suffer accordingly.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- God's love always comes first. If God did not first love us, we could not love Him in return. While God created us with the capacity to love and to be loved, God Himself is the ground and Source of all love. We have the choice, however, whether we will accept it and then reflect it in our lives. This truth is exemplified in Christ's parable of the unforgiving servant (*see Matt. 18:23-35*). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 16).

It is absolutely true that God is the source of love, that we don't have within us the ability to love innately, that in our current state, whenever we see a human being living out love it is evidence of God's grace functioning there.

But let's consider God's intention in creating Adam and Eve. Of course, it is true that as created beings they did not have life original to themselves, so their existence, their life, their bodies, their everything was a gift from the Creator who created them. So in that sense all of their abilities originated and came from God.

But after God created them, before they sinned, did they have the ability in their own strength to love or did they need to reach out to God and receive love from God being poured into them in order to love?

What about us today? Can we love without receiving God's love, without God first reaching out to us to intercede in our hearts to put a desire for Him and His love in us and then when we respond in trust to connect with us?

John wrote:

- We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19 NIV84).

Paul wrote:

- God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5 NIV84).

And this historical quote describes God working to draw us away from fear and selfishness, away from sin and Satan and back to Him. Do you agree?

- The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." The enmity does not exist as a natural fact. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship. (Signs of the Times, July 11, 1895 par. 5).

What is described? Is the author describing that evil humans and evil angels have the same legal problem, or is the author saying that evil is something that operates in the heart and wars against God? Fear and selfishness war against love and trust, lies war against truth.

Since the fall every human is born with hearts animated, motivated, driven by fear and selfishness—the life, spirit, animating energy that we inherited from Adam. But God did not abandon humanity in this terminal state, but stepped in and began interceding.

God intercedes in three places, here in Genesis 3:15 God promises to intercede by sending His Son to be our Messiah, but He also begins right there to intercede in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit working to bring conviction, creating a longing for something better, causing us to be dissatisfied with sin, wooing us and calling us back to Him and when we respond to the Holy Spirit He pours His love into our hearts and we are reborn and transformed and begin to actively choose to live lives motivated by love and trust.

And God throughout human history has interceded with the principalities and powers of darkness holding them in check, as in the book of Job, and providing a hedge of protection to allow His grace to do its work and redeem us from this terminal sin condition through the intervention/intercession of Jesus as our Savior.

Is this love that originates in God only an emotion, a feeling, compassion, or is it also functional, operational, and in fact a design protocol upon which life is built to operate?

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13 that love is not self-seeking, love is other-centered, giving, beneficent. And Paul wrote in Romans 1:20 that God's divine nature is seen in what He has made, and since God is love we should be able to nature and see if this is the principle of life. You have heard many examples over the years, such as breathing, the water cycle, the pollination cycle, and the many operations of our bodies, digestion, and so forth, all of it is the law of love built into reality.

Consider these historical quotes:

- The divine beauty of the character of Christ, of whom the noblest and most gentle among men are but a faint reflection; of whom Solomon by the Spirit of inspiration wrote, He is "the chiefest among ten thousand. . . . Yea, he is altogether lovely" (S. of Sol. 5:10-16); of whom David, seeing Him in prophetic vision, said, "Thou art fairer than the children of men" (Ps. 45:2); Jesus, the express image of the Father's person, the effulgence of His glory; the self-denying Redeemer, throughout **His pilgrimage of love on earth, was a living representation of the character of the law of God.** In His life it is made manifest that **heaven-born love, Christlike principles, underlie the laws of eternal rectitude.** . . . Those principles that were made known to man in Paradise as the **great law of life will** exist unchanged in Paradise restored. (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 48-51, emphasis mine).
- By coming to dwell with us, **Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels.** He was the Word of God,--God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"--"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"--"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe.** God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their **science and their song.** It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the **glory of self-sacrificing love.** In the light from Calvary **it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing**

love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has **its source in the heart of God**; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. (The Desire of Ages 19, emphasis mine).

- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life.** (The Desire of Ages 21, emphasis mine).

What kind of law is this?

This is the law that governs the operation of reality. This is the law that was in operation in heaven when Lucifer rebelled, when Lucifer instead of seeking to love others sought to exalt self at the expense of others. This is the law that Adam and Eve broke when they believed the lies of Satan and broke trust with God. And this law is the protocol upon which life is built and we cannot survive, live, exist without this law operating in our being.

Thus, the Bible teaches, the wages of sin is death, sin when full grown brings forth death, those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction, because sin breaks the protocols, parameters, design laws that God built life to operate upon. And God has been using His power throughout human history to hold at bay the damage that sin causes and to restore humanity back into harmony with Himself by restoring His living law of love in our hearts and minds.

This is reality—how reality is built to operate and there is nothing penal/legal going on.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Just as the servant could never repay his debt to his master, we can never repay God. We could never earn or merit God's love. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom. 5:8, NKJV*). What amazing love! As 1 John 3:1 puts it, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (*NKJV*). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 17).

What is the impact of this paragraph on you? When you read it, what does the ideas in it cause you to experience?

Is it true that we can never earn or merit God's love? Yes, it is true—but do you hear being suggested by this statement and description? Is it suggestion that we are undeserving of His love because of our sinful state? Does hearing this cause a feeling of unworthiness, triggering one to feel inadequate, undeserving?

Would it be a true statement to say the following,

sinless angels in heaven and sinless Adam and Eve in Eden could never earn or merit life from God, it was a complete and free gift from God?

Is that a true statement?

When you hear this statement, that *sinless beings could never earn or merit life from God, that God gives life to His creation freely*, does that truth undermine the value or worth of those beings?

What about the sinless beings today, can they earn or merit God's love? Or is God's love given freely to them just like it is to us?

What does the idea of earning or meriting do to your mind? Does it cause one to think down lines of reward and punishment—which is how human law systems work.

Satan's lie about God's law and character is so deeply imbedded in human systems and human thoughts that even when trying to present God as love these concepts creep in and undermine the truth.

What about the idea of being called children of God? Who are God's children?

Have you heard the idea that all human beings are a member of God's family? The question is sometimes asked to help bring this point across, "in your family, are only the good children members of the family?"

And it is absolutely true that all beings, saints and sinners, are God's children by creation—but does the Bible describe that because of sin, there is a split in God's family and that while God loves all of His created children, not all of His children are actually members of God's heavenly family?

There are two human family trees, one descended from Adam in Eden, and one descended from our second Adam, Jesus Christ. We are all born into the first family, the family dying of a terminal sin condition, the family that is naturally in rebellion against God, the family in whose image Satan's character is dominant and forms. But, only those who are **reborn** with a new life received by faith become part of the new family, grafted into the Vine with Jesus as their new family head, because only those people have the life of Christ living within them so that they now bear the image of their heavenly Father.

So we are all God's children by creation, but only those who are reborn are part of God's eternal, righteous, saved heavenly family.

- “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1 NKJV).

Jesus makes this point when He said to the Jewish leaders:

- **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is making a distinction between being born a descendant of Adam, of being part of the *human* family, and what it means to be part of *God's* family?

The apostle John tells us that

- **“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God” (John 1:12, 13 NIV84, emphasis mine).

If we become children of God when we believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, wouldn't that mean we were not considered children of God before we accepted Him?

Consider these verses:

- You are all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus** (Galatians 3:26 NIV84).
- **Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you **received the Spirit of sonship**. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:14–17 NIV84, emphasis mine).

To be a member of God's family, we must first be born into the world physically—born into the *human* family—and then we must be reborn spiritually, reborn into *God's* family.

Why? To be considered part of God's family means and requires that we bear the image of God, that we have God's law, methods, principles, and character within us, and that we look like God to the world. Whereas those who internalize and embrace the principles of selfishness and sin become like Satan in character, look like him, and are considered part of his family.

Notice what John tells us:

- The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's **seed** remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: **Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother** (1 John 3:8–10 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Children resemble their parents, carrying within them attributes of the parents, genetically and physically, yes, but also in attributes of language, character, practice, and beliefs.

Likewise, those who are born of God become like God; they carry within themselves the attributes, characteristics, methods, and principles of God (the seed of God), thereby resembling God, having been restored to the image of God and, thus, are part of God's family. With that new heart-orientation, they do not go on living for self but, instead, live for the glory of God and the benefit of His kingdom. They live lives of service, of usefulness, of other-centeredness rather than lives seeking to aggrandize self. Such people live like Jesus and, thus, carry His image into the world and are considered part of His family.

In contrast, those who internalize the methods, principles, practices, and characteristics of Satan and thereby become like him are considered part of Satan's family because they resemble him and carry around his image.

John confirmed that the children of God live like Jesus lived when he wrote,

- “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.” (1 John 3:9).

Does this verse make you uncomfortable?

Do we believe that, via the Holy Spirit, we are reborn, that we receive new hearts and right spirits, that the “seed” of God is planted within us? In other words, we receive the very life of God, we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and it works a change in us so that our motives, desires, attitudes, understanding, perspectives, and practices change, and we grow, develop, transform, and become ever more like Jesus!

Or do we instead believe that we merely have a legal adjustment in a book, have adoption papers filed in the heavenly court, and are legally declared to be part of God's family—even though we go on living sinful lives and still look like Satan in character?

Which idea are you more comfortable with:

- Those born of God will go on sinning until Jesus returns, or
- Those born of God will not go on sinning?

What law lens do you understand this through? What is the essence, the root, of sin? Is it deed and task performance, or is it attitudes of the heart? And the root attitude of sin is distrust of and disloyalty to God, attitudes predicated upon fear and selfishness.

Those reborn into the family of God may be tempted by fear and selfishness, they may have struggles in personal performance, they may make errors in judgment (like Peter did when he didn't associate with the uncircumcised), but they do not break trust with God. They remain humble; they have hearts that love truth and are willing to be corrected and grow. They love God and others. They do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11). Thus, they develop, advance, and grow in godliness—in the same way that children grow. This growth in godliness is evidence that they are children of God, that they are part of God's family, and that they are not going on living in rebellion (sinning) but are living victoriously.

We become part of God's family when we are reborn through Jesus and become like Him in character, people who live out the principles of God—truth, love, and freedom—in how we treat others.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 3 To Be Pleasing to God

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the entire day's lesson,

- Imagine the following scenario: a five-year-old child comes to his father with a poorly wrapped gift on Father's Day. Excitedly, he hands the gift to his father.
Imagine that the father says, "Son, I do not care about your gift. After all, there is nothing you could give me that would please me. Anything you could give me, I could get for myself, and anything you give to me was either bought with my money or made from materials that I paid for. So, keep your gift. I do not need it or want it. But I love you, anyway."

Ouch!

What do you think of this father's reaction? Such words as heartless, cold, and unfeeling come to mind. Is this the way God responds to us? Can we actually be pleasing to God? Hard as it is to imagine, even we as fallen beings, corrupted by sin, and prone to evil—yes, we can be pleasing to God! In other words, God does not look upon us, or the gifts that we bring Him, with the attitude of that father. On the contrary, we can be pleasing to God, but only through Christ. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 20).

Why is the way of the human father depicted in this text not the response that our heavenly Father gives?

Where is the focus of the human father? What is the focus of our heavenly Father? Isn't the focus of the human father on the task, the performance, the objective value or quality of the gift itself, which is an expression of selfishness, what value does the gift have to the father; whereas our heavenly Father is not concerned with material or substance value or quality, but the character quality, heart attitude, the motive, which is an expression of love for the child?

And while it is true that both the earthly father and our heavenly Father could get any material object, possession, or substance of higher quality than the child can give, can *either* the earthly father OR our heavenly Father get love, devotion, affection, loyalty, and reliable and trustworthy character from another person by the exercise of their own abilities and power?

And what happens to the child's growth, development, and maturation if the father does all of these things for himself? So if the father loves the child, what does the father do?

Recognize what God loves is healthy people, people who are not dying of sin, people who have His living law restored within them. God loves healthy people who have hearts and minds that love and trust Him and live His methods and that cannot be obtained by God's use of power—it is not the deed that God loves, but the motive of the heart that leads to the deed and the *choices* to act on the motives of heaven which build mature character.

This is why the Bible says God loves a cheerful giver and does not say that God loves a giver. It is not primarily about the act of giving, it is first and foremost about the heart motive of love that leads to giving.

This is why the Bible teaches God does not win by might or power but by the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love (Zech 4:6).

This is why the Bible teaches that we sinful humans look on the outward appearance, the actions, the deeds, the behaviors, but God looks on the heart, the motive that leads to the action.

This is why the Bible teaches that we are to present ourselves to God as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God. The gift God loves and desires is the same gift that every parent loves and desires—children that have hearts that love, hearts that love to grow, develop, and mature in God's methods and principles, hearts so that they are freed from the sickness of sin.

So God loves our acts of love to Him, our deeds from a heart that loves because He loves us and He knows when we live His methods it is good for us, and also because of the law of exertion, when we do healthy things from healthy motives we grow stronger in godly character.

And this is why God hates our gifts when they are given out of legal obedience, out of obligation, out of a sense of debt, out of fear and guilt, gifts given begrudgingly but believing if we don't God will be upset and withhold His blessings. For if we give gifts from such motives we actually harden our hearts against God despite behaviorally being obedient. This was the older brother in the Prodigal Son story. He stayed home and behaviorally obeyed, but did so with a heart that was resentful.

This was the Jews throughout their history and God repeatedly contrasts the two types of obedience, the obedience that comes from fear of punishment, from law keeping, and that which comes from love and trust, which Paul also contrasts as the obedience that comes from law versus faith.

Any Bible texts come to mind?

Here are a few, but this theme is repeated over and over and it is the ongoing conflict between God and Satan over hearts and minds centered on the question of law and government. The imposed law system instigated by Satan is all about behavioral conformity and focuses on the ritual, deed, and legal religious requirements whereas our Creator's system of design law is all about health, life, and happiness and focuses on the heart motive and attitude. And any deeds prescribed by God are tools, aides, devices provided for the sin-sick to assist us in recovery and healing, they are not legal requirements.

But here are some texts:

- Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! “The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:10-14 NIV84).

And four verses later God says,

- “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

These Jews that God describes as Sodom, did not have the wrong Sabbath day, the wrong Temple, the wrong feast days, the wrong clothing, the wrong animals for sacrifice, the wrong vessels to carry out the sacrifice, the wrong name for Yahweh, the wrong tithing system, the wrong songs—they had the wrong understanding of law. They had the wrong picture of God and God’s law. They viewed God like a dictator and his law as imposed and thus their obedience was legal performances, rule-keeping, and they did it out of obligation, with hearts that resented having to do it, and without understanding. Thus God hated their carrying out and observing the correct behaviors that He instructed them to do because their hearts were not right with Him and in acting out the right behaviors with the wrong understanding and wrong motives they actually hardened their hearts against God.

He says the same through other prophets:

- With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:6-8 NIV84).

Or from Hosea:

- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me. (Hosea 6:6 GNT).

Again, notice what God wants—He wants hearts that love, not drones that behaviorally obey rules with hearts that are either in rebellion or don’t love and simply function the role of a slave.

Consider these historical quotes, exposing this elements:

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of **obligation** merely--because **he is required to do so**—[what kind of law leads to this type of response?] will never enter into the joy of obedience. **He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may **know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within.** It springs from **the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.** The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 97, emphasis mine. [This sums up the difference between imposed law and design law. Imposed law is external, is behavioral modification and mechanical performance based on threat of punishment and is not actual obedience. Whereas, design law is about healing the heart so that we actually love doing what is right, it is our preference. We rebel against breaking God's law instead of rebel against keeping it.]
- A **sullen submission** to the will of the Father will **develop the character of a rebel.** By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is **not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God.** It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. *Signs of the Times* July 22, 1897, emphasis mine.

The sad history of Christianity, including where we find ourselves today, is that Christianity became infected with Roman law, imposed rules, that changed the understanding of who God is understood to be, how His law and government function, what the sin problem actually is, how God solves the sin problem through Christ and has resulted in a form of godliness without power because it focuses on law keeping or legal loophole law keeping of a substitute who kept the legal demands of the law and then teaches that we cannot.

But the truth is that through Christ we can receive a new heart and right spirit, an actual new life, an actual new animating power, desire, drive, motive, that we can choose to say yes to, that we can choose to follow and by doing so, we enter into a cooperative relationship with Jesus that transforms and heals us and then our gifts, our obedience, our actions to worship God are acceptable because God sees, no matter how imperfect the action, no matter how many notes we sing off-key that we sing, we live, we worship with hearts renewed to love Him and others!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- As we saw in an earlier lesson, there is no one—even the worst sinner or worst evildoer—whom God does not love. And because God values people more than we could possibly

imagine, He is displeased by sin because He loves us and knows what sin does to us, as well.
Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 21.

I think this is very well said! Well done Study Guide! Now, the question—what does sin do to us?

Does it get us in legal trouble or lethal trouble?

And how did you and I become sinners? Did any of us choose to become sinners or were we born with the sin condition? Psalm 51:5.

And if we were born with the sin condition—is it our fault that we have it? If someone is to blame for the fact we are sinners, who is that someone? Adam and Eve. They were sinless, and they had the power to choose to remain sinless and reject the lies. But they believed the lies and chose to break God's law of love and trust and they changed their being, their spirit, their life energy, their animating drive to action was changed from love and trust, to fear and selfishness.

And each of us are born with this shared life, the only life that Adam and Eve had to reproduce with. Like an HIV infected man and woman having a child born HIV infected. The child did nothing wrong, the child has no guilt, yet the child still has a terminal condition, a condition of being that without remedy will cause symptoms and end in death. That is every human being since Adam and Eve sinned. And if the HIV infected child is presented with a free remedy and is able to comprehend and choose to say yes or no, and they refuse the remedy and prefer the sickness, while it is not their fault they have the condition, it is their fault for refusing the remedy. That is the difference between the saved and the lost—all humans are born in sin and conceived in iniquity and we have no guilt for this. But all who refuse the remedy will suffer the natural consequences of what that terminal sin condition does when God stops holding at bay the ultimate results, and they will be guilty of refusing the remedy that would have saved them from the condition that is not their fault for having.

Jesus came to be our substitutionary Savior. He came and voluntarily took up a condition that was not naturally His own, suffered a fate that He did not naturally deserve, in order to eradicate the spirit of fear and selfishness from humanity, which is the cause of death, and restore into humanity the spirit of love and trust. This could only be done by a human being possessing the life, the spirit, breathed into Adam in Eden, and corrupted by Adam, a being who had another spirit, a sinless, holy, spirit and by that human being always choosing to live only the life animated and motivated by the spirit of love, which Jesus did and despite the spirit of fear tempting Him to save self—consider Jesus' temptations in Gethsemane—Jesus chose to live only the life of love and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a humanity delivered from death, purged from the infection of fear and selfishness. And Jesus becomes the source of salvation for all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

So yes, God hates sin for sin breaks His design laws for life and cut people off from God the source of life and results in terrible painful symptoms and eventual death.

The lesson focuses our attention on the parable of the Prodigal Son, who took his inheritance and went off and wasted it all, ended up starving while feeding pigs wishing he had pig's food to eat. He

eventually comes to his senses and returns home and the father sees him a long way off and runs out to meet him and restores him to full sonship, and the older brother who stayed on the estate was angry with the celebration and the restoration.

What lessons do we learn from this story?

Why do you think the son went home? What was the son's motive? Did the son go home because the son loved the father? Did the son go home because the son actually knew the father well?

Consider what the text says:

- “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.” Luke 15:17-20 NIV84.

Does this sound like he knew his father? Did he go home because of love for the father? When do you think the son actually came to know his father and experienced a true heart conversion? Wasn't it when he returned home and received the love, the forgiveness, the grace, the restoration, the acceptance without price, without legal payment, without having to work or earn it?

But how did the older brother respond? Was he happy with his father or his brother?

And this is what Paul was dealing with when writing to the Jews who were legally observing the rules, like the older brother, doing the work assigned with hearts unrenewed:

- Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:4 NIV84.

Those with hearts unrenewed, those who don't actually know God, those who believe God's law functions like human law, show contempt for the kindness of God, not realizing it is the kindness of God that leads us to repent, to trust, to surrender to Him and die to the old life of fear and selfishness and be reborn in love and trust.

Read the questions at the bottom:

- Interesting is the reaction of the other son. Why was this reaction such a human reaction, based at least in part on fairness, and so understandable, as well? What, however, does his part of the story teach us about how human concepts of fairness don't capture the depth of the gospel or of God's love for us? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 21.

What is the natural, which means carnal or sinful, human motivation to action? Survival of the fittest, the fear and selfishness motive. And what kind of law do people motivated by fear and selfishness

establish wherever they can? Imposed rules with externally inflicted punishments. And what is fairness in such a system? Getting what one deserves.

But in God's kingdom what is the right or fair thing to do? If you see a person who is dying from an overdose of heroin, what is the right or fair thing to do if you have the ability?

MONDAY

The lesson talks about rejoicing with gladness and references the biblical account of God using the metaphor of a marriage, where the people of God are the bride.

The New Testament also uses this imagery, where Christ is the Groom and the church is the bride.

How many have read our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming](#)? If you haven't I recommend it. You can read it online, download the pdf online, or order paper copies to read and share with your friends through our online store.

What do you understand the metaphor of the wedding to teach?

What happens in a wedding ceremony? Isn't it the uniting of two hearts and minds into a unity of one joint sacred fellowship? The two shall become one?

Is there another Bible symbolism, object lesson, ritual, metaphor that teaches God becoming one with His people? The Day of At-one-ment!

In the Jewish economy they had seven annual feast days that recurred in a cycle, which were designed to teach them the plan of salvation from the time of Adam's sin until the earth is made new.

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from

our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.

- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):** The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!
- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

We find ourselves today in the time of the Day of Atonement. The time where Jesus is uniting His people to Him, sealing them to Himself. Cleansing His bride, preparing His people to meet Him face to face. And when that work is complete He returns to receive His bride and we celebrate the wedding supper of the Lamb.

The wedding happens first and the celebration happens second.

And what is necessary for the church, the people of God, to be cleansed, purified, brought into unity with Jesus?

Is this something that happens in record books, or is this something that happens in hearts and minds?

If you would like a deep dive into understanding the evidence documenting that the cleansing of the sanctuary, the atonement ritual and the cleansing of the bride, the preparing of the church for the second coming are the same event, watch our video [Light from the Sanctuary](#)

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- How could it be that the God of the universe takes delight in mere humans, fleeting blobs of protoplasm on one tiny planet amid what is probably an infinite universe? How could it be possible that humans could matter so much to the Supreme Being, who is all-powerful and who needs nothing? These questions can be parsed into two aspects. First, how could God Himself be delighted? Second, how could humans bring Him delight, particularly given our sinfulness? The first aspect of these questions is the topic for today and the second for tomorrow. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 23.

I can't tell if this is simply hyperbole, exaggeration, a provocative statement designed to teach by contrast, or is there is some seriousness to this paragraph?

But, let's break it down, the first question:

- How could it be that the God of the universe takes delight in mere humans, fleeting blobs of protoplasm on one tiny planet amid what is probably an infinite universe?

Was it God's original design that we would have transitory lives, that we would be fleeting, or did God design us to live eternally? And in that design what function or role did God intend for us? To be friends of His. So, the answer to the first question is to recognize that sin has corrupted God's design, interfered with God's intentions and plans for us and we would err to answer this question merely from the position of our current terminal sin-state.

I find this seems to happen a lot, people degrading our value and worth to God because of what sin has done to us. But it is not biblical—in fact, I will say that it is demonic. It is Satan that hates humanity and wants to infect our minds with lies that we have little merit, little worth, and are not that valuable to God. But it is a lie, “For God so loved the world...”

Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- Jesus gave His life for the life of the world, and **He places an infinite value upon man**. He desires **that man shall appreciate himself**, and consider his future well-being. If the eye is kept single, the whole body will be full of light. If the spiritual vision is clear, unseen realities will be looked upon in their true value, and beholding the eternal world will give added enjoyment to this world. *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 136, emphasis mine.

- It was a wonderful thing for God to **create man, to make mind**. The glory of God is to be revealed in **the creation of man in God's image and in his redemption. One soul is of more value than a world**. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind. The Lord Jesus Christ is the author of our being, and He is also the author of our redemption, and everyone who will enter the kingdom of God will **develop a character that is the counterpart of the character of God**. None can dwell with God in the holy heaven but those who bear His likeness. Those who are to be redeemed are to be overcomers; they are to be elevated, pure, one with Christ. *E.G. White, SDA Bible Commentary* p. 1105, emphasis mine.

While we are sin-sick and possess no remedy, no ability to cure ourselves, no ability to free ourselves from sin, that does not mean we have lost value or worth. It is because we are valuable to God that He grieves over ever soul lost.

Next portion of the paragraph seems to either be presenting hyperbole to contrast reality or is struggling with understanding reality and asks,

- How could it be possible that humans could matter so much to the Supreme Being, who is all-powerful and who needs nothing?

How could a parent who needs nothing from their child possibly value that child?

Again, God values what God cannot create, what God cannot get by the use of might and power, what God cannot provide for Himself and that is love from another free being.

God is love and God loves love. And love cannot be achieved by the use of might and power. God cannot receive love from robots or puppets, but only from free beings. Further, God is a Creator and all humans are created in His image and we know from experience the joy in creating. God rejoices and experience pleasure and joy from His creation and seeing His creation thrive, develop, and grow in harmony with Him and how life is built to operate. So it goes beyond God directly receiving our returned love, it includes God rejoicing in our development, our excitement with new discovery, or growth, our happiness—just as every parent gets delight in seeing their children playing, learning, developing even when the child is not directly telling the parent that they love them.

And God cannot do any of this for Himself by the exercise of His own power to provide it back to Himself.

So the lesson is either asking this to contrast, or they don't comprehend reality because they are stuck in a Roman imposed law system of rules and power, which is suggested by the reference to God being all powerful.

But is power the attribute that God prefers and chooses to be identified by, the attribute that God chooses to glorify in? Or is it His character of love?

Read the last paragraph,

- According to Psalm 146:8, “The Lord loves the righteous” (NKJV). Second Corinthians 9:7 adds, “God loves a cheerful giver” (NKJV). Notice, first, what these texts do not say. They do not say that God loves only the righteous or that God loves only the cheerful giver. God loves everyone. Yet, for these texts to convey anything at all, they must mean that God loves the “righteous” and the “cheerful giver” in some special sense. What we have seen in Proverbs 15:8, 9 provides the clue: God loves these and others in the sense of being pleased with them. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 23.

Any questions, concerns, things you would expand on or say differently?

It seems the lesson focuses exclusively on God’s heart attitude, His compassion, mercy, loving desire for all people and then His pleasure or being pleased. But, the lesson doesn’t seem to describe functional love, connecting how reality works, which is the outworking of design law.

God functionally loves a cheerful giver, those who give cheerfully are doing so only because God’s love is working, operating, functioning, growing, developing, expanding in their hearts and minds. Thus God’s power of love, God’s presence of love, God’s ability to functionally love in them expands and grows more in those who give cheerfully. And God personally loves it when He is able to functionally love His children, He loves it when His children respond to His love and grow in His love because it is good for them.

But those who give begrudgingly, from a sense of obligation, because the rules say so, have their hearts closed to God and while God’s heart still loves them, He cannot operate in love *in* them.

Consider the metaphor of the garden hose on your home and the fire hydrant on the corner. If you open both up full blast, which gives away more water? Which in so doing is simultaneously receiving more water to it?

This is a metaphor of God’s love, the more you give the more you receive. Thus, understanding how reality functions informs us how it is that God in reality, in function, loves a cheerful giver.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- Without God’s intervention, fallen people are incapable of bringing anything valuable to God. Yet God, in His grace and mercy, has made a way, through the work of Christ. Specifically, “through Jesus Christ” we may “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (1 Pet. 2:5, NKJV). Although “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6, NKJV), by the mediating work of Christ, God will “make” believers “complete in every good work to do His

will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:21, NKJV). Those who respond to God by faith are accounted righteous in His sight through the mediation of Christ, whose righteousness alone is acceptable. And those who respond to God’s loving overtures are accounted worthy through Christ’s mediation (Luke 20:35), and He transforms them into His likeness (1 Cor. 15:51–57, 1 John 3:2). God’s redeeming work is not only for us but in us, as well. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 24.

It is true that without God intervening Adam and Eve would have died from sin in Eden and thus no human would exist and none could bring anything of value to God.

In Eden, immediately after their sin, God intervened in the hearts and minds of human beings, God said to the serpent that He would put enmity between the woman and the serpent, between humans and Satan. This enmity does not exist as a natural thing. The natural result of sin is fear and selfishness and rebellion against God. The natural result of Adam’s sin is humanity joins Satan’s team in a confederacy against heaven.

But God intervened and put a desire in our hearts for Him, for love, for goodness, a dissatisfaction with evil. And God intervened by sending His Son to become the second Adam, to take up humanity damaged by Adam and eradicate the death causing principle of fear and selfishness and restore humanity back to love and trust.

With this in mind, let’s unpack the rest of what this paragraph describes.

Why is it that without faith we cannot please God? What is faith? It is trust and why is trust necessary to please God?

Because it is only through trust in Him that we will open our hearts to surrender our fear-ridden, selfish, terminal life to Him and receive from Him a new life, a new spirit, a new animating power of love. And love is God’s living law, the law upon which life is built, and it pleases God for His children to live, to be healthy, to be saved or redeemed. It displeases God for us to suffer and die. And thus we can only please God if we surrender to Him in trust/faith and allow Him to eradicate the cause of death and restore life in us.

But what about the idea that only “Those who respond to God by faith are accounted righteous in His sight through the mediation of Christ, whose righteousness alone is acceptable”?

Does this sound right or is something off?

Does the Bible say we are accounted righteous by faith or that we become righteous by faith and then after we are actually righteous by faith, God, who is the source of truth and always speaks the truth, recognizes or accounts us as righteous because we are?

First text to consider is:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine

This is substitutionary atonement—Jesus substituted Himself for us so that we might *become* the righteousness of God, not so that God could account or declare us righteous while we remain unrighteous. The legal accounting theories are all part of the system of lies built upon the lie that God’s law functions like human law.

The Bible teaches, as we have just explored from Genesis, that the natural human heart is enmity to God and cannot please God (Romans 8). Thus, the natural human heart must be converted, transformed, renewed, we must be reborn with a new heart and right spirit that changes from the natural heart that distrusts and rebels against God to a heart that loves and trusts God and follows where He leads.

Abraham’s natural heart was enmity to God, but Abraham had a change of heart such that he trusted God and followed where God was leading. And it was only *after* Abraham’s heart changed from distrust to trust that God recognized, accounted, or declared that Abraham was righteous—because Abraham was righteous.

What does righteous mean? To be set right, put right, or justified. And what is wrong in the sin problem that needs to be put right? It is the rebellious, selfish heart of human beings that don’t love and trust God. Our hearts and minds need to be set right.

God only accounts as righteous those who have had their hearts set right with Him because they are righteous. And the hearts of people can only be set right because of Jesus. When we are won to love and trust we open our hearts to receive the righteous life of Christ, so that as Paul wrote, “it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20).

This is why when the Father looks at us He does not see our sinful selves but the perfect righteousness of His Son, because we actually have His spirit, His life, living in us and animating our hearts, motives, desires, and drives.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Under the umbrella of God’s mercy and mediation, God takes pleasure in even the smallest positive response to His love. Through the One who alone is worthy of love and is Himself perfectly righteous, each one of us can be counted righteous and counted among God’s beloved who will live with Him in perfect love for eternity. This is the great hope of the redemption, which involves Christ’s work for us in heaven. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 25.

What problems do you see with this paragraph?

Read second paragraph,

- But, you might wonder, can this include even me? *What if I am not good enough? What if I am afraid that I do not have enough faith? Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 25.*

From where do these question arise? What causes these question to come to mind?

Is it the human law model of reward and punishment?

Do people typically ask these questions about going to the doctor? *What if I am not good enough for the doctor to see me? What if I am not good enough for the medicine to cure me? What if I am afraid that I do not have enough faith in the doctor to take the medicine he prescribes for me?*

When we operate upon design law, the laws of health, do people typically, usually, ask such questions?

These questions are manifestations of people who have been persuaded that the problem is a legal one and somehow related to them, either their works or the strength of their faith.

Read the bottom questions,

- If God accepts us through Christ, how much more should we accept others? What light does the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:39) and the golden rule to treat people the way you want to be treated shed on this idea? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 25.*

Does God accept us without Jesus? Or is our acceptance with God only through Jesus? Why?

Should we accept people who reject Jesus?

What of these texts?

- Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84.
- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14 NIV84.

Is it possible we could, through love and compassion, accept into fellowship people we should set healthy boundaries with?



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 4 God is Passionate and Compassionate

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

- Unbridled emotions can be problematic, yes. However, God created people with the capacity for emotions, and God Himself is displayed throughout Scripture as experiencing profound emotions. If God can experience deep emotions, as the Bible consistently portrays, then emotions cannot be intrinsically bad or irrational—for the God of the Bible is perfectly good and possesses perfect wisdom. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 28.

I always have to think about things like this. The general point they are trying to make is that experiencing emotions doesn't make one bad or good, that if God has emotions then it is okay for us to have emotions, but our emotions are not to be unbridled—meaning our emotions are not to govern us, control us, make choices for us, but our emotions are to be processed through our good judgment and our choices are to be based on truth not emotion. That is what they are trying to say and that is absolutely correct.

However, I am struggling with the phrase, “emotions cannot be intrinsically bad or irrational.”

I am struggling with this and at best the quarterly is unclear, but depending on how one understands the meaning, this is not true.

Let's break the two elements up, emotions are not inherently irrational:

Irrational means, according to dictionary.com:

- without the faculty of reason; deprived of reason.
- without or deprived of normal mental clarity or sound judgment.
- not in accordance with reason; utterly illogical:

Emotions are, as I understand it, not generated from reason, not based on good judgment, but are in fact without reason or judgment, and are processed in a different part of the brain from where our reason and judgment operate. And the mature person must learn to understand their own emotions—what the emotions are trying to convey. Because emotions *can* lie, can misinform, mislead, and the stronger the emotions one has of any kind the less effective is our reasoning ability and the more impaired is our good judgment.

So, emotions are inherently, without reason, they are not reasonable thought through facts, comprehensions, understandings, logical conclusions, they are reactions and experiences generated by a wide variety of life experiences both internal and external. And our emotions are to be processed through our good judgment and as we process them with truth we can change our emotions.

In fact, James tells us it is through powerful emotions that the devil tempts us.

Does this mean God did not make us to experience and have emotions? No, of course He did, but our faculties in this world of sin are often imbalanced and our emotions cannot be trusted as a guide to lead us. But at the same time, we are not to ignore our emotions, run from our emotions, suppress our emotions, we are to bring our emotions into the light of truth, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to act and choose in harmony with truth despite the emotions.

Look at Jesus in Gethsemane—He experienced powerful human emotions that tempted Him to avoid the cross, but He did not merely accept them and act on them, He wrestled through them in prayerful submission to His Father and chose to follow the truth despite His emotions and ultimately His unhealthy tempting emotions were overcome and He left Gethsemane in internal emotional peace with His Father and with Himself. He had chosen and accepted the path of sacrifice and pain.

But what about emotions not being inherently bad—in general I think this is true that emotions are not inherently bad, but my question is: is there one or more emotions that are inherently bad, that are in fact only experienced because of sin and are a part of the sin condition and which God does not experience and Adam and Eve did not experience in Eden?

When God called to Adam in Eden after their sin, this is the response:

- He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was naked; so I hid.” Genesis 3:10 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Do you think, God experiences fear? Do you think Adam and Eve experienced fear before sin? And fear here does not mean the old King James use of fear, where the Bible says “Fear God and give glory to Him...” that use of fear means, awe, respect, revere, admire, esteem and of course that is an emotion we are to have and will have.

The fear I am talking about is dread, terror, panic, anxiety, worry.

Notice, awe, admiration, reverence and esteem lead the mind and heart to be drawn to the one revered, such emotions turn our attention away from self to the one revered.

Whereas, terror, dread, anxiety turn our attention toward self and lead to acts of selfishness, what we must do to protect self and that is why Adam ran and hid and blamed Eve and Eve in turn also hid and blamed the serpent and God and in fact the fear caused them to have less reverence, admiration, awe, and love for God, but increased doubt, uncertainty, and distrust of God.

So, do you think Adam and Eve experienced the terror, panic, dread, and anxiety fear before sin?

If so, what about this text?

- **There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear**, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Does God have perfect love—of course, so does God experience fear? And what about us when God finishes His work in us, will we still be have fear?

Then the question, is fear inherently bad? I think it is. I think that fear is an emotion that is only experienced in sin, when the bonds of love and trust have been broken, and the emotion of fear turns the heart and mind to self, resulting in acts of selfishness, causing more guilt, shame, and fear, which leads to more acts to protect self, denial, distortion, blame, which leads to more self-deception, fear of being exposed, found out, rejected, abandoned, punished, which leads to the need to protect self more to take away one's fear, which leads to willingness to use power over others to control one's environment so one can feel safe, including, making up the laws and punishments to control others and excuse oneself—all human governments.

The remnant of God will be so changed that they will not allow fear to control them:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:11 NIV84.

The blood of the Lamb is symbolic of the life of Jesus, for the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), thus the Bible is saying they overcome by the life of Jesus—how? They died to self and were reborn with a new life, a new spirit, a new animating energy, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and can say like Paul, “It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me. Galatians 2:20. Or as Peter wrote, they become partakers of the divine nature 2 Peter 1:4. This is being so settled spiritually, in their motives, desires, affections that they cannot be moved. And the word of their testimony is the truth that they speak about God, His kingdom, His design laws; they know God and know His methods and principles. This is being so settled intellectually that they cannot be moved.

And being settled spiritually and intellectually that one cannot be moved is being sealed of God. And when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of truth and love we are no longer controlled by fear and will not shrink from death, we will no longer seek to save self, but will sacrifice self for God and His kingdom.

God has settled many of His friends into this state of being throughout human history:

- Job—could not be moved despite his terrible tribulation and did not shrink from death. Though he didn't understand what was happening, though he had many questions, he was so settled that he said, “even if God were to kill me, yet I would still trust Him.”

- Daniel and the lion's den—Daniel would not shrink from death
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego would not shrink from death
- The Apostles after Jesus' resurrection
- The many martyrs through history

When we are settled into truth and love, sealed of God, we will overcome by the life of Christ, the spirit of love, the animating motive of love for God, trust in Him, and by knowing in our minds the truth of who God is and how His kingdom operates and trusting Him with how things turn out.

SUNDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- Perhaps the greatest love common to human experience is the love of a parent for a child. The Bible often uses the imagery of the parent-child relationship to depict God's amazing compassion for people, emphasizing that God's compassion is exponentially greater than even the deepest and most beautiful human expression of the same emotion. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 29.

This is absolutely true. God designed humans to be images bearers of Himself, and as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from the unity of love, create, God designed for husbands and wives to join together in the unity of love and procreate beings in their image. From their love, life comes forth.

It was God's design that Adam and Eve would fulfill this purpose in Eden in a world without sin. And what would have been revealed had Adam and Eve had children in a world without sin?

How would Adam and Eve have treated their children, would they have exploited, dominated, controlled, abused, demanded service and worship or would Adam and Eve have done everything in their power for the health, welfare, development, advancement, and good of their children?

And the universe would have learned that God didn't create intelligent beings to wait on Him, for Him to dominate, control, exploit, demand worship from, but for Him to love, to pour Himself into and celebrate their growth and development.

So, yes, the parent child relationship is designed to teach us truth about God and His love for us.

But has sin damaged human beings in such a way that even parent child relationships can misrepresent God, can be harmful rather than healing?

I think it is pretty obvious that overt abuse—abuse of any kind is not representative of God and is harmful: and we are not talking about loving discipline but parents venting their anger, rage, and problems onto the child and injuring and harming the child, or parents exploiting the children, taking

children's birthday and Christmas presents and pawning them so the parents can buy drugs; parents verbally abusing, or neglecting etc.

But what is not as obvious is when parents act not out of selfishness, or rage, or anger, or lust, or some unbridled emotion, but are acting with compassion, mercy, empathy, sympathy, and only goodwill in their heart—yet have divorced their actions from objective reality, from the truth, from God's design laws and their emotional love is not applied in truth and this harms.

Remember, the Bible teaches that love rejoices with the truth, but sometimes people can be tricked by their emotional tenderness to avoid bringing loving truth to bear because of the pain, discomfort, anguish that the truth will have upon the one they care about. In other words, the overly empathic and loving parent cannot tolerate their own emotional discomfort to do what is actually best for the child. This often happens in addictions, in which the compassionate person becomes what is called an enabler—they are not seeking to harm, their actions are intended to help, but because of objective reality, how things work, the actions are harmful.

One of the best depictions of this is in the movie *The Miracle Worker*, which is the story of the life of Helen Keller.

But before I unpack this, let me preface by saying, that there is no evil person doing evil in what I am going to describe. All parties have good motives, good hearts, seeking to do good, but because we humans don't know everything, we can with good hearts take actions that are not actually healing, that interfere with healing. It is important to recognize this, because some may hear themselves in this and be tempted to feel guilty—that would be the wrong response, that would be the devil seeking to trick you into self-injury by embracing a lie that your intentions, motives, goals were wrong, when in reality you lived to do what you understood was best—but what was interfering was a full comprehension of what is objectively healthy.

It is important we recognize the difference between heart motive and objective performance. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Humans look at how well the task is performed, or the positive or negative impact of the action, but God looks first and foremost on the motive that leads to the action. And then, for those who trust God, He will lead them to embrace and practice healthier methods which improve their performance over time.

Because we are finite we all will have places in our lives where in the past we did things with good motives but were applying less than ideal methods. We want to be lovers of truth, meaning, we love to grow and advance in truth as soon as we can comprehend it and we do not live in fear of truth exposing areas in our lives where we can improve, in fact, lovers of truth rejoice in this.

Helen Keller was born deaf and blind and therefore never learned to talk so she was also mute. Her mother had great love and compassion for Helen and couldn't bring herself to ever discipline the child because she was so disadvantaged. And in that home Helen became an unruly, wild, undisciplined, individual who had no boundaries and caused discord throughout the entire family. One scene depicted in the movie was the family sitting at dinner with food on the plates and Helen, who could smell,

walking around the table and sticking her hands on everyone's plate and grabbing food with her unwashed hands off their plates to eat. And the mother allowed this because poor Helen couldn't see or hear or speak.

The family brought in a specialist to try and help Helen, Annie Sullivan, who herself had been blind for much of her life and a new procedure allowed her to gain vision.

When Annie Sullivan began to set boundaries and hold Helen accountable, Helen, predictably, protested, cried out, acted out, appeared distressed, waled and cried, and the mother intervened to comfort Helen and stop the discipline.

This resulted in Annie demanding that Helen be removed from the presence of the mother, and in that new environment Annie began to teach Helen. She started by putting a spoon in her hand to eat with, and Helen threw the spoon, and Annie put another in her hand, which was thrown, and this continued over and over again until Helen slapped Annie across the face, and what did Annie do? She slapped Helen back, and eventually Helen stopped acting out and started to learn. And she learned sign language, and eventually braille and was able to go to school and eventually got a college degree. An entire new world opened to Helen who developed her mental faculties and became a self-controlled intelligent being in whom the image of God was formed.

Now, who emotionally loved Helen more, the mother or Annie? Who functionally loved Helen more? And who did Helen come to have greater appreciation and affection for, and ultimately trust more?

Does what I describe here make Helen's mother evil? No, not at all. Her heart was that of love. It makes her ignorant. She really didn't understand what Annie was doing, and she really didn't want to harm Helen, and she didn't understand that emotional distress and discomfort and pain do not necessarily represent harm, it all depends on the reason and what is transpiring.

She didn't understand that once there is injury or brokenness of any kind there are no pain free options, there is only the option to heal or not heal, but the path of healing, of applying what restores to an injury or brokenness is painful, yet not harmful. But if we allow emotions or feelings to determine what is best, then we avoid doing what is healthiest because it doesn't feel best in the moment.

This is where truth and love must be united and together lead to wisdom.

The lesson focuses on the object lesson of God taking the role of a loving parent and we humans are His children and how God yearns and anguishes over His children. Then in the last paragraph, we have the following sentence,

- Even despite their infidelity, God continues to bestow His abundant compassion and mercy on His people and does so beyond all reasonable expectations. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 29.

My question, who are “His people”?

When you hear this term used, what do you think? I wonder if an unconscious misunderstanding has woven itself into our thinking and we conclude that God’s people are the Jews?

Are God’s people the Jews or are God’s people humanity, all the descendants of Adam and Eve?

- Are only the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob created to be images bearers of God?
- Are only the Jews loved by God?
- Did Jesus come only to save only the Jews? (John 3:16)
- In Old Testament times were the Jews the only ones God called His people?

Were the following God’s people?

- Seth
- Enoch
- Noah
- Melchizedek
- Job

Were any of them descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What about after Israel was established—any others who were God’s people?

What about Rahab and Ruth? Or, what about this passage:

- Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and **my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,**” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 25:8-9 NIV84, emphasis mine

Was king Nebuchadnezzar one of God’s people?

My point is that God called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s descendants for a specific mission or purpose, to be His witnesses, His lights, His bearers of truth, the ones through whom He would give the inspired written Word and through whom the living Word, Jesus our Messiah, would be born **so that** God could accomplish His design, intent, purpose and save the world, save the species human, save every single human being who responds positively to His grace—because we are all called to be His people.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God’s instruction to Hosea to marry a woman of harlotry and the actions of Hosea are to continue to redeem her and bring her back to himself. This was a living object lesson to

the people of God's love seeking them when they continued to leave Him and give their hearts to other gods.

Was Hosea's altruistic and selfless love and his actions to love and redeem and bring Gomer back sufficient in itself to produce a healthy marriage?

Can a healthy marriage be achieved by the love and actions of one of the partners?

What is required for a healthy marriage? Healthy people!

God cannot experience, achieve, or obtain restoration, reconciliation, unity with sinful humans as long as we remain unhealthy in heart and mind, as long as we live our lives controlled by the spirit of fear and selfishness. The way God obtains His goal of human beings being reconciled to Him in love, trust, friendship, loyalty, devotion—is by healing us, by restoring in us His original design, by eradicating lies, fear and selfishness and restoring in us truth, love, and trust.

This is the sealing of God's people, the cleansing of His bride, the cleansing of His sanctuary, the completion of the plan of salvation.

Read the third paragraph,

- In contrast to God's unwavering faithfulness, His people were repeatedly unfaithful, ultimately pushing God away and bringing judgment upon themselves and deeply grieving Him. God is compassionate, but never to the exclusion of justice. (As we will see in a later lesson, love and justice go together.) *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 30.

What do you hear in this paragraph?

How do we understand the terms judgment and justice?

Does the law lens we use impact our understanding?

If we accept the lie that God's law functions like human law, then what is judgment? It is judicial, a legal ruling of guilt for law-breaking and what is justice? The infliction of just punishments for unforgiving crimes.

But this is all fiction—it is fantasy, it is false, it is the fruit of believing Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we return to worshiping the Creator and understand God's law is design law, the laws built into the fabric of reality and which govern the operations of life itself, then we understand that God's judgments are His accurate diagnosis of what is wrong and His therapeutic interventions to heal and save. And God's justice is doing what is right or just, which is always to heal and save, never to destroy.

Before I share some historical quotes, any questions about this, any examples you can cite from Scripture?

- What was the purpose of the 70-year captivity? Why did it occur, what was its cause? What did God do?
- What was the purpose of the 3.5-year drought during Elijah's day?

What were God's judgments and justice in these circumstances?

And why were these actions on God's part recorded in Scripture? What is the purpose of Scripture? Does the Scripture have anything to do with advancing God's judgment?

- Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." John 9:39 NIV84.

What does this mean? How is Jesus' presence in the world for judgment, and a judgment that causes some that can't see to see and others who see to become blind?

Is this talking about a judicial process? Is it talking about God using divine power to miraculously heal some and miraculously blind others?

Consider this Bible commentary, do you agree with its interpretation of the passage, and what type of law is in operation in this description:

- A group of Pharisees had gathered near, and the sight of them brought to the mind of Jesus the contrast ever manifest in the effect of His words and works. He said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." Christ had come to open the blind eyes, **to give light** to them that sit in darkness. He had declared **Himself to be the light** of the world, and the miracle just performed was in attestation of His mission. The people who beheld the Saviour at His advent were favored with a **fuller manifestation** of the divine presence than the world had ever enjoyed before. **The knowledge of God was revealed** more perfectly. **But in this very revelation, judgment was passing upon men. Their character was tested, their destiny determined.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 475, emphasis mine.

What type of judgment is this? What is being described? Is it an external judicial process or is it the outworking of reality, people are demonstrating by their actions and choices who they trust, what they believe, what kind of person they are, whose methods they prefer, and ultimately on whose side they align with? What type of judgment is this? A few pages earlier in the same book, the author states it more clearly,

- **They thought themselves passing judgment on Christ; but in rejecting Him they were pronouncing sentence upon themselves.** "He that is of God," said Jesus, "heareth God's

words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." *The Desire of Ages* p 468, emphasis mine.

Here is another quote:

- The forbearance of God was very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments.**" *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 587, emphasis mine.

What type of judgment is this? If you have a child that takes your resources and goes into wild living, rejects all counsel, rejects all attempts to restore them to wellness and health, what does your judgment ultimately say? Let them go to reap what they have sown and perhaps their suffering will awaken them to the destructiveness of their choices. This is the story of the Prodigal son. This is God's judgment. His accurate diagnosis of what is wrong and His therapeutic judgment of the best course for Him to take that provides the greatest opportunity to bring the wayward to repentance.

Here is another quote:

- "I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;
 "They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them.**
 "It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." *Manuscript Release* vol. 14, p. 3, emphasis mine.

What is God's judgment? Is it judicial? What kind of law is in operation in this description?

Consider this quote:

- The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of**

God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control. *The Great Controversy* p. 35, emphasis mine.

How much of Christianity have also been tricked into teaching that God uses His power to inflict punishment for disobedience? That God's judgments are judicial and justice is God externally punishing? Imposed external law with coercive enforcement is the way creatures operate, it is Satan's lie about God.

Or consider this quote:

- We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** *The Great Controversy* p. 36, emphasis mine.

What kind of law is in operation? Do you notice there is nothing penal legal going on.

When we represent God's judgments and justice to be like human, imposed rulings with imposed punishments we are advancing Satan's kingdom and working against heaven.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the compassion of Jesus in His life, ministry, and sacrificial death.

Read the bottom green section,

- There is no greater example of God's great compassionate love for us than Jesus Himself—who gave Himself for us in the ultimate demonstration of love. Yet, Christ is not only the perfect image of God. He is also the perfect model of humanity. How can we model our lives after the life of Christ, focusing on the felt needs of others, and, thus, not merely preaching God's love but showing it in tangible ways? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 31.

Do you like the language of “gave Himself for us in the ultimate demonstration of love.”

Might there be a better word used here than demonstration—how about manifestation, fulfillment, accomplishment, outworking?

I agree that that what Jesus accomplished included demonstration of God’s love, but did it do more? In fact, if it was only a demonstration would it have had saving value? Would a demonstration alone be sufficient to save humanity from sin?

Consider an object lesson as an example, you have a child who overdoses on a drug and their actions have destroyed their liver and kidneys and they are dying. Will it have any saving value for your child for you to take an even higher dose of the drug and die of the same cause to demonstrate how much you love your child?

But, what if you donated your liver and kidney, which are perfectly healthy, to save your child—would that not only demonstrate your love but also provide what is necessary to redeem your child, save your child from death?

Yes, the life of Christ is a demonstration of God’s love, but it is much more, it is the outworking of God’s love in humanity for the eradication of the cause of death and the restoration of the cause of life into the species.

What did you think of this sentence,

- How can we model our lives after the life of Christ, **focusing on the felt needs of others**, and, thus, not merely preaching God’s love but showing it in tangible ways?

Are they saying we focus on what others feel they need? If they are saying this then they are teaching us to harm people and obstruct healing. Consider again Helen Keller, what did Helen Keller feel she needed? What did she actually need?

And consider this, what would happen in our society today if a licensed social worker slapped a deaf, dumb, and blind child across the face?

Take a moment and really consider this question?

Did Annie Sullivan do anything that was harmful to Helen? No. In fact, that action was an act of love that brought healing to the child.

But, if our society would arrest, punish, fine, censure, revoke the license of a social worker who did this what does that mean?

Our society is sick, it has disconnected itself from God’s designs and methods and far too many people have put in policies that are based on feelings instead of truth, empathy instead of objective reality,

and allowed all kinds of false theories and destructive practices to enter, which prioritizes an individual's feelings over objective reality.

Consider the following, a person feels inside themselves that they are a disabled person who is really paralyzed from the waist down, despite the objective reality that they are in a body that is perfectly healthy, so they go to a surgeon, identifying as a disabled person and ask for the surgeon to surgically sever their spinal cord and make them a paraplegic so they can live in the body of their true identity.

Do you think I just made that up from my imagination? I didn't, this is a group of people who describe themselves as transabled. <https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/transgendered-transabled-people-choosing-identify-handicapped>

Now, because these people really feel like their identity is that of a disabled person and they claim they are emotionally tormented being in a body that can walk, should we surgically sever their spinal cord and give them what their felt need is?

If we love such a person, what response should we provide for them? We should give them the mental health care that they need, for this is symptomatic of a severe identity disturbance. What about the people who are struggling with other internal identity disturbances that cause them to believe they are not in the right body for their identity, should we allow their feelings to determine reality and surgically intervene to mutilate their bodies in order to provide their felt needs? And what if such people are children? Should we allow the feelings of children to determine reality? Or are we to be lovers of truth? A person's feelings cannot change objective reality.

We are living in a very sin-sick world with very unhealthy methods and practices being taught that are corrupting hearts and minds. The only path to safety and health is the path of truth and love combined.

WEDNESDAY

Read the last three paragraphs,

- The “jealousy” of God is often misunderstood. If you refer to someone as a jealous husband or wife, you likely do not mean it as a compliment. The term jealousy often has negative connotations in many languages. However, in the Bible, divine jealousy has no negative connotations. **It is the righteous passion of a loving husband for an exclusive relationship with his wife.**

While there is a kind of jealousy that is against love (1 Cor. 13:4), according to 2 Corinthians 11:2, there is a good and righteous “jealousy.” Paul refers to it as “godly jealousy” (2 Cor. 11:2). God's jealousy is only and always the righteous kind and may better be spoken of as God's passionate love for His people.

God's passion (qana') for His people stems from His profound love for them. **God desires an exclusive relationship with His people; He alone is to be their God.** Yet, God is often depicted as a scorned lover, whose love is unrequited (see Hosea 1–3, Jer. 2:2, Jer. 3:1–12). **Thus, God's "jealousy" or "passion" is never unprovoked** but always responsive to the infidelity and evil people. God's jealousy (or "passionate love") lacks the negative connotations of human jealousy. It is never envious but always the **proper righteous passion for an exclusive relationship with His people and for their good.** *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 32, emphasis mine.

What do you hear? I want to be sure I am not misreading this, but do you hear that God's jealousy is provoked because He wants exclusivity with us and if we don't give Him exclusivity that makes Him jealous, but when God does it is a good jealousy, but if a human husband wants an exclusive relationship with his wife and becomes jealous if she goes after other men then that is a bad jealousy?

Does this sound contradictory or confusing? Because it is, because it fails to understand reality, design law.

God is not jealous for Himself. He is not jealous because He is not getting exclusivity, that is the jealousy of selfishness that seeks to control.

No, God is jealous *for* us, for our health, wellbeing, happiness, and eternal best good. Like my wife being jealous for my reputation and wanting to act in ways that protect me, not get something for her.

And this is directly connected to God's design laws built into reality and then later described by God in the Ten Commandments, the first two which read:

- "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:3-6 NIV84.

Why does God say this?

Because of the law of worship, by beholding we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18), or as Paul wrote when they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped images made with their own hands their minds became darkened, depraved, and futile (Romans 1:18-32), or as Jeremiah wrote,

- They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5 NIV84.

It is a design law of worship that we become like that which we admire, esteem, value, and worship. As the highest created beings on planet earth there is nothing on this planet we can worship that will advance and develop us. Anything on earth we worship degrades us. God says to worship Him, the

infinite one because as we worship Him we grow, develop, advance, on a continual eternal journey of development. He tells us to worship Him not for His rights or needs but for our good, because He loves us.

And this is why He is jealous—He is jealous for us, for our hearts and minds, our characters, our lives, our good, our eternal destiny. And He created us in His image and He knows that our choices in what we eat, how we think, the beliefs we hold the God we worship changes us, We epigenetically alter how our own DNA is expressed, and when we have children we pass along not only the DNA sequences, but the epigenetic markers that instruct the genes on how to express themselves, and these markers pass down 3-4 generations. God is jealous for our health and that of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren so He tells us to worship Him and live in harmony with His designs for life, but if we refuse to do so, then by His design, by the unchanging design laws of health and life built into the fabric of reality our choices will pass down and injure our children. But God's mercy and love will continue through all generations and all who turn to Him He will save and heal.

FRIDAY

Read quote from COL, which is the first paragraph,

- “All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus. He says, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden.’ Matthew 11:28. He bids you **exchange your poverty for the riches of His grace**. We are not worthy of God's love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and **His robe of righteousness**. **He presents us to the Father clothed in the white raiment of His own character. He pleads before God in our behalf**, saying: **I have taken the sinner's place. Look not upon this wayward child, but look on Me**. Does Satan plead loudly against our souls, accusing of sin, and claiming us as his prey, **the blood of Christ pleads with greater power**.” Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 8, 9, emphasis mine.

What do you hear? Are you tempted to think along lines of penal legal theologies? The view that God needs someone to plead with Him? The idea that we need to have our sins covered over to hide the reality of our sinfulness from the Father, the idea that in the judgment the Father doesn't look at the reality of our sinfulness but the sinlessness of His Son and declares us legally pardoned and righteous or legally justified while we remain unrighteous in reality hiding behind the legal cloak and payment of Jesus?

My first recommendation is to read widely, understand all 66 books of the Bible, bring all the inspired record to bear. Never draw conclusions from single texts or single passages. Define terms in light of the Bible and what is revealed there. Allow the author being quoted to shed light on the meaning of the

terms they use and how they understand them. So read widely from that source as well. And if you do, you will know immediately that there is nothing penal legal going on in this commentary, but a symbolic description of how design law works.

Without unpacking it all, we can clarify the meaning very quickly with one clear description later in the same book by the same author, so we can have confidence of what this author intended by the language of presenting us to the Father in the white raiment of His own character, consider this:

- Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. **This covering, the robe of His own righteousness**, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul... This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. **Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character**, and **this character He offers to impart to us**... By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness**. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 311, emphasis mine.

We see immediately that the author does not mean some legal process in record books, some covering over sin, some hiding things from the Father, but that Jesus presents us to the Father with His character reproduced within us. This is reality. This is healing. This is restoration to righteousness. This is having the mind of Christ, the law written on the heart and mind, being a partaker of the divine nature, having Christ living within. It is not judicial, it is actual.

What do we make of the pleading before God and the blood of Jesus pleading louder than Satan's accusation?

Note, the author does not say pleading to God, but before God. Jesus is the member of the Godhead through whom God accomplishes His purpose of defeating Satan, destroying sin and death, and saving humankind. Thus the battle between Christ and Satan occurs under the purview of the Father—Jesus does all things before the Father. But the battle between Christ and Satan is NOT FOR THE loyalty, love, trust, devotion of the Father. Christ and Satan are not battling to win the Father to their side. The Father is already on the side of Christ. But sadly, the penal legal view of things places the Father in a position where Christ needs to do something to win Him to the side of the righteous. This idea is evil and contrary to Scripture.

The Bible tells us, that:

- God so loved the world He gave us His son John 3:16
- That God is for us and therefore who can be against us? Romans 8:31
- That God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself 2 Cor 5:19

- Fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Col 2:9
- If we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father John 14:9

No, Jesus pleading before the Father was not to persuade the Father, then who? Who are the only beings in the universe left who are vulnerable to Satan's accusations and who need to be plead with to love and trust God? You and me, sinful humans. And Jesus, in His mediatorial role of our High Priest in heaven pleads before the Father the love and truth of God, symbolically represented by His blood, to YOU and ME and the Holy Spirit comes to us, not speaking on His own but only what He hears, the pleadings of Jesus, "my blood, my blood, don't you know how much I love you, how much I have sacrificed for you, and the health, happiness, healing, freedom, joy, peace, that can be yours if you trust me and allow my life, my blood, to flow into your heart and mind? Won't you trust me, won't you let me heal you, don't listen to the father of lies, my Father and I are One. Everything that is true about me is true about my Father. He is on your side, don't believe the lies that He is the source of pain, suffering, and death God is the source of life and if you trust me you can receive my life and live with us eternally."

This is what his happening in the description above. And how can I be so confident this is what that author intended? Because I read widely, and this is from the same author, consider what she describes here about the pleadings of Christ before the Father in heaven.

- **As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the "accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins.** He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ. Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power.** All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation.** *5 Testimonies* 470.1, emphasis mine. [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will**

obtain it; therefore he presents their sins before them to discourage them. [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner to the sinner to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt.** [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten them so THEY GIVE UP. So, to whom would Christ be pleading for them not to listen to the accusations of Satan?] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation.** [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself.** In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I cannot and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary.** [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, "My grace is sufficient for you." I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man.** [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan."** These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning." [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive

the comforting assurance: “**Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.**” [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. 5

Testimonies 470.2, emphasis mine.

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name. Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will have a most humble opinion of themselves.** [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.** 5

Testimonies 471.1, emphasis mine.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 5

The Wrath of Divine Love

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

When you hear the term *wrath* what comes to mind?

Does the law lens one views the Bible and the world through, the law one applies to how one understands justice and injustice, wrath and punishment impact our understanding of wrath?

The Bible speaks of God having wrath:

- The **wrath of God** is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Romans 1:18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But the also speaks of Satan having wrath:

- Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the **devil has come down to you, having great wrath**, because he knows that he has a short time Revelation 12:12 NKJV, emphasis mine.

Is there a difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

- Do we understand wrath to be the same functionally regardless of who the agent of that wrath is?
- Do we see God and Satan acting in similar ways, using similar powers, and causing similar outcomes?
- Do we differentiate God's wrath and Satan's wrath only by motive—for instance, saying that God wrath is the wrath of passionate love against injustice whereas Satan's wrath is angry selfishness, but they both use power to inflict harm, to punish their enemies?

Is Satan's wrath and God's wrath manifestations of the same power, methods, and actions? Absolutely not! In fact, **the wrath of God and that of Satan are exact opposites!** God's wrath functions exactly the opposite of how Satan's wrath functions, and we can only understand this if we understand reality, which is to understand God's design law.

If we view the world through Satan's system of government, that of a creature who cannot create reality so, instead, makes up rules that are enforced through external punishments, then we understand wrath to be the use of power to punish—to inflict harm upon those whom one is wrathful toward. Satan's wrath is the use of power to harm, to punish, to injure, to destroy.

Throughout human history, God has been shielding us from Satan's wrath. God has been holding back the four winds of strife (Revelation 7:1); He has been warring against Satan and the principalities of darkness (Revelation 12:7; Colossians 2:15); and He has been sending angel armies to shield us (2 Kings 6:17–20). We see this happening all throughout Scripture.

But God's wrath is the opposite—it is when He stops using power to protect us. God is the Creator, the builder of reality whose laws are the template of health and life. Breaking His laws directly causes us harm, and God, in harmony with His character of love, must expend His power, His energy, His resources, to hold at bay the harm that results from breaking His design-laws and to impart the healing solution. **While Satan uses power to injure, God uses power to heal, restore, recreate, renew, and rebuild.**

God's wrath occurs when He respects the choices of rebellious people and gives them what they have insisted upon—freedom from Him, His design laws for life, and His merciful healing power and presence.

This is exactly what Paul describes in Romans:

- The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse Roman 1:18–20 NIV84.

Paul then goes on to explicitly state three times and describe with outcome-based evidence that God's wrath is letting people go to reap what they have chosen when they break away from His protective care. In verses 24, 26, and 28, Paul says that God gave them up, or let them go, or handed them over to what they insisted upon—and the only outcome from breaking away from the Creator and Sustainer of life and health is ruin and death.

The scholarly commentary *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, published by Intervarsity Press, explains these verses beautifully:

- In some sense, God's wrath is built into the very structure of created reality. In rejecting God's structure and establishing our own, in violating God's intention for the creation and substituting our own intentions, we cause our own disintegration.

The human condition, which Paul describes in Romans 1:18–32, is not something caused by God. The phrase “revealed from heaven” (where “heaven” is a typical Jewish substitute word for “God”) does not depict some kind of divine intervention, but rather the inevitability of human debasement which results when God's will, built into the created order, is violated. Since the created order has its origin in God, Paul can say that the wrath of God is now (constantly) being revealed “from heaven.” It is revealed in the fact that the rejection of God's truth (Rom 1:18–20), that is, the truth about God's nature and will, leads to futile

thinking (Rom 1:21–22), idolatry (Rom 1:23), perversion of God-intended sexuality (Rom 1:24–27) and relational-moral brokenness (Rom 1:28–32).

The expression “God gave them over” (or “handed them over”), which appears three times in this passage (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), supports the idea that the sinful perversion of human existence, though resulting from human decisions, is to be understood ultimately as God’s punishment which we, in freedom, bring upon ourselves.

In light of these reflections, the common notion that God punishes or blesses in direct proportion to our sinful or good deeds cannot be maintained. ... God loves us with an everlasting love. But the rejection of that love separates us from its life-giving power. The result is disintegration and death *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, published by Intervarsity Press p. 543.

God is the God of reality—and His wrath is the exact opposite of Satan’s; yet, sadly, billions believe that God’s wrath is functionally no different than Satan’s. Billions have been led to believe that God’s wrath is when He uses His power to inflict pain, suffering, and torture upon His children as a response to evil and sin. This is a lie!

And this lie is the fruit, the unavoidable result, of believing another lie—that God’s law functions like human law; that is, imposed rules. If one believes that any part of God’s law is like human law, made up rules, then one always believes that God must use power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking, for if there is no punishment in this artificial system, then there is no “justice.”

Read last paragraph,

- God’s anger is always His righteous and loving response against evil and injustice. Divine wrath is righteous indignation motivated by perfect goodness and love, and it seeks the flourishing of all creation. God’s wrath is simply the appropriate response of love to evil and injustice. Accordingly, evil provokes God to passion in favor of the victims of evil and against its perpetrators. Divine wrath, then, is another expression of divine love. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice* p. 36.

Is God against the perpetrators? Or is God also for them? Does God only want to help the victims or does God want to help the perpetrators? Does God love only the victims and not the perpetrators? Are God’s actions only good for the victims or are they also good for the perpetrators?

When we think through design law we understand reality—that after Adam sinned, humanity, the species, Adam and Eve, from whom all humans are descended, became infected with a terminal condition and that without the Messiah promised in Genesis 3:15, no human could be saved from sin.

Thus,

- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 NIV84.

Did Christ die for the righteous or for the unrighteous—to provide the means of turning the unrighteous into the righteous?

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84.

So, God acted to destroy the world in the Flood—for whose benefit? Was that action good only for Noah, his family, and the righteous through history?

Could any human being be saved from sin without Jesus? No! What was the purpose of the Flood? It was to keep open the avenue for the Messiah. At that time in human history only one man and his family were still willing to work with God. The rest of the entire population were hardened against God. God's actions were not against sinners, they were for sinners.

But was it good for those individuals who died in the Flood?

Didn't God warn, through Noah, for 120 years of a coming flood, of their sinfulness, of their need to repent, of their need to turn to Him for salvation? How did they respond to the message of Noah? Ridicule and rejection.

What would allowing the flood to occur over a period of time (rain, fountains of water breaking through, etc.) allow for? Would it allow for some people to reflect and to reconsider? Would the evidence of what was transpiring confirm to them that Noah was right? Would that give the people outside the ark the opportunity to repent? Whether they actually repented or not isn't the question I'm asking here; rather, I'm saying that wouldn't a God of love give every opportunity for repentance even if that opportunity was rejected? And if so, then was the flood against them or for them, giving them one more evidence of the truth, one more opportunity to repent and be saved eternally?

Did the thief on the cross have many truths presented to him throughout his life—yet persistently rejected God, pursuing a sinful life until he ended up in a state of suffering leading toward death? Did that situation give him opportunity to reflect and repent, even though he was destined to die at that point? And didn't the other thief have the same opportunity at the Cross but rejected it? I think this represents the people who died in the Flood.

Thus, the Flood was a therapeutic action by God to not only keep open the avenue for the Messiah, but because God was still *for* those people who died in the Flood and He gave them every possible opportunity to choose life.

SUNDAY

Read first section of the lesson,

- The God of the Bible loves justice and hates evil. Sin and evil, therefore, provoke Him to passion, a passion expressed on behalf of those oppressed and abused, and even in cases in which one's evil affects primarily oneself. God hates evil because evil always hurts His creatures, even if self-inflicted. In the biblical narratives, God is repeatedly provoked to anger by what biblical scholars refer to as the cycle of rebellion. This cycle goes as follows:

The people rebel against God and do evil, sometimes even horrendous atrocities, such as child sacrifice and other abominations in His sight.

God withdraws according to the people's decisions.

The people are oppressed by foreign nations.

The people cry to God for deliverance.

God graciously delivers the people.

The people rebel against God again, often more egregiously than before. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 37.

This is well said and described. And what is revealed in this description? What kind of law is in operation? How does God's love function? Why does it function this way?

And why does God hate sin? For the same reason doctors hate disease—it destroys.

And if a person had a brain disease, encephalitis, dementia, that caused that person to act irrationally, impulsively, destructively, even say ugly things would we hate the person with the disease? Would we hate the disease and want to eradicate it?

This is exactly God's attitude—He hates sin and wants to eradicate it. And His anger is against sin, not sinners.

- Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. Isaiah 1:24-25 NIV84.

Read the second to last paragraph,

- According to the Bible, love and justice are intertwined. Divine anger is the proper response of love against evil because evil always hurts someone whom God loves. There is no instance in

Scripture where God is arbitrarily or unfairly wrathful or angry. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 37.

How do you understand God's love and justice being intertwined?

It is absolutely true that God is not arbitrary and not unfair, but why is it necessary to state this?

Is it because God has been presented as being arbitrary? What does arbitrary mean? Made up because one has the ability to make it up—these are all the laws of creatures, they are arbitrary. It is arbitrary to choose red for stop and green for go. It is arbitrary to choose speed limits at 55 instead of 65. There may be a rationale, or reason one imposes such laws, but they are still arbitrary—not inherent in the fabric of reality.

God's laws are not like our laws, they are the laws built into the fabric of reality and thus they are not arbitrary. They are how things work.

But, when we teach God's laws functions like human law, then we teach God's laws are arbitrary and God's punishments are arbitrary. For instance, why is it that the punishment for sin is death? Under the imposed law model—it is because God said so; He warned them, they sinned, justice requires God keep His Word, and impose the death penalty. But why is death the punishment, why not being locked out of Eden until repentance, or a severe spanking until repentance, why death?

Under design law, we know this is not arbitrary, we know death is the natural result of breaking the laws God built life to operate upon—and salvation requires removing that breach, that infection of fear and selfishness which causes one to sever their connection with God, who is the source of life. As Scripture teaches—the wages of sin is death Romans 6:23; sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15; those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8.

This is what Paul is teaching when he wrote,

- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 1 Corinthians 15:56 NIV84.

Sin, which breaks God's design law for life causes the sting of death, but the power that causes sin to cause death is the law, which is not imposed rules, but is design law, the protocols life is built upon by God. For instance, if one ties weights on their legs and jumps into the ocean, they are breaking the law of respiration, and the sting of that is death, what is the power to cause death? The law of respiration—one cannot live outside of that law. This is design law and it is not arbitrary, it is why Jesus had to die, to restore His living law of life into our hearts and minds. Just as the new covenant teaches.

There is nothing arbitrary about the punishment for sin, because the punishment, eternal death, is the natural result of what sin does—unless remedied, healed, by our Creator and Savior Jesus Christ.

But the imposed law model doesn't understand this and in fact teaches many arbitrary things.

MONDAY

Read the last two paragraphs,

- The Hebrew phrase translated “slow to anger” or “longsuffering” could be literally translated “long of nose.” In Hebrew idiom, anger was metaphorically associated with the nose, and the length of nose metaphorically images how long it takes for one to become angry.

References to God as “long of nose,” then, convey that God is slow to anger and long-suffering. While it does not take long for humans to become angry, God is exceedingly long-suffering and patient, and bestows grace freely and abundantly, yet without justifying sin or turning a blind eye to injustice. Instead, God Himself makes atonement for sin and evil via the cross so that He can be both just and the justifier of those who believe in Him (Rom. 3:25, 26). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 38.

How do we understand atonement and God’s justice and God justifying sinners?

What is atonement?

What law model do we explain it through?

If we have the human law model, atonement is appeasement, paying an appropriate penalty to turn away the wrath or anger of the one offended, in this case God. But any such teaching is pagan; it is not the truth of the Bible.

When we worship God as Creator, we recognize that when Adam sinned, God did not get changed, God’s law did not get changed, the condition of Adam changed such that rather than loving and trusting God, Adam distrusted God, was filled with fear and selfishness, and separated himself from God, fleeing from Him.

If God did not intercede and pursue Adam in love, Adam would have died from what sin does to the sinner. But Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus stepped in and became our substitutionary Savior, taking upon Himself a condition that was not naturally His own to provide us an outcome that is not naturally our own, not naturally what we would experience from our inheritance from Adam.

And what is our inheritance from Adam? A life, also known as a spirit, of fear, of selfishness, which is out of harmony with God’s law of love and trust. Thus, we are born in sin, conceived in iniquity because after Adam sinned, he only had a spirit of fear and selfishness to procreate with. Thus we are born dead in trespass and sin, we are not born legally guilty, we are born terminal. This is why God sent His Son to take up this condition and eradicate the spirit of fear, the cause of death, and replace it with a spirit of love and trust.

God's justice is doing what is right or just, and when we have design law of love, we recognize it is right and just to eliminate the cause of death, to destroy sin, to eradicate disease, to save and to heal, to restore to righteousness. Thus, God is just in applying His living law of truth, love, freedom through Jesus Christ who became human and was tempted in all points like we are and as a human chose only the path of love and trust and thus destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that His humanity inherited from Adam through Mary and restored the perfect sinless spirit of love and trust into the species created in Eden.

God was right and just in doing this for this is what is right, what love does. And in doing this He also provides the remedy to our sin condition. We can exchange our spirit of fear and selfishness for a new and holy spirit, a new heart and right spirit of love and trust. We can be reborn through trust and be animated, live a new life, no longer our old fearful selves living, but Christ living in us. Thus, with Christ's life, spirit, reproduced in us by the Holy Spirit we are set right, put right, with God, which is justification. God justified or put the species right with Himself in the person of Jesus Christ and God puts individual sinners right with Himself when those sinners are won to trust and surrender their lives, their spirits of fear and selfishness and are reborn with a new life of love, the life of Christ.

And when that happens, we who were far off are brought back into closeness, into intimacy, into love and trust with God—into at-one-ment (Ephesians 2:13).

That is what atonement is, reconciliation, unity, being at one. And the only way we could be at one with God again is for the barrier, the breach, the dividing wall to be removed and that barrier is sinfulness in us, our fear, our selfishness, our distrust of God. We must internalize the truth, the Word, the bread/flesh of Christ and be won to trust and drink the wine/blood, partake of the life, the spirit of Christ and be reborn. This is how we are reconciled, brought closed, atoned.

Here is my paraphrase of Ephesians 2:13-16:

- But now, you — whose minds were once far away, and who were practicing the principles of selfishness and survival-of-the-fittest — have been enlightened and brought near to God, and are in unity with Christ through the truth revealed when he died. For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and—via the exercise of his human brain—he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan's lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two—our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state—thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God's original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race—regardless of ethnic background—into loving unity with God... Ephesians 2:13-16 REM.

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs,

- While there are many inappropriate forms of anger, the Bible also teaches that there is “righteous indignation.”

Imagine a mother watching her three-year-old daughter playing at the playground and then, suddenly, a man attacks her daughter. Should she not be angry? Of course, she should. Anger is the proper response of love in such a circumstance. This example helps us understand God’s “righteous indignation.” *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 39.

From this example can you describe the nature of the mother’s anger? Who or what is the focus of her anger?

Is the anger righteous anger? What action would that righteous anger take if it was able, why would it take that action?

What if the man in the story was the mother’s oldest son who was deranged with schizophrenia and in state of psychosis? What if he was her oldest son who was high on drugs? What if he was her oldest son who wanted simply to do evil to his little sister?

Is the focus of the righteous anger different if the man is the son of the mother?

In both circumstances would the mother, if able, stop the man from assaulting the child? Would there perhaps be a motivational change and a shift in goals for the mother if the perpetrator is also her son?

Would the mother have anger in both circumstances? Where is the anger focused if the perpetrator is a stranger? Where is the anger focused if the perpetrator is her son?

Would the righteous anger seek to punish the man?

If the man is able to succeed in assaulting the child and the child does not die and is not physically disabled, but is exploited and abused by this man—who is damaged worse by his actions, him or the child?

I have many patients who were molested and abused as children and the perpetrator was never caught. They were never punished, and my adult patients struggle with chronic anger, resentment, bitterness and desire for vengeance. For my patients’ healing, when the time is right, we must discuss their heart, whether they will forgive their perpetrator or not, for the only way they can truly heal their heart is to, within themselves, forgiven. (This is not about seeking out someone and interacting with them.)

Many of my patients struggle because of the question of fairness, of the person never being caught, of the person getting away with it. But no one gets away with it, but most people don’t understand this because most of us are conditioned to think through human law, which is imposed rules and justice is

imposed punishments. Thus, if someone isn't caught and punished, there is no justice, they get away with it.

So, I ask my patients, “who do you think got *damaged* worse when your uncle molested you; you or your uncle?” All of my patients say, they did. So I give them this scenario, where God takes them to heaven and gives them one choice between two options. Option one, nothing changes in their lives, they continue their therapy session with Dr. Jennings. Option two, God says to them, “If you want I will let you trade lives with your uncle and you go around molesting kids, but no one will molest you.” Then I ask, whose life do you choose?

All of my patients have thus far chosen their own life. And I ask, “But I thought you got damaged worse?” Then a light goes off. When someone abuses us they can damage our bodies, our minds—the way we think, our emotions, but they cannot damage our souls, our consciences remain clear. But when we exploit and abuse others we damage our souls, sear our consciences, corrupt our characters. This is what sin does and no one gets away with it.

So if you were that mother, and understood this, and the perpetrator was your oldest son—what are you experiencing now?

Every human is God's child, He gets angry at what sin is doing to His children, and especially those who are practicing and choosing to sin—and His anger is focused upon the sin, wanting to eradicate the sin from the heart. And He is angry when the sinner refuses because it didn't have to end with their loss.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Throughout the Bible, God repeatedly displays His passion in favor of the downtrodden and the oppressed and His corresponding righteous indignation against the victimizers and oppressors. If there were no evil, God would not be angry. His anger is only and always against that which harms His creation. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 40.

What is God's anger against? Is it against a murderer? What about David—was God's anger against David, or was God still for David? Did God send Nathan to David to vent anger upon David, or did God send Nathan to redeem David, to bring David to repentance and save him?

So, what is God's anger against? It is against sin, not sinners. God's anger is like the anger of a physician whose child has cancer and the physician has a radiation knife that can cut out the cancer, that can burn out the cancer, that can completely destroy the cancer—and the father wants to do that with a vengeance. But the father is not angry at the child—even if the cancer is a brain tumor that causes the child to act in all kinds of inappropriate and even destructive ways. The father knows if it

wasn't for the cancer the child would never act that way, and the father knows if he can remove the cancer and restore health the child will be back to their loving self.

God wants to destroy sin out of the hearts and minds of people and restore in them the living law of love, the motivating spirit of love, the character of God, the mind of Christ and He knows that when this happens it results in us being restored back to His design and we will be loving and healthy beings reconciled to God.

But the Bible does use language that seems to suggest God does get angry at people: "The Lord's anger burns against his people" (Isaiah 5:25 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is this different than what the Bible describes here?

- "Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (Psalm 27:4 NIV84).
 - Is God cruel? Some present Him as such, is God's anger cruel or something else?
- "Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger" (Proverbs 29:8 NIV84).
 - If God gets angry is He not wise or is God's anger different in some way than human anger?
- "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9 NIV84).
 - If God gets angry is He now foolish or is God's anger the result of wisdom?

The Bible tells us to get rid of anger:

- "**Get rid of all** bitterness, rage and **anger**, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32 NIV84).
- "Now you must **rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger**, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips" (Colossians 3:8 NIV84).

How do we make sense of anger? How can we be instructed to get rid of all anger—and that anger is unwise and for the fools—yet God is described as getting angry?

The issue is the motive and the focus of the anger:

Righteous anger is always **motivated by love for people** and focuses on destroying the disease of sin in order to heal and save people.

Sinful anger is **motivated by selfishness** and focuses on punishing, hurting, exploiting, abusing, or destroying people, while perpetuating sin and selfishness.

Here is a simple example: Doctors have righteous anger toward pathogens (measles, polio, Ebola) and diseases (cancer, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, etc.). They seek to destroy all disease and pathology to heal and save people. But doctors do not have anger toward sick and dying patients.

Of course, doctors do get angry at activities that spread disease, especially when it is purposely spread—HIV-infected individuals who spread the disease with dirty needles or unprotected sex. But doctors still love the addict or prostitute who is spreading the disease. It's just that, while seeking to cure those currently infected, doctors also want to prevent the spread of the disease to protect all who are not yet infected.

Doctors also offer remedies for HIV and methods to stop its spread, but when a person refuses to take the remedy and to use methods that prevent infecting others, doctors get angry not only at the disease, but they also get angry at the refusal of the person who rejects the treatment. And how much greater the anger when the person who refuses lifesaving treatment is the doctor's own son or daughter?

Why are the doctors angry? Because they love the dying person and know they can save them, if the terminal individual would only let them.

This is righteous anger—never seeking to harm the person, but always motivated by love to heal and save, even when a person refuses healing and chooses paths that destroy themselves and others. This is the anger that God expresses:

As the Holy Spirit says:

- “Today, if you hear his voice offering healing and restoration, do not reject the true Remedy and darken your minds as you did in the rebellion in the desert, during the opportunity to partake of God's cure, where your fathers broke my heart by trying their own remedies and rejecting the truth which I brought and for forty years patiently tried to heal them. That is why I was so angry with what happened to that generation, and said, ‘Their minds continually reject the healing truth, and they refuse to practice my ways of health and live.’ So I granted them their persistent choice and said, ‘Since they refuse the truth—the Remedy I freely offer—they will never be able to enter my rest and get well’” (Hebrews 3:7–11 The Remedy).

Jesus also expressed anger at the hardness of heart that obstructed His healing love, but He still loved those whose hearts were hard:

- He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored (Mark 3:5, 6 NIV84).

And what does righteous anger, which is a manifestation of love, do to those who persistently refuse healing? It acts to restrain and to protect until the point that the person is healed or no further intervention will be helpful—and then love let's go, with sadness, and allows the person to reap what they have chosen: pain, suffering, and death. But it never retaliates. Love is angry, because it didn't

have to be this way! Righteous anger doesn't act to torture, inflict harm, or cause suffering and torment.

When Israel persistently rejected God and insisted on damaging their hearts, minds, and characters by engaging in idol worship, God—like a loving doctor whose patient refuses rehab and insists on injecting themselves with harmful substances—set them free to reap what they chose. Without God's protecting presence, enemies of all sorts came in and attacked them; they reaped what they had chosen, a life separated from God.

And God was angry, because it didn't have to be that way! Read last paragraph,

- Many other judgments that Scripture describes as brought about by God are explained as instances in which God “gives” the people over to their enemies (Judg. 2:13, 14; Ps. 106:41, 42), in accordance with the people's decisions to forsake the Lord and serve the “gods” of the nations (Judg. 10:6–16, Deut. 29:24–26). God's anger against evil, which will finally culminate in the eradication of all evil once and for all, stems from His love for all and from His desire for the final good of the universe, which itself has a stake in the whole question of sin and rebellion and evil. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 40.

This is well said.

But selfish anger is not motivated by love for others, nor is it angry at the suffering that sin is causing others. Rather, selfish anger is anger about the wrongs we experience—done to us or to what we value—not for love for others. Examples of this include:

- Anger at not getting our way
- Anger at having our ideas challenged or refuted
- Anger at having our projects and pursuits interfered with
- Anger at having our self-promotion thwarted or name maligned
- Anger at being assaulted, injured, robbed
- Anger at having been embarrassed
- Anger of envy—someone else getting what we have wanted
- Anger of perceived unfairness—someone else having more than we do
- Anger when someone questions our authority, disobeys, or disrespects us
- Anger at having not lived up to the family standard

This type of anger leads to selfish acting out—seeking to take from another, hurt another, make another person pay for the wrong they have done to us, even killing another in order to protect self, advance self, or promote self. It wants to ensure the wrong is punished, not remedied. This is the anger of sin and selfishness.

Actions that impair our higher cortical functions (the part of the brain behind our foreheads, where we reason, think, and love) increase our vulnerability to selfish anger—such things as intoxication, sleep

deprivation. Furthermore, having false beliefs that incite fear—including lies about God—increase the likelihood of sinful anger. Why? Because we process emotions and impulses in this area of the brain, and when this part of the brain is not operating at peak efficiency, we are more vulnerable to moments of angry outbursts, feeling it is the right and proper response to a perceived wrong. This gives insight into much of the Bible’s counsel on avoiding drunkenness, getting appropriate rest, eating healthy foods, forgiving others, avoiding physical conflict, and the importance of knowing God as Jesus revealed Him to be.

So if you find yourself angry, first inquire, with what am I angry? Is it because you love someone and you see them injuring themselves, or something injuring them, and you are angry at the pathology or process that is causing harm? Or are you angry at some wrong, actual or perceived, happening to you? Is your motive to act in love in order to save or heal another, or is your motive to act in vengeance—to punish or harm another?

When we find that our anger is selfish in nature, then we must go to God in prayer and ask for a new heart and new motives—to give us love and help us change your perspective and replace the selfish motive with the motive of love.

THURSDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- While divine wrath is a “terrible” thing, it is by no means immoral or unloving. On the contrary, in the Old and New Testaments, God expresses wrath against evil because of His love. Divine wrath is terrible because of the insidious nature of evil in contrast to the pure goodness and splendor of God. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 41.

Thoughts? What is meant by “terrible”? Do they mean it is just a bad thing, it would be terrible to experience God’s wrath, or do they mean that terrible is a quality of God’s wrath, it is terribly severe, it is terribly intense, it is terribly powerful?

Read the second paragraph,

- In this regard, love is essential to God; wrath is not. Where there is no evil or injustice, there is no wrath. In the end, God’s most loving action of eradicating evil from the universe also effectively will eliminate anger and wrath. And that is because never again will there be any injustice or evil. Forevermore, there will be only the eternity of bliss and justice in a perfect love relationship. There will never again be divine wrath because never again will there be the need for it. What a wonderful thought! *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 41.

How does God get an eternity of bliss and perfect love? How can God get a universe where there is no sin, no death, no rebellion, no fear, no exploitation? Can God get such a universe by force, by external law and law enforcement, by inflicting external punishments for sin? Why or why not?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Bob Lorren, long time member of Come and Reason class passed away Sunday morning Jan 12 from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. He leaves behind his wife Johnnie Lorren, who wrote our Domestic Violence Bible Study Guide, 3 children and 2 step children. Bob and Johnnie were good friends and strong supporters of Come and Reason Ministries. The family has asked that remembrances be made to Come and Reason Ministries. Bob was a loved example of Gods character in all he did. He will be greatly missed.

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2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 6

God's Love and Justice

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Throughout Scripture, love and justice go together. True love requires justice, and true justice can be governed by and meted out only in love. We are not used to thinking of these two concepts together, but that is only because both love and justice have been greatly perverted by humanity. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 45.

I absolutely agree that true love requires justice and justice and love go together—the question is what is justice?

Doing what is right or just? And what determines what is right or just? The law and thus a person's belief about love and justice is completely determined by their belief about the law.

Examples:

- It is right and just to punch someone in the face in a boxing match; it is unjust to do so in soccer, or in the supermarket. What makes the difference? The rules, the laws.
- It is right and just to drive 160mph on the Autobahn but unjust to do so on the US interstate—what makes the difference? The law
- George W. Bush in an address to the joint session of Congress September 20, 2001; nine days after the terrorist attack on the US, said:

“Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.”

What did the President mean by justice? Using power to inflict punishment upon the perpetrators.

Is it right and just to send law enforcement to hunt down criminals, terrorists, arrest them, bring them to trial, present evidence, and if found guilty to inflict punishment appropriate to the crime including, if the crime was sufficiently horrendous, death?

Under what law system is doing that justice?

This is human law, imposed law, Roman law, made up rules imposed by force.

Can this system of governance, using imposed rules, and imposed punishments, inflicted by external power—even if only the genuinely guilty are the only ones always found guilty and the falsely

accused innocents are always found innocent, even if it could be carried out with absolute accuracy and perfection—can such a system of governance achieve what God wants for His universe?

Well what does God want for His universe?

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Hebrews 8:10 NIV84.

What law?

- Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37–40 NIV84.

What law does God want to write on our hearts and minds?

Can God restore love and trust, friendship and loyalty, into hearts and minds by the use of external laws enforced through inflicted punishments?

Why or why not?

- “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6 NIV84

God cannot get love, trust, friendship, loyalty, devotion from His intelligent creatures by threatening them with inflicted punishments if they don’t give it.

This entire system of imposed law taught in Christianity is an infection that came through Rome, when Constantine converted Christianity Romanized, accepted the idea that God’s law functions like human law and justice is the use of punishment to kill the guilty.

Thus, people write things like this:

- I’ve always been baffled by those among us who deny the **penal substitutionary** aspect of Christ’s death, viewing it as merely a **dramatic expression of God’s love**, as opposed to a **legal payment for sin**. For them, penal substitutionary atonement goes like this: you break God’s law (sin), you face God’s wrath (death). Period. However, to spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). **In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead... Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn’t have to kill us.**

Clifford Goldstein, from Cliff's Edge *Adventist Review*, December 8, 2023 article Law, Freedom, Love emphasis mine; https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAlHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0

A couple of things to notice from this honest expression of his beliefs. He believes God's law functions like human law. He believes God's laws are made up rules and if you believe that then the only justice possible is the use of power to inflict punishment, penal-legal law enforcement through punishment. This theory is based on a lie but the people who hold don't realize they have been duped into believing Satan's lie about God's law.

The second thing to notice is that they always assert, and do so falsely, that those who reject penal substitution theology are teaching Moral Influence Theory. He alludes to this with the phrase, "viewing it as merely a **dramatic expression of God's love**." Moral Influence Theory teaches that Jesus died merely as a way to reveal God's love and win us back to trust but there was nothing objective, no reality-based action, just subjective influence on hearts and minds.

They always assert this because they do not understand God's law and not understanding God's law, having accepted the lie that God's law functions like Roman law, they falsely believe the objective aspects are legal in nature, taking punishment. If they would accepted Design Law, that God's laws are the laws life are built to operate upon then they would realize the truth of Scripture that Jesus not only came to reveal the truth that destroy the lies of Satan and win us back to trust, but He also had to eradicate the spirit of fear and selfishness from humanity and restore the spirit of love and trust into humanity.

And by *spirit* I mean the life giving principle that motivates to action and animates our being. When God breathed into Adam the breath, spirit, of life Adam became a living soul. That animating energy, spirit, was the spirit of love and trust. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they corrupted their spirits with fear and selfishness—this spirit is out of harmony with the very protocols, principles design, energy, life that God built all life to operate upon.

Adam and Eve would have died then if God didn't intercede and suspend the consequences by creating an artificial bubble of reality around Earth in which His natural life-giving glory is veiled. This Earth is currently shielded from the full glory of God that was bathing it before Adam and Eve sinned and which will bath it again in the new Earth as described in Revelation.

God gave Adam and Eve the ability to share their life—their spirit, their breath of life, their *pneuma* as the Greek renders it, and procreate children in their image. But having corrupted their spirits with fear and selfishness the only life, the only spirit, they had to share was one of fear and selfishness.

Thus the Bible teaches,

- For God has not given us a **spirit of fear**, but of **power** and of **love** and of a **sound mind**. 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV, emphasis mine

Thus we are all born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We are not born legally guilty, we are born lethally terminal with a condition that without intervention and remedy causes suffering and death.

To save the species human this infection of fear and selfishness must be removed and the spirit of love and trust must be restored.

Understand, the spirit of fear and selfishness is an unclean spirit, or as some translations render it an evil spirit. The Greek translated evil in some versions and unclean in other versions is *akathartos*.

- “Those troubled by evil (*akathartos*) spirits (*pneuma*) were cured” (Luke 6:18 NIV84).

The when Jesus cleansed the lepers He told them:

- “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed (*katharizo*). Luke 17:14 NIV84.

Kathartos is the root for Cathartic = purge or cleanse

Akathartos = uncleansed or unclean, like amoral means without morals

So Adam and Eve corrupted their spirits, made them unclean with fear and selfishness. Someone had to come and clean things up, their spirit temples were defiled, unclean, and the sanctuary, the temple had to be cleansed.

Jesus came and became a real human being descended from Adam, through David, through Mary and through that human connection He partook of the breath of life, the spirit of life, breathed into Adam.

God breathed one breath of life into Adam—every other human being shares that same breath of life. Eve was taken from living tissue. She was not made from mud and did not have a separate breath of life breathed into her. And all of us are descended from that same life, that same spirit, which is unclean, infected with fear and selfishness.

Jesus, through Mary, partook of that very life. For it is the only way God could save the humanity He created in Eden. God could have formed a new human from more dirt and breathed into that body a new breath of life and created a new person but that person would not be related to Adam, would not be part of the creation God created in Eden, but a completely different creation.

The only way to save the humanity created in Eden was for Jesus to partake of that life and replace the spirit of fear and selfishness with a spirit of love and trust.

And because the Father to Jesus’ humanity was the Holy Spirit, Jesus had a holy, sinless, clean, pure, undefiled, uncontaminated spirit. In other words, through the Holy Spirit a sinless, pure, undefiled,

spirit was the animating energy that joined with the living ovum that Mary donated and that living ovum carried the unclean life, the unclean spirit of fear and selfishness.

Thus in the humanity of Jesus He partook of our humanity, was tempted in all points like we are, and we are tempted by our own evil desires or feelings that come from our spirit of fear and selfishness (James 1:14), but Jesus had another spirit, the spirit of love and trust and in Jesus these two antagonistic energies, motives, drives, spirits were at war.

And Jesus always chose to only act upon the spirit of love and trust. Despite being tempted by fear and selfishness, as evidenced by His human emotions tempting Him in Gethsemane, He said no to that corrupt spirit and yes only to the spirit of love and trust and at the cross He exterminated, destroyed, purged, cleansed humanity from the infection of fear and selfishness and rose in a restored, healed, cleansed, purified humanity and thus became the second Adam, and as Hebrews says,

- During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he **offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears** [this is Jesus in His humanity battling against the spirit of fear and selfishness He inherited from Mary. He rejects that fear, that anxiety, that distress, and chooses only the path of love and trust] to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he **learned obedience from what he suffered** [As a human He had to choose with His human brain what spirit He would act upon, that of love and trust or fear and selfishness. By choosing love and trust He crucified the spirit of fear and selfishness and that caused Him to suffer, but in doing so His humanity learned, wired into His brain, the principles of love and trust and developed a mature sinless character] and, once **made perfect**, [Wasn't He always perfect? He was always sinless because though being born with the inherited spirit of fear and selfishness, He always chose to identify with and act upon only the spirit of love and trust. So He was always sinless. But Bible perfection is maturity of character and character cannot be created, it must be developed by the freewill choices of the individual. Jesus came, picked up humanity damaged by the infection of fear and selfishness and was tempted in all points like we are, but chose always only the spirit of love and trust and thus He learned, He developed a pure, holy, mature, sinless human character and purged, cleansed, humanity by destroying the infection of fear and selfishness at the cross. And then He became our source of salvation because He had achieved the Remedy to our terminal fear and selfishness sin-sick state] he **became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** [He only became the source of our salvation by completing the mission of curing the condition] and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. [The high priest who ministers the remedy into the hearts and minds of all who trust Him. Hebrews 5:7-10 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And none of this is penal-legal, it is actual, it is objective, it is what the reality of our condition requires in order to purge sinfulness from the species and restore holiness.

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages*

- The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. [Why does the law require this? For the same reason the law of respiration requires that we breathe. It is the law of love that life is built upon. Life does not exist outside of the protocols of God's design laws.] He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. [We cannot produce a sinless spirit of love and trust and develop a sinless mature character] But Christ, coming to the earth as man, [Jesus became a real human descended from Adam. He partook of our nature] lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. [He is the new head of humanity. The second Adam. The species human was saved, cleansed, redeemed, restored to perfection, made holy, justified, made right, put right in the person of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus the species human lives eternally—even if no other individual human were saved. But praise God, what Jesus did not only saved the species in His own personhood, but simultaneously provides the remedy, the cure, the means for every individual to be redeemed, to be healed, saved, cleansed, restored to righteousness.] Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. [Not through a legal payment.] More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, [This is real salvation, it is healing, restoring, cleansing, renewing, recreating, and there is nothing penal legal going.] a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Romans 3:26. Desire of Ages p. 762, emphasis mine.

Now compare directly, back to back, the two paragraphs, one from Clifford Goldstein published in the *Review* and this one from EGW, both are explaining how God can be just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus and quote that verse from Romans 3:26 to support their position:

- I've always been baffled by those among us who deny the **penal substitutionary** aspect of Christ's death, viewing it as merely a **dramatic expression of God's love**, as opposed to a **legal payment for sin**. For them, penal substitutionary atonement goes like this: you break God's law (sin), you face God's wrath (death). Period. However, to spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). **In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead... Or, to put it crudely, the Father killed Jesus so that He wouldn't have to kill us.** Clifford Goldstein, from Cliff's Edge *Adventist Review*, December 8, 2023 article Law, Freedom, Love emphasis mine; https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAIHx47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0
- The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the

attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Romans 3:26. Desire of Ages p. 762, emphasis mine

Do you see the infection of Roman imposed law into our church and theology? The penal legal theory of atonement is a lie built on a lie about God’s law and we cannot finish the work of sharing the final message of mercy, the message of the three angels as long as we are misrepresenting God as the source of pain, suffering, and death. We must return to worshiping God as Creator and this is only done when we understand that His laws are design laws and not imposed rules.

So we read from the Bible about God’s justice, which is based on design law, and it is always about delivering the oppressed not punishing the oppressor. Human justice is about punishing the wrongdoer, God’s justice is about healing and restoration by eliminating the cause of injustice, eliminating the spirit of fear and selfishness.

- Defend the poor and fatherless; **Do justice to the afflicted and needy.** Psalms 82:3
- Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. **See that justice is done — help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.** Isaiah 1:16-17 GNT
- **The Lord longs to be gracious** to you; he rises to show you **compassion.** **The Lord is a God of justice.** Isaiah 30:18 NIV
- This is what the Lord says to the dynasty of David: ‘Give **justice** each morning to the people you judge! **Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors.**’ Jeremiah 21:12 NLT
- Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will **freely pardon.** “**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,**” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**” Isaiah 55:7-9
- Describing the justice system of the OT, Ben Carson writes: “They focused on reparation to the victim rather than punishment or fines levied on the perpetrator...” Ben Carson *America the Beautiful*: Zondervan, 2012, p. 29.
- “We **are not** to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. **The sinner brings the punishment upon himself.** His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. **Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character,** and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, **cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.**” E.G. White, 1890’s, *1 Selected Messages*, p. 235

Read the second paragraph,

- These texts explicitly declare that God loves justice (Ps. 33:5, Isa. 61:8). In Scripture, the ideas of love and justice are inextricably linked. God's love and God's righteousness go together, and He is deeply concerned **that righteousness and justice be done in this world**. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 45, emphasis mine.

What do you think of this paragraph?

Why do you think they wrote, "righteousness and justice be done"? Are they suggesting these are two separate attributes?

Do you hear righteousness and justice the same or differently? In God are they different? Is God righteous and also just, or is God's righteousness actually justice?

Consider Romans 3:25-26:

- God presented him as a **sacrifice of atonement**, through faith in his blood. He did this to **demonstrate his justice**, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to **demonstrate his justice** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who **justifies** those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:25, 26 NIV84, emphasis mine

Now compare this to the GNT:

- God offered him, so that by his **blood [margin sacrificial death]** he should become the **means by which people's sins are forgiven** through their faith in him. God did this in order to **demonstrate that he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to **demonstrate his righteousness**. In this way God shows that he **himself is righteous** and that he **puts right** everyone who believes in Jesus. Romans 3:25, 26 GNT, emphasis mine

These two versions are translated from the same Greek—do they read the same? Do you hear them the same?

Both are linguistically honest for the word translated justice and righteousness is the exact same Greek word and can be translated to either English word. Because to do the just thing is to do the right thing and to be right is to be righteous and righteousness is the outworking or doing with is right or just and thus it is justice.

But do we hear these words, *Justice* and *Righteousness*, the same? No, Justice connotes a legal context, implies punishment, whereas righteousness connotes character qualities and connotes restoration and healing.

Those who believe God's law functions like human law will translate the Greek with preference to *Justice* whereas those who prefer God's character of love and design law will translate it as *Righteousness*.

Here is my paraphrase from the Remedy, which is based on Design Law understanding:

- God presented Jesus as **the way and the means of restoration**. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to **demonstrate that he is right and good** — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to **demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is**, so that he would also be seen as being **right** when he **heals those who trust in Jesus**. Romans 3:25, 26 REM, emphasis mine.

MONDAY

The lesson cites twice Psalm 92:15, which reads:

- This shows that the LORD is just, that there is no wrong in my protector. Psalm 92:15 GNT.

But what shows that the Lord is just? We have to read the previous verses, which were not referenced. But let's look at those verses:

I will read it from the Remedy, but you can read it in any version and this is what it says, but perhaps not quite as clearly:

- It is good to give thanks to the Lord and sing praise to your character of love, O Creator God, to live out your love in the morning and your never-changing truth in the evening, to have hearts in perfect harmony with you, like the music of the strings and the melody of the harp. All your works, O Lord, fill me with happiness; I sing for joy at the universe you have created. How magnificent are all your works, O Lord, how infinite are your thoughts! Psalm 92:1-5 REM
- Wicked and brutal people do not know, the foolish do not realize, that though the selfish may spring up like grass and evildoers may attain fame and fortune—having rejected the remedy and embraced selfishness, they will die eternally. But you, O Creator God, will be exalted in the hearts of the righteous forever. Unavoidably, your enemies, O Lord, unavoidably, your enemies—those who oppose truth and love—will perish; all the persistently selfish will be severed from you, the source of life. You have given me life and strength like that of a wild ox; the pure oil of your Spirit you have poured upon me. I see clearly the terminal condition of those who oppose me; I understand the selfish motives of those who rise up against me. Psalm 92:6-11 REM

- Those with hearts healed to love will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow mighty in godliness like the cedars of Lebanon; rooted in God's kingdom of love and truth, they will live in the dwelling place of our God. Though old, they stay healthy and bear much fruit; they retain their vitality and remain vibrant, proclaiming, "The Lord is perfect and righteous; he is my source of life, health and happiness, and there is nothing evil in him." Psalm 92:12-15
REM

What law is in operation in this Psalm? And what do the wicked not know? And how is it God's justice is done?

The lesson asks the following at the bottom of the page,

- Why does such a good God allow for so much of the evil that is in this world? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 46.

Can evil, rebellion, sin, be eradicated by the use of might and power? If it could, why didn't God use might and power in the beginning?

Can God get love, trust, loyalty and devotion by using might and power?

What is the only way for God to get loving, loyal, understanding friends? By truth, love, and freedom.

And this is why the Sabbath is so important, why it is such a wonderful gift God has given to humans. God created the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy, sanctified, when *He* rested; when God refused to use power to punish Satan and his followers; when God refused to force compliance; when God refused to use the justice of creatures, the justice of fallen sinful beings, but instead practiced and enshrined the law and justice of God—truth, love, and freedom. God presented the truth, built the law of love into the operations of all life, and then refused to use power to force His way but rested, stopped using power, and enshrined this method, this living law of love and liberty into the weekly Sabbath, which is built into time and cannot be removed from the operations of reality.

And He gives this to us not as a rule, not as an imposed law that we are required to keep or else we get into legal trouble and face inflicted punishment—that idea is Satan's lie intended to corrupt minds and cheat people from the blessing of the Sabbath. No, God gave humanity the Sabbath as a gift, it was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. It is a gift of truth, of evidence, of reality, of God's living law built into time, and those who Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy are only able to do so as they surrender to God, internalize and embrace the living law of God and have the new heart and right spirit of God, a holy spirit of truth, love, and freedom written into their identity and they practice God's law in how they live. They always leave others free, never coerce conscience, never use imperial law to seek to force people to comply.

Thus, evil exists in the world because God can only win and make the universe secure by truth, presented in love, while leaving others free. People must freely choose what spirit they prefer and they will develop their character in harmony with the spirit they prefer. Will they choose the spirit of love

and trust, or fear and selfishness. This is the ultimate question and the Sabbath is a sign post, a marker, a memorial, a weekly event that reveals the Spirit of truth and love and gives us an opportunity to say no to the spirit of fear and selfishness and rest in trust with God knowing that God will not use His power to coerce, to inflict punishment, but leaves all beings free. And some use their freedom to hurt others and ultimately destroy themselves.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- In Malachi 3:6, God declares, “ ‘I am the Lord, I do not change’ ” (NKJV). While some read this part of the verse and take it to mean that God does not change in any way whatsoever, the rest of the verse and its immediate context shows that the changelessness of God affirmed here is God’s moral changelessness. The rest of the verse indicates that God may change relationally, for God says: “ ‘Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.’ ” And in the very next verse, God proclaims to His people, “ ‘Return to Me, and I will return to you’ ” (Mal. 3:7, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 47.

I agree with the lesson that when the Bible speaks of God being changeless, being the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow it is speaking of His character, His methods, principles, that God is love and God is truth and God is good, righteous, faithful, trustworthy, and moral and this never changes.

But can anyone think of one obvious and reality-based change that God has experienced? Did God experience a change when Jesus became human? Not a change in character, morality, but a change in being. Jesus became a real physical human being, and Jesus gave up some of His divine abilities to achieve this, such as omnipresence, the ability to be everywhere at once. This is why He told His disciples that He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would not speak on His own but only what He hears. The Holy Spirit is Jesus’s representative on Earth and is working in the hearts and minds of people to bring the pleas and love of Jesus to people. It is Jesus standing at the door of hearts knocking through His representative the Holy Spirit.

So isn’t this a change that occurred in their being because there was no change in their character?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Can God “repent”? If so, what would that mean? We have seen that God’s character never changes. However, some biblical texts speak of God as “repenting” or “relenting.” At least for humans, repentance involves recognition that one has done something wrong. How, then, can

some biblical passages depict God as “repenting”? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 48.

Genesis 6:6

- And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Genesis 6:6 KJV

But all modern versions render it differently:

- And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Genesis 6:6 NKJV
- The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. Genesis 6:6 NIV84
- The LORD regretted that he had made humankind on the earth, and he was highly offended. Genesis 6:6 NET
- The Lord grieved at their suffering, and his heart ached over humanity’s terminal condition. He also grieved at the action his love must take in order to slow the spread of sin and to keep open the avenue for the Messiah to come and save the human species. Genesis 6:6 REM

What about God relenting from what He said He would do? What does this say about God?

What does love that seeks to heal and restore do with people who are fickle, unreliable, inconsistent, follow the prescription for a while but then go back into destructive living?

Does a loving person have to adapt, bring a variety of different interventions to bear that are designed to influence people to choose for themselves the path of life and reject the path of death?

So does God change, or because God’s character of love, goodness, faithfulness, truth never changes He constantly changes His interventions, approach, actions to meet the needs of His sick children?

But what might children think if they see one child getting one consequence and another child getting a different consequence? Might children think God is unfair?

Might an older brother who stayed and worked hard on the farm think it is unfair for a younger brother who left home for the party lifestyle to get a celebration and restoration when he finally comes home?

Why would the older brother think this is unfair? Because he focuses on imposed law, and rule-keeping is supposed to be rewarded, but rule-breaking, disobedience, disrespect, is supposed to be punished. The younger brother disrespected the father, didn’t obey the father’s wishes, and therefore, according to the imposed law view, he deserved punishment.

But the design law reality is that the younger brother had finally given up his disease, rejected sickness, and came home to receive the remedy, the cure, to be healed. How happy all mature people should be when a sick person accepts healing, when a sinner accepts Jesus.

THURSDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- Matthew 5 describes God's love as perfect love. Imperfect love is the love that loves only those who love you. But God loves even those who hate Him, even those who position themselves as His enemies. His love is complete and, therefore, perfect. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 49.

God loves His enemies, those who reject Him. Does that mean God loves Satan? Does God love the people who reject Him and are eternally lost?

In His heart, yes, God's attitude is one of love toward those who reject Him. But functionally His love cannot enter them because they close their hearts and reject Him, thus He cannot in function love them, connect to them in love because they close their hearts and minds to Him.

And what about God's justice do to those He loves but who reject Him?

How does love function in the end with the destruction of the wicked?

Does the law lens one uses impact the answer?

Very simply, if you have an adult child that you love and who is choosing to break the laws of health, say they have an addiction and they refuse rehab, refuse all pleas from you, and the envoys, intercessors, representatives that you send, and they have suffered various consequences, their body is getting sicker, but no matter what you try to do to save them, they refuse treatment, they choose their addiction—what is the only loving action you can take? What is the only just action you can take?

When we understand God's laws are the laws that life is built upon, the only loving action God can take is to let those who prefer sin and refuse to repent go, and that is also the only just action God can take. And when the source of life let's go, what is the outcome? Death, separation from God results in death. God does not have to use power to inflict death, God must use, and has been using, power to hold death at bay and give people the opportunity for repentance.

EGW describes it beautifully in *The Great Controversy*:

- God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin.** [what do you think that declaration is?] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering

and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [What do you hear? What is His method? Why will God not clear the guilty? What law lens do you see it through, imposed or design?] Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. **The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.** (The Great Controversy 541.2) [What does this mean? Do you hear retributive justice and think using power to inflict harm, pain, punishment? This would be human law, imposed law, Satan's view. So, let's keep reading and see how this author applies these words to God, what law is applied in bringing about this retributive justice, how it works exactly.]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. [If this is true, can God then be the source of inflicted suffering, punishment and death? If you understand how reality works, you recognize that the human imposed law understanding of retributive justice with inflicted pain and death is incompatible with this very next statement. It is impossible to get anything other than slavish obedience from inflicted punishment; inflicted punishments do force the will, and it is impossible to get love and trust by threatening to kill people who do not love and trust you. Thus, immediately this author is calling every person who is still capable of thinking for themselves, every person who is not blinded by the lies of Romanism and the imposed law system, to stop, think, and inquire—how can God apply retributive justice and at the same time not be forcing people? And that is only possible when we understand design law.] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence.** [What reason would God have us obey? Not fear of punishment, but appreciation of His character of love, which cannot exist if God is the source of inflicted punishment. It is Satan's view that God must punish sin because it undermines love. DA761] And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. (The Great Controversy 541.3)

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. [What are the principles of God's character? Do these principles coerce, compel, or torture?] Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [Does love seek to inflict pain and suffering to torture and punish? But notice what is describe next as love for our enemies] **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What is justice? Doing what is just or right, and what determines what is actually just or right? The law—so it comes back to how one understands God's law functions. Those who accept the Roman lie that God's law is like human law believe the lie that God's execution of justice is the infliction from God of pain and death. But, when we return to worshiping the Creator and realize His laws are design laws,

such as the law of love, liberty, worship and more, we realize that God uses power to heal, to save, and when people refuse Him, then God uses power to minimize pain, minimize suffer, and to stop the torment of those who won't allow Him to heal them. Thus, God's justice is like the parent whose child is in liver failure and refuses to be healed, the parent does not seek to prolong and protract the suffering, but allows the suffering to end. Notice what is described next.] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't God make them happy? Because they refuse to participate in His methods, they refuse to allow Him to heal them. Love cannot be forced and thus God cannot use might and power to make them happy.] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. [How do they make void His law? By replacing it with a false law—imposed law. Think how sad it will be for those legal Sabbath keepers who wouldn't enter Pilates house while they sought to kill Jesus. Law keepers, but the wrong law, how many today are in the same situation?] While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided.** [Who determines their destiny? Is it a heavenly judge making a legal ruling in a heavenly court, or the decision that of the sinner who permanently hardens their heart to the work of the Holy Spirit?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** [These are rhetorical questions, meaning that God will not do this, God has the power to do this, to artificially keep people alive and chain them to His side. But He won't use power in this way, why? Because it would inflict torture and pain and God is the source of healing and life. Note what comes next...] (The Great Controversy 541.4)

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why are they not prepared? Is it that they don't have the right blood, don't have the right legal payment, don't have the right robe to hide behind so the Father won't see their true self? Or is it that they don't have the right heart, mind, character, within them?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** [How did it become fixed? Who fixed it there? If God "judges" their characters as fixed in sin and beyond saving, does that mean God's judgment is what makes their characters fixed in sin or is God's judgment simply the accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to do to themselves?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? (The Great Controversy 542.1)

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with

hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; [Why not? Because God uses divine power to prevent them, to torture them, to inflict harm upon them, or is their condition incompatible with God's design for life?] years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven;** but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** [Why are they unfit? Is it that they don't have the right legal payment in record books, or is it something actually incompatible with life within them? Notice why they are not fit] **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** [This is huge, what do they experience as torture? Purity, holiness and peace! Is this God using His power to cause pain, to inflict suffering, is there something coming out from God other than goodness, mercy, love and truth? It is their condition which experiences goodness as pain, purity as torment, holiness as suffering. The torture happens because of sin in them, not as an infliction from God!] **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What do the wicked actually want? Separation from God! Why do they want it? To be at peace, to stop their suffering; So, in this situation what is the just action for God to take, what is the merciful action for God to take? Is there a difference between justice and mercy? Notice the next sentences] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** (The Great Controversy 542.2)

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [This is design law, this is justice and mercy, and justice and mercy rightly understood is always an expression of God's character of love and does the same thing] (The Great Controversy 543.1)



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 7

The Problem of Evil

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

How would you describe evil?

I have heard a variety of explanations, one explanation states that essentially every culture of the world recognizes evil as the exploitation of others. I think we would all agree that exploiting people is evil. But does the idea, the concept, of evil include more than purposeful exploitation?

- Is evil a substance?
- Can evil be transferred from one person to the next, like a germ, like a substance?
 - Could Satan who is evil, for instance, smear some evil on Jesus and thereby make Jesus evil?
 - Can an evil person smear evil on another person and make them evil?
 - Can an evil angel smear evil on a person and make them evil?
 - If evil cannot be transferred from one person to another like a substance, then why do so many theologies teach that all the sin and evil of every person was transferred to Jesus at the cross?
- Can one person do evil to another person?
 - And when evil is done to another person can evil spread in that way how?
 - When evil is done to an innocent the innocent will experience temptation. They will experience increased fear and a desire to protect self, selfishness. They will be tempted to hate, resent, believe lies, retaliate, choose to use evil methods to hurt their assailant. And if they choose to embrace the methods of the evildoer in dealing with the evildoer, what happens to them?
 - So how does evil spread?
 - And what are the weapons God has given us to stop the spread of evil?
 - Truth stops the spread of lies
 - Love stops the spread of fear and selfishness, this is why Jesus said to love our enemies and pray for them who abuse us.
 - Forgiveness stops the spread of resentment, hatred, jealousy, envy
 - But does forgiveness make the evil untrustworthy abuser trustworthy? No, it only stops the spread of the evil in the hearts of the victims. We forgive and we also don't trust the untrustworthy
- If evil is not a substance what is it?
 - Is it an attitude, method, desire, motive?
 - Is it anything that is out of harmony with God, God's design laws, methods, principles, and will?

- Is it rebelliousness, selfishness, fear?
- The Tree in the Garden was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and *Evil*—what does it mean to know evil?
 - Does knowing evil mean cognitive knowledge?
 - If you cognitively know that Eve was Adam's wife, is that the same as knowing her as wife?
 - Is *knowing* evil the same as knowing what it is?
 - Knowing evil is knowing it in heart, in practice, in attitude, in motivation, drive, in spirit—it is having an evil spirit, or evil animating energy. So one is no longer animated by love, truth, trust, goodness, kindness, gentleness, mercy, grace, but is animated, motivated, moved to action by fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, anger, malice, rage, lies etc.
- Can evil be passed down from one generation to another?
 - What is meant by sins passing down 3-4 generations?
 - Can people pass down their life, their spiritual energy?
 - And if they are animated by hatred, jealousy, discord, bitterness, resentment, racism, sexism, can they pass along to their children these evil traits?
- Can evil effect animals and plants and the environment?
 - Paul wrote that all nature groans under the weight of sin
 - Can animals be subjected to evil treatment?
- Are evil and acts of sin the same?
 - Can someone have evil in their heart and mind without committing an act of sin?
 - Can a person lust without committing the act of adultery?
 - What is the true problem of sin, the act, or the evil in the heart that leads to the act?

What is the cause of evil?

Consider these verses:

- The Israelites did **evil** in the eyes of the LORD; **they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs**. Judges 3:7 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Judah did **evil in the eyes of the LORD**. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. **They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles** on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. 1 Kings 14:22–24 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What made this evil? Was it the behavioral perversity that made it evil, or was the behavioral perversity the fruit of the evil? Then what was the evil? It was replacing love and worship of our Creator God with that of false gods—and why is this evil?

Let's look at some more texts to see if it becomes clear why this is evil.

- They **worshiped other gods** and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city **they built themselves high places in all their towns**. They **set up sacred stones and Asherah poles** on every high hill and under every spreading tree. **At every high place they burned incense**, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They **did wicked things** that provoked the LORD to anger. **They worshiped idols**, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "**Turn from your evil ways**. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 2 Kings 17:7–13 NIV84, emphasis mine
- **They sacrificed their sons and daughters** in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and **sold themselves to do evil** in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 2 Kings 17:17 NIV84, emphasis mine
- They **sacrificed to demons**, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. Deuteronomy 32:17 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- They sacrificed **their sons and their daughters to demons**. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they **sacrificed to the idols of Canaan**, and the land was desecrated by their blood. Psalm 106:37–38 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The people of Israel must no longer be unfaithful to the LORD by killing their animals in the fields as sacrifices to the **goat-demons**. Leviticus 17:7 GNT, emphasis mine.

Why does God say we are to have no other gods before Him? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed.

- They worshipped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2.5 GNT.

Only by worshiping Him, the infinite one, do we advance, develop, mature, and ultimately fulfill God's purpose for us and be images bearers of God. It is Satan's goal to destroy the image of God in human beings and place his image where God's should be.

It is evil to destroy that which is healthy and good, and it is evil to destroy human beings, created in the image of God. False worship destroys love, goodness, compassion, nobility of character, kindness, mercy, patience, tenderness, grace, truth out of the heart, mind, and character of people and instills fear, selfishness, greed, lust, cruelty, abuse, murder, envy, strife, hatred, licentiousness and every demonic attribute.

It is evil to have other gods before God because it destroys the image of God in us, degrading us, ultimately resulting in our eternal death.

Does this truth give insight as to why the following was evil?

- The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the **evil of asking for a king.**” 1 Samuel 12:19, NIV84, emphasis mine.

Why was it evil for them to ask for a king? What was the motive? Was it love and trust in God or distrust? What was the motivating energy, spirit, that led them to ask for kings? And what was the result?

What do you make of this passage?

- **So Solomon did evil** in the eyes of the LORD; **he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.** 1 Kings 11:6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah, but Solomon is described as doing evil whereas David is not, what is the difference?

But David prayed,

- For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and **done what is evil in your sight...** Psalm 51:3–4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David confessed to having done evil, then why is Solomon chastised by God for doing evil, but God says David followed Him completely?

David goes on to write in the same psalm:

- Surely I was **sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.** Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Psalm 51:5-6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David’s sin, his evil deed, came from the infection of the spirit of fear and selfishness with which he was born. His failing there was a symptom of the sin condition, but David never turned to other gods, David never sought sin-treatment from other sources, David wasn’t trying to save self through law-keeping, his own goodness, idols, sacrifices, or ritual. David had a heart, a spirit, for God and this event in his life was the symptom of yet to be treated and removed fear and selfishness in his heart. And once it was fully revealed to him, he went to God for a new heart and right spirit. Thus while David suffered from the same evil, sinful, condition that all humanity suffers from, David did not turn away from God to other gods nor to self to try and justify himself as righteous. Thus, David, always turned to God, always followed the Lord, whereas Solomon did not, as the following describes:

- Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been **like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes**. You have done more **evil** than all who lived before you. **You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal...** 1 Kings 14:7–9 NIV84, emphasis mine

And what is the result of choosing evil, choosing anti-love, rejecting God, His design law methods, the truth of His character of love?

So are the sinful actions the true evil or the result of the evil? Then what is true evil? The distrust of God that leads us to have a spirit of fear and selfishness that subsequently leads us to apply, prefer, choose the methods of Satan, we reject truth, love, freedom and embrace imperialism, coercion, control and ultimately external abuse of others.

And if we do not receive God’s cure, if we are not reborn with new hearts and right spirits, like David, and have God’s living law written upon our hearts and minds, then what does evil do to us?

- **Evil will slay the wicked**; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. Psalm 34:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Do not fret because of **evil men** or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass **they will soon wither**, like green plants they will soon die away. Psalm 37:1–2 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What kind of law is described here? Is evil evil because it breaks a rule that causes legal trouble with God and then God must use power to inflict legal punishment, or does evil actually destroy and that is why it is evil?

- **Your wickedness will punish you**; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize **how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God** and have no awe of me,” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. Jeremiah 2:19 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is being described here? Is God saying if they don’t do good God will use power to harm them? Why does evil result in bitterness? And why is it evil to turn from the Lord? Because the Lord is the source of life, of health, of healing and to turn from Him is the cause of pain, suffering, and death.

How does Satan lead people into evil?

- You love **evil** rather than good, **falsehood** rather than speaking the truth. Psalm 52:3 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Satan is the father of lies and lies believed break the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness. As Satan gets people to believe lies they will be less capable of making healthy choices and thus will deviate from God's design laws for life and suffer various negative results, that suffering will cause more anxiety and fear, which will lead to greater desire for security and if they don't turn to the Lord, then they will ultimately use various other evil methods, harmful methods to try and comfort self, turning to toxic substances to feel better, or destructive behaviors—porn, overeating, gambling, thrill-seeking to try and feel better, but this only causes more harm. Or they employ the methods of control, force, power, and other evil actions to try and protect self at the expense of others.

Satan uses other methods than lies and deception to lead people to do evil:

- Refrain from **anger** and turn from **wrath**; do not **fret—it leads only to evil**. Psalm 37:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? How does anger, wrath, and fretting lead to evil?

James tells us that our evil desires or feelings lead us into temptation—temptation is not sin, but if we don't choose truth and love, and instead choose to gratify the evil desires, the anger, feelings of vengeance, or worry and fret, then those feelings will take control of our imagination and we will begin to fantasize about revenge, hurting those who hurt us, making our enemies pay, which hardens our heart, or we will worry about the future, about our safety, about what will happen and the worry, increased fear, leads away from love and trust to survival methods of coercion and control.

We saw this during COVID when fear caused many good people to embrace the power of the state and seek to force others to do something so they could feel safe.

What does the following describe?

- The **evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him**; the cords of his sin hold him fast. Proverbs 5:22 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The **righteousness** of the upright **delivers** them, but the **unfaithful are trapped by evil desires**. Proverbs 11:6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What we choose reacts upon us changing our characters, rewiring our brains, and over time we become changed, we develop either healthy or unhealthy habits by what we choose to embrace and practice.

Habits can be behavioral, such as habits of hygiene, or worship, or exercise. But we can also develop habits of thinking, of how we interpret the world around us. Such habits, developed from upbringing, education, and previous choices in thinking and believing that are wired in and become automated neural pathways that fire without our active decision-making or immediate contemplation and give interpretation, meaning, relevance to events which may or may not be in the events themselves.

There are events and there are interpretations of events. Our interpretations if not prayerfully, intelligently, and truthfully made are vulnerable to old habits, some of which may be evil.

For instance—prejudice, racism, sexism, nationalism are learned biases that become filters upon which people interpret events.

Or other automated pathways that interpret events against the self—“I am no good. No one likes me. I am ugly, stupid, worthless, fat, men are not safe, churches are evil etc.” And people interpret neutral events with some internal automated negative impact.

A Bible example: an event—God thundering at Sinai, resulted in two different interpretations with two different conclusions about God—because of the different states of the hearts and minds of those involved. The people interpreted the event as God being a threat to them, someone who they could not trust and if God had direct contact and interaction with them then He would kill them and thus they requested an intercessor to stand between them and God. They asked that God talk to that intercessor and then that intercessor talk to them. But Moses was there and experienced the same event but had a different interpretation. He said that there was no need to be afraid of God, that God was not against them and only wanted to inspire and motivate them to stop hurting themselves by worshiping false gods.

In other words, God was seeking to get them to turn from evil—the evil of worshiping demons and turn to the good of worshiping Him, the God of love. But the people interpreted the event in a false light, they put a false understanding on God and His actions and taught that God was someone to be terrified of and distance themselves from, someone whom people needed an intercessor to protect them from. And the entire mediatorial priestly ministry was started because of their misinterpretation of events and false beliefs about God who wanted to talk to them directly, but they misunderstood.

This same evil is taught about God in many churches today. That we cannot go to God directly. That we need an intercessor to stand between us and God. That if we don't have that intercessor to pay Him with innocent human blood then God will lash out and kill us. And God is calling for a people today to be like Moses to stand up and let people know that there is no reason to be afraid of God. That God is for us and will save and heal all who trust Him.

Solomon wrote that there are seven things the Lord hates—why are these seven things hateful to the Lord and what makes them evil?

- These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: (1) A proud look, (2) A lying tongue, (3) Hands that shed innocent blood, (4) A heart that devises wicked plans, (5) Feet that are swift in running to evil, (6) A false witness who speaks lies, (7) And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19 NKJV

Are these seven things evil? If so, what makes them evil?

- What did pride cause Lucifer to do? And what was the result to him and all who trusted him?

- What do lies do to love and trust?
- What happens to the person who commits murder? What happens in their heart and mind?
- What happens in the person who plots wickedness?
- What happens in the person who does evil?
- What happens in the person sows discord and then to the community where it is sown?

Do all these things cause legal problems in the heavenly court, or do they actually destroy the image of God in people, hardening hearts, searing consciences, corrupting characters?

What does this text mean?

- To **fear the LORD is to hate evil**; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Proverbs 8:13 NIV84 emphasis mine

Why is it that to fear the Lord means we hate evil? What does fear mean? Awe, revere, respect and thus those who admire, revere, respect the Lord will hate evil because it is the antithesis of good, and all good comes from God.

- **Woe** to those who **call evil good and good evil**, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Isaiah 5:20 NIV84, Emphasis mine.

Why? Why is woe to these people? What does woe mean?

The dictionary defines it as profound grief and distress, why would those who call evil good and good evil experience profound grief and stress? Is it because they get into legal trouble, or because evil violates the laws upon which life is built and the only result is injury, loss, grief, and stress?

- But **your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.** [What does this mean? What does it mean that God won't hear? It is simple—God is love and God wants only good for us, so He doesn't "listen" respond positively to the requests from people that will harm them. Like a parent whose 6 year old says after having repeatedly told no and why no still says, "daddy, can I have a cigarette" the father will say, "I'm not listening to that."] For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched. Their cobwebs are useless for clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their **deeds are evil deeds**, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their **thoughts are evil thoughts**; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. Isaiah 59:2–8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But the righteous shun evil:

- Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and **shuns evil**.” Job 1:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does it mean to shun evil? It means we turn to God in trust embracing and practicing His design law methods into our lives.

We are in a world filled with evil—but God’s grace still abounds. We must decide, what spirit will we identify with and choose to be animated by, the spirit of fear and selfishness or the spirit of love and trust.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson spends a significant amount of time exploring the question of why God, who is good, would allow evil to exist. Thoughts?

In Wednesday’s lesson it presents the reality of Free Will, read second paragraph,

- The freewill defense is the view that evil is the result of the misuse of creaturely free will. God, then, is not to blame for evil, because evil is the result of creatures misusing the free will that God has given us for good reasons. Why, however, would God give such free will? In this regard, C. S. Lewis once wrote that “free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other. . . . And for that they must be free.”—*Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p. 52. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 56.

To me this is the only answer to why evil exists—because God is love and love requires real freedom. God could have made sophisticated robots, but robots cannot love. Thus, God created beings who have the freedom to choose to break the laws of love, the protocols upon which are built to operate, but the only result of that is ruin and death, unless healed by the Creator.

Does the fact that God created a universe in which freewill exists mean God caused evil or God is the source of evil?

Does the fact that God foresaw its existence mean that God caused it? Or because He foresaw it does that mean God ordained it or wanted it to happen?

Consider this Bible commentary:

- The **plan for our redemption was not an afterthought**, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an **unfolding of the principles** that from eternal ages have been the **foundation of God's throne**. From the beginning, **God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man** through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence**, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So **great was His love** for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. *The Desire of Ages* p. 22, emphasis mine.

Do you agree with this? What do you hear?

What does the plan of salvation being an unfolding of the principles that are the foundation of God's government mean?

What are those principles? Truth, love, and freedom. The design laws that are built into the operations of reality. When sin entered love, truth, freedom met the lies, fear, selfishness face to face—ultimately in Jesus who lived out the design laws of God in humanity perfectly, revealed the truth that destroys the lies, restored the law of love, which is the law of life, into the human species, and exposed Satan and his methods as the source of pain, suffering, and death, while confirming God is not only good, but is the source of life.

What is the only way God wins? How do God's methods of truth, love, freedom win in the end?

Can God get a safe and secure and sinless universe of love and trust by imposed law with law enforcement? What is the only way?

Satan's system of government is imposed law with coercive enforcement, justice through punishment, rule-keeping.

And how much of the Christian world is teaching that God's government functions on Satan's principles of imposed law and law-enforcement?

But God cannot get love, trust, loyalty, devotion by imposed law and law enforcement, it is only through truth, love, and freedom.

Consider Saul of Tarsus before Damascus road. A worshiper of Yahweh, a believer in the Bible, Sabbath, sanctuary, coming Messiah, Creation, faithful tithe payer, zealous for God's cause, a member of the only church on earth that God had blessed up to that time. Yet, he used the power of the state seeking to enforce religious dogma through imposed law and punishment.

After Damascus road, he still worshiped Yahweh, but now knew that Yahweh was Jesus. He still worshiped on the Sabbath, still believed in the coming Messiah, still paid a faithful tithe, still believed in the inspiration of Scripture—but now he wrote in Romans 14, when religious differences occur, that

every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5). It is only when we are persuaded in our own minds that our hearts are changed, and God's plan of salvation is to heal hearts and minds, to save people from sin, from evil, to remove fear, selfishness, and distrust and write into our inmost being love and trust and faithfulness so that we can be like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, people who are trustworthy, people who would rather die than betray God, people who would give their loves in love for others, as Revelation describes the remnant:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They overcame by the blood of the Lamb—the life of Jesus which they have internalized and partaken of so that they have a new life, no longer the old self, sinful, fear ridden living within, but Christ lives within, the motives, desires, methods of truth, love, freedom—the pure life of Christ. And because they have been reborn with the blood/life of Christ within, they give the word of testimony that is the same testimony Jesus gave, the testimony that God is not like Satan alleges, the testimony that Jesus and the Father are one and God's laws are design laws and life is only possible in harmony with God and His design laws for life. And thus, they live that law of love in sacrificial service to others.

But when Romanism is embraced instead of the truth, people read the blood of Jesus as a legal payment they claim to their legal books in heaven, and the testimony such legalists give is the testimony of Satan as they testify to the world the lie that God's law functions like human law, and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death that He will impose upon people who do not claim the proper legal payment. This is the evil that infects the church, the pagan, false, demonic worship of God's enemy under the name of God.

TUESDAY

- The sanctuary provides part of the key to the problem of evil—namely, recognizing there is a righteous Judge who will bring justice and judgment in His own time. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 55.

Thoughts? What does this paragraph suggest? Does it suggest a legal process?

When Jesus separates the sheep from the goats does His judgment of who is a sheep and who is a goat make a sheep into a sheep and a goat into a goat, or are they what they are?

And who decides if a human ends up in the sheep or goat category?

Does God's judgment in the end determine whether a person is saved or lost?

Does God's judgment contain anything other than accurate diagnosis of reality, of what actually is?

And what does it mean for God to bring justice? Does it mean God will use power to inflict punishment for sin?

If God did this what would be the result? It would be the method of Satan and it would violate liberty, and it would result in increased fear, and it would cause the spread of sin and would not result its elimination or a secure universe.

I recommend you read the entire chapter *It Is Finished* in the book *The Desire of Ages*. This chapter focuses on Jesus' death on the cross, but here are some excerpts:

- **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion... *The Desire of Ages* p. 758, emphasis mine. [Christ was the truth, the Word made flesh, the living embodiment of God, the One who the fullness of God dwelt bodily. And what did Christ reveal in His human life? How did Christ respond to injustice? How did Christ wield power? Whom did Christ compel and coerce? Whom did Christ inflict punishment upon? Whom did Christ accuse? Do we see a different character lived out by Jesus than by any other human? Do we see a different law lived out? Do we see a different method of governing? Is this a lesson for us today?]

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; **but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love;** and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine [This is one of the most important truths ever to be revealed and one for which all the saved will embrace and practice. Truth and love are the prevailing powers of God's government. God wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship and this cannot be achieved by legal means, by legislation and the infliction of punishment, by compelling and coercing. In fact, those means lead to more rebellion. All compelling power is found in Satan's government, the Lord never does this.]

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, [By having God's law of love written into hearts, where beings are settled into truth, love, liberty and are genuine friends of God, who would rather die than betray Him or live out of harmony with God's design] and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given **for Satan to develop the principles** which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.... *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine [What are Satan's principles that needed to be developed so their corruption and destructiveness could be revealed? The rule of law, imposed law, coercion, force, the governments of this world!]

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the **unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine [What broke the last link of sympathy? It was the revelation of truth—Jesus revealing God's character, methods, principle and Satan revealing his. Why was Satan's work restricted to this earth after the cross? Was there a force shield? What kind of war is it? It is a war of ideas, of lies versus truth and the battlefield is the hearts and minds of intelligent beings. So, when the intelligences in heaven were settled into the truth about God, when all sympathy for Satan was lost, there were no minds or hearts willing to listen to Satan anymore, none of his ideas, distortions, lies, innuendos, or propaganda had any impact on heavenly beings anymore. Thus, his work was restricted to the hearts and minds of the only beings in the universe who still believed him, valued him, think like him and will follow him—human beings.]

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. **The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy.** [What else was there? Wasn't the issue only about who was telling the truth, who they needed to trust? No—it isn't enough to be eternally secure to believe Jesus is telling the truth, we must also **understand why this is so.** It isn't enough to be secure to believe your math teacher knows the answers to the problems, in order to be secure one must know how to do math, we must mature to be able to discern right from wrong, to not only love and trust God, but to be understanding friends of God.] **The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man,** Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve... *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine [For our sake Satan was to continue on longer—how is this for our sake? Because we must decide, we must see for ourselves the difference between the methods and principles of God and that of Satan. And if we can't see this difference in the subtle ways they manifest, then what will God allow to happen? Won't He allow more and more evidence, more truth, more obvious differences to be manifested so that we can see the difference between the principles of God and that of Satan? This is the rise of the beast of Revelation—a system built completely on imposed law, coercion, infliction of punishment all under the guise of seeking to make a better world, to improve lives, to save lives. So what was the specific concept that we all needed to understand more clearly that required Satan's existence to be continued? Here is the next paragraph.]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.** [What kind of law is Satan describing? A law which created beings can

make, a system of rules that require oversight and coercive enforcement. This is Satan's lie about God's law and as we look through history we see this repeats itself over and over again. And at the end of time, the beastly system of Revelation uses imposed law to force its way, to create mandates, to restrict travel, to force compliance, no one can buy or sell...] ...**God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.** [What is the basis of this allegation? What kind of justice is this? What law is this based upon? Again this is imposed law, and thus the allegation is that to not impose punishment is to not uphold the law. However, when we understand Design law, we realize that justice is not about punishment, but restoring or healing people back to harmony with the design-law.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. [Different position how? Different legal position? Or different position in objective reality? Note how] Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. **There was no more that God could do to save him.** [Why? Was Jesus unwilling to give His life for Lucifer? Was Jesus unwilling to pay a "legal penalty"? Didn't we just read that the death of Christ was for angels and the unfallen worlds as well as humans, so Jesus did die for angels—just as Colossians says, "all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross." Then, did God love Lucifer less than humans? Was God playing favorites? No! No! It was because Lucifer had destroyed in himself the capacity to respond to truth and love. He had seen, understood, and participated in God's love and rejected it. Thus he changed himself, hardened his own heart and corrupted his character. This again, is design law. Just the same way Pharaoh hardened his heart—when truth is presented a person must decide to accept or reject it, when we reject truth we harden, when more truth comes we have an opportunity to repent and be healed, but it requires humbling oneself and acknowledging where the lie was believed. If we refuse and instead reject the additional truth then we harden ourselves more until at some point we destroy the ability to respond to love and truth. This is what Lucifer did. Adam and Eve, while deceived, while infected with fear and selfishness, had not rejected truth that would win them to repentance and had not destroyed within themselves the faculties capable of responding to truth and love.] But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. **The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God.** [What is it man needs? Is it a legal penalty paid? No, the legal solution is what people think up when they are operating under Satan's false view of God's law. But when we understand the truth, then we realize we need to be set right in heart and mind with God, meaning we need the lies removed and truth to win us to trust and love restored within the heart by the indwelling Spirit of God, who takes Christ's victory and reproduces it in us!] *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; **but mercy does not set aside justice.** [What does this mean? What law lens do we view justice through imposed or design? What difference does it make?] **The law reveals the attributes of God's character, [which is**

what?]) and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. [Why? For the same reason the law of respiration cannot be changed to meet a person drowning. God's law is the protocol upon which life is constructed to operate.] God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."** 2 Corinthians 5:19. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [Which means that Christ was carrying out God's purpose to fix what sin did to humanity, set humanity back into harmony with God's law—design! Notice the next paragraph's description about justice.]

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character,** a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. [Notice this is Christ, as a human, using human abilities, developing a perfect human character and then healing humans back to this perfect state. This is literal not metaphorical.] **Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.** God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [If you see someone drowning, is it right and just to pull them from the water and administer CPR to revive them? What law are you operating under? Why, if you want them to live, must you do this? This is God's justice and what He accomplished for us through Christ. He pulls us from drowning in sin and breathes into us the breath of life, the Spirit of God Himself comes into us to give us new life with new motives and desires! We are resurrected from sin and death into a new life in Christ.]

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. [Mercy is God not abandoning sinners to die, not retaliating, not seeking to punish; Justice, doing what is right by sending Christ to destroy sin and restore God's law in humanity in order for us to be restored to life, to be set right or made right, justified, this is what is right or just. Justice is the sustaining of the operations of God's laws, including the law of liberty, justice is giving people freedom to reject God's healing remedy and reap what they sow.] **Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice.** He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [How does Satan attempt to divorce mercy from justice? By getting us to believe the imposed law lie, which results in a split Godhead in which Christ in mercy dies to pay a legal penalty for our sins to a wrathful father who is the administrator of just punishments. Thus, justice is separated from mercy in the way we perceive and describe God—leading to theologies in which Jesus must protect us from the Father. 1. Jesus pleads His blood to the Father. 2. Jesus covers us with His blood so the Father can't see us. 3. Jesus applies His blood to our record books so the Father can't

punish us for our bad deeds. 4. Jesus is our heavenly attorney to argue our case before the Father to protect us from His judgment and punishment. 5 Jesus took our place and was executed by His Father on the cross to pay for our sins. All of this is the divorcing of mercy from truth and justice by created a false caricature of the Godhead.]

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. [How? What was the just or right thing for God to do? Fix the problem, which was accomplished through Christ developing a perfect character. What charges of Satan were refuted? That every sin must meet its punishment, that transgressing God's law requires punishment. These lies were refuted at the Cross. But Satan still gets legal theologians to teach the lie when they teach that all sins, past, present, future were put on Christ and punished by God at the Cross.] God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine

Another deception was now to be brought forward. [History now repeats itself] Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, **that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law.** [What kind of law can be rescinded, changed, or abrogated? Imposed law, the kind of laws created beings make. Design law cannot be changed or abrogated. Thus Satan's allegations that began in heaven that God's law requires punishment, i.e. imposed law, now repeats itself and is accepted by the vast majority of humans, including Christians.] Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died... **It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross.** [Why? Because the law is the protocol of life, and only in harmony with it is there salvation, or healing!] **Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it.** [How? Twofold, one by declaring the law is no longer binding, which is only possible if the law were imposed rules. But, also, amongst those who claim the law is still binding, by tricking them into accepting the imposed construct, thus they claim loyalty to God's law and all the commandments, while they present it as imposed rules requiring God to inflict punishment. They, thereby misrepresent God, the Cross and God's law and ultimately practice Satan's methods of coercion as they will one day force other on some point of conscience or go along with governments that do, as long as it is for a good cause, perhaps to save lives.] **Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan...** [This is where we are today in Christianity, fighting a battle over God's law, not which day of worship, but which law—imposed or Design law. We are to call people back to worship Him who made the heavens... to Designer worship.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine

By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world... [How? Not simply by a change in rules, but a change in the entire idea of law from the law the Creator builds life upon, to imposed rules so that people will seek to achieve justice through human governments and enforce their beliefs upon others. Notice the next paragraph...] *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. [Here we have it—the use of compelling power, which is always used in imposed law systems. This is what is happening in the world today and far too many Christians are going along with it. But they will say, “Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons and performed miracles in your name—we did this to save lives. And of course, in your name, to honor you and save lives, we forced people against their will to get the job because we know that you want to save lives and we know those people are ignorant, are not scientific and that the job isn’t a religious issue, it is a science issue. So we know you would want us to coerce, compel and force in order to save lives.” And Jesus replies, “Get away from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.”] *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

[Notice the paragraph, it is about developing character, character of love like Jesus, in which we sacrifice ourselves for others, present truth in love and leave others free. Or, character like the beast, where we use compelling power to coerce conformity! This is the test we all must face. And the final deception will be so subtle that if possible the elect will be deceived? How because it will be set up as a law for the good, for saving lives, for protecting others, for saving the planet. And those who won’t comply will be presented as the enemy of the good. But notice what this author says comes next, after these two classes have formed, after every character is tested.]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch... [Why? Mercy—God would not use His power to keep people in a place of torment, but grants them their choice to be separate from Him, the only source of life.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. [This is design law, not imposed penalties!] He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. [What did angels not understand? God's law as design law, as an outworking of His character of love. They were confused by Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law. Thus history repeats itself as humans suffer the same confusion and many today are willing to use Satan's methods to coerce consciences in order to seek justice or save lives.] Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; **but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed**, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine [This is how many Christians, including in our own church, view things; they fail to understand the truth of God's law and instead teach the same distortion that God must kill the wicked, rather than the truth that unremedied sin itself results in death! And because they accept Satan's lie about God's law, they are willing to accept Satan's methods of compelling others for a good cause.]

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, **the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable.** Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 8

Freewill, Love, and Divine Providence

by Tim Jennings

WEDNESDAY from Lesson 7

Read second paragraph,

- The freewill defense is the view that evil is the result of the misuse of creaturely free will. God, then, is not to blame for evil, because evil is the result of creatures misusing the free will that God has given us for good reasons. Why, however, would God give such free will? In this regard, C. S. Lewis once wrote that “free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other. . . . And for that they must be free.”—*Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p. 52. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 56.

To me this is the only answer to why God would create a universe where evil could exist—because God is love and love requires real freedom. God could have made sophisticated robots, but robots cannot love. Thus, God created beings who have the freedom to choose to break His design laws of love, the protocols upon which He built life to operate, but the only result of that is ruin and death, unless healed by the Creator.

Does the fact that God created a universe in which freewill exists mean God caused evil or God is the source of evil? Absolutely not!

Does the fact that God foresaw its existence mean that God caused it? Or because He foresaw it does that mean God ordained it or wanted it to happen?

Consider this Bible commentary:

- The **plan for our redemption was not an afterthought**, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an **unfolding of the principles** that from eternal ages have been the **foundation of God's throne**. From the beginning, **God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man** through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence**, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So **great was His love** for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. *The Desire of Ages* p. 22, emphasis mine.

Do you agree with this? What do you hear?

What does the plan of salvation being an unfolding of the principles that are the foundation of God's government mean?

What are those principles? Truth, love, and freedom. The design laws that are built into the operations of reality. When sin entered, love, truth, and freedom warred against the lies, fear, selfishness—ultimately in Jesus who lived out the design laws of God in humanity perfectly. He revealed the truth that destroys the lies, restored the law of love, which is the law of life, into the human species, and exposed Satan and his methods as the source of pain, suffering, and death, while confirming God is not only good, but is the source of life.

What is the only way God wins? How do God's methods of truth, love, freedom win in the end?

Can God get a safe, secure, and sinless universe of love and trust by imposed law with law enforcement? What is the only way?

Satan's system of government is imposed law with coercive enforcement, justice through punishment, rule-keeping.

And how much of the Christian world is teaching that God's government functions on Satan's principles of imposed law and law-enforcement?

But God cannot get love, trust, loyalty, devotion by imposed law and law enforcement, it is only through truth, love, and freedom. And therefore when we teach God's kingdom works like human kingdoms through imposed law, legal judicial processes and infliction of punishments, we are working to delay the second coming of Christ.

Consider Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus Road experience. A worshiper of Yahweh, a believer in the Bible, Sabbath, sanctuary, coming Messiah, Creation, faithful tithe payer, zealous for God's cause, a member of the only church on earth that God had blessed up to that time. Yet, he used the power of the state seeking to enforce religious dogma through imposed law and punishment.

After Damascus Road, he still worshiped Yahweh, but now knew that Yahweh was Jesus. He still worshiped on the Sabbath, still believed in the coming Messiah, but now the second coming, still paid a faithful tithe, still believed in the inspiration of Scripture—but now he wrote in Romans 14, when religious differences occur, that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5).

It is only when we are persuaded in our own minds that our hearts are changed, and God's plan of salvation heals hearts and minds; to save people from sin, from evil, God's Spirit of truth and love must cut our identity away from being motivated by fear, selfishness, and distrust and establish our identity, our inmost being upon truth, love, trust and faithfulness so that we can be like Job, Daniel, the

three worthies, people who are trustworthy, people who would rather die than betray God, people who would give their lives in love for others, as Revelation describes the remnant:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They overcame by the blood of the Lamb—the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11) and thus they overcame by the life of Jesus which they have internalized and partaken of through trust so that they have a new life—a new animating motivational energy of love for God and others, and are no longer their old self, sinful, fear ridden self-living, but Christ lives within, the motives, desires, methods of Christ is what they identify with. It is who they are. And because they have been reborn with the blood/life of Christ within, they give the word of testimony that is the same testimony that Jesus gave, they have the “testimony of Jesus,” the testimony that God is not like Satan alleges, the testimony that Jesus and the Father are one and God’s laws are design laws reality is built upon and life is only possible in harmony with God and His design laws for life. And thus, they live that law of love in sacrificial service to God and others and do not love their life so much that they would shrink from death, they will not resort to the power of the state and imposed laws to try and protect themselves by forcing others to comply on matters of conscience with what they think is right.

But when Romanism is embraced—the imposed human law system—instead of the truth that the blood of Jesus is the life of Jesus reproduced in the believer, people read the blood of Jesus as a the death of Jesus being legally paid to the Father so that they can claim legal payment to their record books in heaven, and the testimony such legalists give is the testimony of Satan as they testify to the world the lie that God’s law functions like human law, and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death that He will impose upon people who do not claim the proper legal payment. Thus they testify that God is like Satan in character. This is the evil that infects the church, the pagan, false, demonic worship of God’s enemy under the name of God.

SABBATH

The lesson focuses on the providence of God, what do you understand God’s providence to be?

The lesson describes God’s providence as God working through human history to bring about His purposes in dealing with sin and evil.

The lesson describes how some people believe God’s providence means God is in control of everything, if you see something bad happen, it is the “providence of God” and thus God’s will for it to happen and some go farther and suggest God causes all things to happen directly.

What is the problem with these beliefs?

If God causes all things directly, then we are all just robots, puppets, sophisticated simulations, and there is no freedom and life is just a sham, and God is completely evil and untrustworthy for such a

god would be deceitful, abusive, selfish, and cruel. So it is pretty straightforward to reject the idea that God is the one who causes everything to happen directly. No, we have freedom and our choices are real choices and cause real outcomes.

When we see evil it is not an act of God or God's will for evil to occur, but it is true that evil would not exist if God did not create a universe where evil could exist. Why is that?

Because, as we just discussed, God is love, and love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. God could have created a universe of robots, but such a universe is not consistent with our God of love. Just consider if you had the ability to create a world—and you start out by creating really beautiful and wonderful robots that do whatever you program them to do—you have trains that run on the tracks you set, you have robots go through the rounds you program—but there is not one other living intelligent free being on the entire planet. How long would such a world of programmed robots satisfy you? And why would you want more than robots?

What about our infinite God—does our God of love want more than robots?

And what is required for you or God to have creatures that are more than robots? Intelligence and genuine free will.

Therefore, God, who is love, created intelligent beings with freewill because He wants a universe in which love, joy, happiness, fellowship, friendship actually exist and none of that exists with robots.

So, God created the conditions by creating intelligent beings with freedom to choose, a universe in which evil could arise, but God did not create evil, nor was it His desire or purpose that evil should exist.

But He foresaw and in His foreknowledge He understood that He could create either a universe of robots or a universe of free beings in which rebellion would occur, and which He would successfully, at extreme cost to Himself, address and overcome the evil and then have a universe in which evil is eradicated and for all eternity future evil never arises again and love, friendship, joy, happiness, trust, really exists. That is the plan God chose and for which we are privileged to be a participant.

So how do we, in this world of sin, understand the providence of God?

Consider this historical quote, do you agree?

- The **conflicts** of earth, **in the providence of God**, furnish the very training **necessary to develop characters** fit for the courts of Heaven. We are to **become** members of the royal family, the sons of God, and “all things work together for good to those who love God,” and submit themselves to his will. Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to him our distress, **he is making arrangements for our deliverance**. Our sorrow is not unnoticed. **He always**

knows much better than we do, just what is necessary for the good of his children, and **he leads us as we would choose to be led if we could discern our own hearts and see our necessities and perils, as God sees them**. But finite beings seldom know themselves. They do not understand their own weaknesses, and when reproof comes, and cautions are given, when they are rebuked, or even advised, they think that they are misjudged and unjustly treated. God knows them better than they know themselves, and he understands how to lead them. But when he undertakes to guide them in ways which seem mysterious to them, because of their blindness and lack of faith, they rebel, and **bring upon themselves unnecessary grief and trouble**. They have prayed to the Lord for light and guidance, and the Lord answered them as he did Jacob, and, like Jacob, they do not discern that it is the hand of the Lord leading them in a way contrary to their own choosing. **If we will trust him, and commit our ways to him, he will direct our steps in the very path that will result in our obtaining the victory over every evil passion, and every trait of character that is unlike the character of our divine Pattern.** *Signs of the Times* May 25, 1888, par. 9, emphasis mine

So what of this text, what does it mean?

- And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28–29 NKJV, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? It does not say all things are good, but God can work all things together for the good of those who trust Him, which comes across better in other translations:

- And we know **that in all things God works for the good of those** who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28–29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But what about being predestined? Does it mean that God predetermines who is saved and who is lost?

Not at all, the key is “foreknew” Those who God foreknew he predestined... how is God’s foreknowing the key?

Because in the Bible knowing is not about cognitive knowledge, it is about intimacy and trust.

- Now this is eternal life: that they may **know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 NIV84, emphasis mine

Eternal life is knowing God, not knowing about God. And God’s foreknowledge is not God knowing about us, but knowing is in the context of our return to love and trust in Him, being reconciled to Him. And thus, those God foreknew are the ones predestined to be healed, restored, recreated to the likeness of His Son.

SUNDAY

Read the first three paragraphs,

- “God is sovereign,” the youth pastor taught his middle school group. “That means He controls everything that happens.” One puzzled middle schooler replied, “So God was in control when my dog died? Why would God kill my dog?”

Trying to answer this question, the youth pastor replied: “That’s a tough one. But sometimes God lets us go through hard times so that we’re prepared for even more difficult things in the future. I remember how hard it was when my dog died. But going through that helped me deal with an even more difficult time later when my grandma died. Does that make sense?”

After a long pause, the middle schooler replied, “So God killed my dog to prepare me for when He’s going to kill my grandma?”—Marc Cortez, quoted in John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), p. 141. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 61.

Have you heard this type of thinking from people, that God’s sovereignty is God controlling everything? There are many very famous Christians in our society who think and teach this. I asked one to endorse my book *The God Shaped Brain*, back when it was being released, but the response I received was a gentle rejection stating their inability to endorse it because they see the sovereignty of God differently than I do—they believe that God is in control of everything that happens.

How do you respond to people who believe this? What if they quote the following?

- **The older will serve the younger.**” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but **Esau I hated.**” What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy**, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” **It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort**, but on God’s mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and **he hardens whom he wants to harden.** Romans 9:12–18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

How do you answer someone who quotes this text to prove God’s sovereignty means God uses His power to control outcomes, it doesn’t matter our desire or effort, only God’s will and power matter, and God did love Esau, but hated him and God used His power to harden Pharaoh’s heart?

The key to understanding the saying “God is in control,” as well as essentially all theological questions, is how one understands God’s law. If one views God’s law functioning like the laws that humans make up — imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments — then people view God as making everything happen.

This leads to a variety of different errors are formed, such as the teaching that when tragedies occur, it is God who is bringing the pain — such as God controlling the molester who abuses people, or God directing the hurricanes, earthquakes, or God hardening the hearts of certain people.

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

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

So, with this in mind, understanding God's design laws of truth, love, freedom can we explain what it means that God loved Jacob but hated Esau?

Is this talking about God's emotions, God's character, God's attitude or God's function—God's ability to functionally love the two? Did one of the brothers have a heart that sought God and submitted to Him and the other who rejected God and would not submit?

So, would the heart attitude of the brothers impact whether God's love would flow into them, transform them, and function within them? So, one experienced God's love and was transformed into a trusting friend whose name was changed to reflect that heart change. And when that happened, God loved it! God not only functionally loved Jacob, but God personally loved that He was able to love Jacob. But Esau closed his heart and God could not functionally love Him in intimacy, friendship, and have His love transform Esau and God hated that, but He still, in heart, loved Esau.

What about hardening of Pharaoh's heart? The Bible describes in the following three different ways the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3)
- Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32)
- Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exodus 7:22)

Which of these texts are inspired by God? All of them! Then how are all of them true—that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and also Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and that Pharaoh's heart was hardened?

If one believes the lie that God's law functions like human law, then one falsely believes that God uses power to force His way, to override Pharaoh's freedom and harden Pharaoh's heart in order for God to show His power—then one finds a conflict in the inspired record and must reject or exclude the texts about Pharaoh hardening his own heart.

But when we return to design law we understand how reality actually works, and we find that all these texts are in perfect harmony.

How does any heart, including Pharaoh's, actually become hardened to truth and love? It is by rejecting truth and love and choosing lies and selfishness. That is how a heart becomes hardened.

So how did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result — healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth to Pharaoh that the king understood and then left the ruler free to decide for himself. God controlled His laws and the presentation of evidence and even the Holy Spirit bring conviction to Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh exercised his own freewill and controlled his own choices, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control. God controls what God controls, and one of the things God controls is the law of liberty.

So the next time you hear "God is in control," think, "In control of what?" — and remember that God is in control of Himself and the laws upon which reality is built to operate. That means we have real freedom, because only in such freedom does love exist. If God made us all robots we would behave perfectly, but there would be no love. God only wins His cause by utilizing His methods — truth, love, and freedom.

But someone might ask, if God in His foreknowledge knew Pharaoh would reject the truth and thus harden His heart, why would God present the truth He knew would be rejected and ultimately result in Pharaoh hardening his heart?

Think through reality—what is the condition of every single human born since Adam and Eve sinned? We are all born in sin, conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We are all born with a terminal sin condition that will result in eternal death unless healed by our Creator. Pharaoh had a terminal sin condition, the only hope for Pharaoh's eternal salvation was the truth, and even though God foreknew Pharaoh would reject it, God, who is love, would not deny Pharaoh his freedom to choose, God would not deny Pharaoh his opportunity, so God presented the truth in the most powerful and impressive ways to Pharaoh for only the truth will set us free. But sadly, Pharaoh chose to reject it and harden his own heart.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God as being all powerful. Some believe because God is all powerful He can do anything. But the lesson rightly takes the position that God cannot do anything, that there are some things God cannot do.

The lesson cites 2 Timothy 2:13 which states that God cannot deny Himself, meaning God will not contradict who He is, will not go against His own character of love.

This is absolutely true—God is true to Himself, true to His nature, His character, and thus there are something God cannot do, not because He doesn't have the power to do it, but because to do it would be contrary to who He is, and destroy that which He has created and loves.

Can you give any examples, evidence that supports this position?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6 NIV84

What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship—can any of that be obtained by might and power? What happens if God uses might and power to reach into a person's brain and change what they have not freely chosen to change about themselves, their character, their values? It erases that person and causes them to be someone else.

Did you notice I specified God changing elements of who they are in character? Why? Because God can use power to change things about us and our brains that do not alter our characters any examples of this?

- See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts... Exodus 35:30-31 NIV84.
- All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4 NET

Any examples from biblical history that confirm with historical evidence that God cannot achieve what He wants by using might and power?

- The Flood resulted in building the tower of Babel
- Plagues of Egypt, miracle at the Red Sea, Thundering at Sinai resulted in worshipping a golden calf and asking for a priestly intercessor
- Fire at Carmel resulted in immediate fearful acknowledgement but then recurrent pagan worship and rebellion

So, are there some things God cannot do? Any others?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- That God is all-powerful does not mean that He can do the logically impossible. Accordingly, God cannot causally determine that someone freely love Him. If freely doing something means to do something without being determined to do it, then by definition it is impossible to make someone freely do something. In short, as we have seen, and must re-emphasize—**God cannot force anyone to love Him, for the moment it's forced, it is no longer love.** *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 63, emphasis mine.

This is well said, and what does this truth expose as false that is taught in much of Christian theology?

The idea that God's law functions like human law and God is required by law to use power to inflict external punishment upon those who reject His love.

What will God do to those who, like Pharaoh, reject all His pleadings, mercy, love, and truth?

What do people who hold to the lie that God's law functions like human law teach?

Don't they teach that God is required to use His power to inflict pain, suffering, punishment upon people as much as they deserve before He kills them?

And if that were happening then isn't that God using force? And since love cannot be forced teaching this theology obstructs God's plan to save people from sin because it obstructs love, it is a lie that incites fear and rebellion and leads to theologies that separate people from God rather than reconcile them to Him.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on God's foreknowledge and our freewill choices. I have met several good-hearted Christian individuals who really struggle with this idea. In fact, they struggle so much that they reject that God has foreknowledge because they believe that if God foreknows what we are going to choose then we are not actually free to choose it but it is predetermined by God.

These individuals will acknowledge that God can know all the possible choices a person can make before they make them, but doesn't actually know which choice the person makes until they make it. Their view is that if God foreknows then we are predetermined and are not free. This view is called Open Theism.

Interestingly, as I was reading in the book *The Desire of Ages* this week, I found the following description of the false theology the Sadducees that came to tempt Christ believed:

- The Sadducees **rejected the teaching of Jesus**; He was animated by a spirit which they would not acknowledge as manifesting itself thus; and His teaching in regard to God and the future life contradicted their theories. They believed in God as the only being superior to man; but **they argued that an overruling providence and a divine foresight would deprive man of**

free moral agency, and degrade him to the position of a slave. *The Desire of Ages* p. 604, emphasis mine.

Wow, this was quite stunning to me when I read it because this is the same argument made by open theists, that if God foreknows we are not free moral agents.

What do you think? Does God have foreknowledge and know our actual choices before we make them, or does He only know the possible choices we might make, but doesn't know until we make them?

And if God does foreknow our choices, are we still free or has our future already been determined by God?

Is there any biblical evidence to help us clarify this concern?

There are two types of evidence in the Bible, declarative statements and the historical record. Let's look at the historical record first, which I find more persuasive.

- At the time of the flood God directed Noah to build how many arks? Why only one? If God didn't know beforehand how many people would respond, if God could only calculate the various possibilities of the numbers wanting a seat on the ark, and until the door to the ark was closed God was still wondering how many would respond, then what does it mean that God didn't have more arks ready? If God didn't know beforehand how many would say yes and choose to get onboard, wouldn't that mean He never intended to let all on board, but just a few people, thus Noah's preaching for 120 years would be a sham. I reject the view that God didn't foreknow the choices of the people and believe that God did know their choices before they made them and Noah preached to show God did not exclude anyone, but because God did foreknow their choices only one ark was needed.
- The prophecies of Daniel demonstrating the fall of kingdoms one after the other and predicting the rise of the next kingdom all the way through the fall of Rome to the second coming demonstrate that God foreknew choices and events, not just the possibilities that might occur. I realize open theists are not comfortable with this so they try and move the date of the writing of the book of Daniel to the time of the Roman Empire and yet what does the prophecy next predict? That there would be no other world empires to rise. This prediction goes completely against the trend of history as four empires in a row had come and human thought would have predicted another to follow. Only our God, who knows the future before it happens, could have predicted with such certainty that no other world power would control those lands again despite all the marriages and attempts. This requires knowledge of individual decisions of how kings and generals will act.
- The prophecy that those who crucified Christ would gamble for His clothing. This required knowledge of their specific choices.

- Jesus predicting that Judas would betray him and that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. This required specific knowledge of their choices before they made them, yet they were still left completely free to make their own choices.

Now the declarative statements:

- “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done., saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure Isaiah 46:9,10.
- He hath made every [thing] beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. Ecclesiastes 3:11.

And then consider these historical quotes:

- I AM means an eternal presence; **the past, present, and future are alike with God. He sees the most remote events of past history and the far distant future with as clear a vision** as we do those things which are transpiring daily. *That I May Know Him* p. 22, emphasis mine.
- He that ruleth in the heavens is the **one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread**, and who, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, beholds the accomplishment of His own purposes of love and blessing. *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 43, emphasis mine.

God is the Creator of all reality, space, matter, energy, life and time—and God lives outside the bounds of time and is the one who sustains its operations. Thus, God is not restrained to a linear existence like we created beings are, but is able to live outside the stream of time and is described as living in unapproachable light.

One other problem the open theists have is that they do not differentiate foreknowledge with causality. They believe knowing is causing, but it is not. If you had a time machine and could travel through time and watch the next Super Bowl and then come back to this time and foreknow every play, who fumbles, who scores touchdowns and the final score, your foreknowledge does not cause the coaches to call the plays they call, the players to execute the plays, the fumbles, the scores, the officiating, every person must still carry out their choices in governance of themselves in harmony with the operations of the design laws built into the operations of reality, including the laws of physics that govern gravity, motion, friction, etc. to cause the ultimate outcome. Your foreknowledge causes nothing, the freewill choices of the individuals cause the outcome.

So the real question is not does God know the future, including our choices, before it happens, but what kind of being do we believe God to be? Do we believe God is just like Jesus, a being willing to let His creatures kill Him rather than use His knowledge and power to restrict their freedoms? Or do

we believe God is something other than this, a God who would manipulate and control and take away liberty by manipulating things with such knowledge?

I think deep down the open theists cannot believe God would not be able to avoid manipulating things if He knew, and they want to represent God as a trustworthy God so they allege He doesn't know, but in this very argument they are not only undermining the power and ability of God, they are undermine the character of God by insinuating that God would be corrupted and we would not be free if God had such knowledge.

I believe the Father is exactly as Jesus revealed Him to be – a being of complete trustworthiness who does know our future and our choices, but whose character is so pure, holy, and loving that our individual freedom is never undermined!

THURSDAY

Read John 16:33

- “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 NIV84

The lesson focuses on the reality that the followers of Christ will have trouble in this world, but we are not to lose hope, but stay faithful because Jesus has overcome the world.

What do you understand this means?

What is the world that Jesus has overcome? Isn't this talking about Satan's kingdom of lies, fear, and selfishness, coercion, force, the methods and principles of this world of sin?

And what are the methods and principles of this sinful world? Survival of the fittest, driven by fear and selfishness, which will use any means, any power, to protect self, lies, fear, intimidation, manipulation, imposed law, inflicted punishments, inducements, bribes, blackmail, deplatforming, accusation, canceling, ultimately killing others to protect self.

Isn't this how the world works? The ends justify the means—but in reality, in the truth of God's design laws and creation, this is a lie. We can only have life, health, happiness in harmony with God and His design laws.

Jesus overcame the world by choosing always in governance of Himself to live out the principles of truth, love, and freedom and never use the methods of fear, lies, selfishness. He would sacrifice His life in love to save others rather than use external power to do justice, to stop injustice, to prevent people from killing and abusing Him.

As the final events on planet Earth unfold it will come down to these two antagonistic principles, laws, and methods.

- Fear and selfishness versus love and trust
- Imposed law versus design law
- Sanctions, coercion, force versus truth, love, and freedom.
- The beast versus the Lamb of God
- The wicked versus the righteous

And in the end it will be all about the law one chooses in governance of self as they decide how they will live and treat others. Do we identify with and choose the spirit of fear and selfishness and thereby choose impose law and coercive force to make self feel safe, the methods and principles of the beast. Or do we identify with the Spirit of love and trust built upon the truth that Jesus revealed and choose to live out God's design law of truth, love, and freedom in governance of ourselves and trust God with how things turn out—including trusting God with our lives under injustice like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, Stephen, Paul, and all the martyrs through history.

As we already cited,

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 9

The Cosmic Conflict

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of the lesson title?

If you haven't read our magazine [The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ](#), I encourage you to do so. And if you want a resource to share with others that lays out this cosmic conflict and the central issue, this is free to share and available in digital form on our website and in print in the US, South Africa, and Australia.

Read Memory Text:

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

The most important point for me about this text is that it sets the framework for the entire Old Testament. Without the Messiah promised in this passage no human being could be saved from sin. Right here, before Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, God promises Jesus to be our Savior and He tells Satan that Jesus is coming to be our Messiah.

Satan does not go on vacation but begins using all his destructive ability to seek to prevent Jesus from coming as our Savior. How? By getting every single human being to permanently hardening themselves to God and closing their hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit. At the time of the Flood there was only one righteous man left on the entire planet still willing to work with God. And in mercy, grace, goodness, God acted, not to punish sin, for the punishment for sin is eternal death after the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of time. The Flood was not that, it was the sleep death, a death from which everyone good or evil will experience resurrection. God was not acting to inflict punishment, but was acting therapeutically, in mercy and grace, to keep open the avenue for the Messiah for without Jesus all humanity is eternally lost.

This gives insight into the focus of the Bible story arch, we keep narrowing the focus from the entire world at the time of the Flood—for we didn't know from which branch of the human family Jesus would come, to Abraham's family when God let him know it would be through his descendants that the Savior would come. But through Isaac, not Ishmael, and through Jacob and not Esau, we keep narrowing the focus of the story arch, ultimately Judah. For the entire story of the Bible is Jesus coming to save us from this terminal sin condition.

So this is the first and perhaps greatest point of this text. But what else does this text teach?

- Two opposing forces in conflict?
- Who are those opponents?
- Who is represented by the offspring of the woman?
- Who is the offspring of the serpent?
- Jesus said to them, “**If God were your Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:42-44 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Who are the two groups? And notice, “**he** will crush **your** head and **you** will strike **his** heel.”

There are two leaders and two groups of followers.

The leaders are Jesus and Satan and the followers, the children, are those who bear the image of whomever they choose as their “father.” We either, through faith, through restored trust, surrender to Jesus and experience a rebirth, a new life, a new heart and right spirit and are recreated to bear the image of Jesus and thus are children of God, or we resist truth and love, we say no to the Spirit of God, we refuse to surrender self in love and trust to Jesus and we solidify ourselves to be like Satan and Jesus says when that happens he is our father and we are his offspring.

And these two groups war through history.

This cosmic conflict view, this Great Controversy view, is probably the most important theological contribution to Christian thought that the SDA church has brought to humanity. And there has been no one that I have read that has done a more comprehensive job of describing the cosmic view of the war that began in heaven better than Ellen G. White. Her Conflict of the Ages series is magnificent.

The great Reformer Martin Luther struggled to appreciate the cosmic conflict because he only accepted 62 of the 66 books of Scripture. He did not include James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation with the rest of the Bible and placed them in the back of his German translation.

Several of the church fathers struggled with the idea of a war in heaven because they conceived of God as running His universe like a Caesar and they opined, how could a creature war against the Creator. Such a war would be over in milliseconds. And again, this is where the Adventist Reformers were advancing the reformation. The church had been infected with Romanism, the lie that God’s law functions like human law and many Reformers failed to recognize this imbedded lie and thus concluded that no creature could war in heaven against our all-powerful God. EGW explicitly describes how the war was not about might and power:

- God **could have destroyed** Satan and his sympathizers as **easily** as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but **He did not do this**. Rebellion was **not to be overcome by force**. **Compelling power is found only under Satan's government**. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon **goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power**. *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine

The Great Controversy was never about who has the power, it was always about whether we can trust God with the power. Satan alleged God was abusive, God uses power to impose His way, to threaten, to coerce, to inflict external punishments and thus we are not free—and without freedom there is no love. Satan did this by insinuating God's laws function like those of a creature, made up rules and thus God, in order to be just must use power to inflict punishments. This insidious lie is still taught throughout Christianity, in all denominations.

And the Reformation has stalled as this lie has never been fully confronted and eliminated and many Reformers fail to fully appreciate the larger view of the war that began in heaven, and others who do see the cosmic conflict view, misconstrue the nature of the war as being about might and power.

What makes the Adventist message unique is that it presents the gospel in the setting of a universal war with stakes that include more than simply using might and power to exterminate the opposition and saving humans from sin; it also includes the securing of the sinless heavenly beings in their loyalty to God so that sin will never rise again. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians:

- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or **things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross Colossians 1:19, 20 NIV84 emphasis mine.

When we view sin and salvation in this larger universal context, we discover eternal truths that are required for us to know and embrace in order for sin and Satan to be permanently defeated; the principalities and powers of darkness destroyed; and all doubt, disaffection, and rebellion eliminated from the entire universe, thereby not only saving humanity from sin but also solidifying the loyal angels in their purity and restoring all things back to sinless perfection.

The Bible teaches that Christ's mission, in addition to saving humans from sin, also included destroying the source and cause of all pain, suffering, and death:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil** (Hebrews 2:14, emphasis mine).
- The end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father **after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power**. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death** (1 Corinthians 15:24–26, emphasis mine).

In order to destroy Satan, death, and the powers of darkness and to eliminate sin from His universe, God must defeat the roots of sin—the lies, the fear, and the selfishness along with the methods and principles of Satan that operate within the hearts and minds of intelligent beings. Destroying Satan without also destroying the lies he has told would not stop the spread of sin and rebellion.

And lies, fear, and selfishness cannot be defeated by the exercise of power and might. A lie cannot be defeated by simply declaring it to be false; the truth must be revealed. It is the truth that sets us free (John 8:32). Fear cannot be eliminated and love and trust restored by threatening to torture and kill those who don't love and trust. In fact to try and destroy fear and selfishness and restore love and trust through imposed punishments actually spreads sin. This is why the Bible teaches that God wins,

- “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty Zechariah 4:6 NIV84.

The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, not the spirit of fear (Romans 8:15); the truth destroys lies and wins us to trust, while love casts out all fear and empowers us to live victoriously (John 16:13; 1 John 4:18).

The war between Christ and Satan has always been a battle for hearts and minds, but this war did not begin in Eden; it began in heaven.

- And **war broke out in heaven:** Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him Revelation 12:7–9 NKJV, emphasis mine.

In Revelation 12:7, the Greek word translated as “war” is πόλεμος (*polemos*), from which we get “polemic,” which is an argument. This shows that this cosmic war is a battle of competing ideas, concepts, beliefs, methods, motives, and principles—it is not a war of physical combat. Thus, Satan wars against heaven by sowing into hearts and minds lies about God that undermine trust in Him, incite fear, and lead to selfishness and rebellion.

We are told that Satan is the originator of lies:

- You belong to your father, the devil. ... When he lies, he speaks his native language, **for he is a liar and the father of lies** John 8:44 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And the devil's primary lies in this war are about God because when we believe lies about God, our trust in Him is broken. As Paul said:

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the**

knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 NI 84, emphasis mine.

And Jesus said:

- Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent John 17:3 NIV84.

We must have the lies about God removed from our hearts and minds and come to know Him intimately and personally in order to be saved and transformed.

Believing Satan’s lies breaks down love and trust, resulting in rebellion against God, thus “everything that does not come from faith [trust] is sin” (Romans 14:23).

The unique contribution of the Adventist Church to the ongoing Reformation is the expansion of the Christian understanding of the sin problem from being an exclusively human problem to a universal problem—and expanding the salvation mission of Jesus from being exclusively about saving human beings from sin to also including the revelation of the truth about God and His government in order to destroy the lies of Satan and secure the unfallen heavenly beings in their loyalty.

Jesus described this larger purpose of His mission when He said,

- “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now **the prince of this world will be driven out**. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all **men** to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die John 12:31–33 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The word “men” in this passage is not in the Greek manuscripts; it was added by the translators. It should read: “will draw all to myself.” As such, Jesus was telling us that His mission included more than just humanity; it also included defeating the powers of darkness in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12). By revealing the truth about God and exposing Satan as a liar, Jesus drives Satan from the shadows, out into the open, and from the affections and sympathies of God’s loyal angels, who knew, loved, and trusted Lucifer before his fall. In so doing, Jesus draws to Himself *all* those who love God and His methods and secures them to Himself for eternity because they are convinced by the truth itself, the truth that God is trustworthy and that Satan is a liar and fraud.

And what is the central lie that Satan has told that undermines trust in God and leads intelligent beings into rebellion and sin?

That God’s law is no different than the laws creatures make, made up rules that God then enforces through inflicted punishments. This is the root lie. For if one believes God’s law functions like human law one always believes God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death for so-called justice sake.

That is why the final message that is to lighten the world is the message of the 3 angels which calls on people to stop judging God as an imperial dictator and source of pain, suffering, and death and start worshiping Him as Creator, the one who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water. And this requires we rejected the imposed law lies and understand His laws are design laws.

If you would like a comprehensive exploration of the message of the 3 Angels through the design law understanding, get our magazine [The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels](#) the digital version is on our website or you can get a free print version in the US, South Africa, and Australia.

When we view God as Creator rather than imperial dictator and His law as design law rather than imposed rules, we realize sin is transgression of the protocols life is built to operate upon and therefore, the wages of sin is death, just like tying a plastic bag over your head and transgressing the law of respiration results in death unless someone puts you back in harmony with the law. This is why Jesus came, to *not only* reveal the truth about God that wins us and angels to trust, but for humans He also came to restore God's living law back into humanity. When we are won to trust and open our hearts to Him, we receive a new heart and right spirit animated with His living law of love as the operational, motivation, drive to our actions.

Here is an historical quote from EGW describing the lie in the opening of the GC:

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

What kind of law requires God to punish sin? Human law, imposed law, made up rules and if punishment is not inflicted then there is no justice in a human law system, a made-up legal framework. But this is not so with design law.

Consider the quotation from *The Great Controversy*, cited in Thursday's lesson,

- In His dealing with sin, God **could employ only righteousness and truth**. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the word of God and **had misrepresented His plan of government** before the angels, **claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven**; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, **that God's government was just, His law perfect**. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper, and his real object, must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works. *The Great Controversy* p. 498, emphasis mine.

Those who believe the lie that God's law functions like Roman law will argue that the statement above **"claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven"** means that God is indeed being just to impose laws upon His creatures and, therefore, God's laws are, in fact, imposed just like human laws. But the author is demonstrating the subtlety of the satanic deception, EGW wrote this position is Lucifer's claim. This is how Lucifer in heaven could deceive sinless angels—for this statement reveals a double lie designed to trick people into accepting one lie by rejecting the other lie.

Consider someone telling you the following lie about one of your close friends, a friend you are certain is always just in all of his actions: "John is not just in beating his wife." Knowing that your friend is always just, you immediately recognize the allegation that "John is not just" is a lie. So, in order to reject the lie that John is not just, you conclude, "No, John must be just in beating his wife." Thus, in rejecting the one lie, you accept and promote the other lie—the lie that John is beating his wife! *Both* insinuations are false, and *both* must be rejected. It is false to say God is not just, *and* it is also false to say God imposes laws and inflicts pain and death as punishments for breaking them.

But sadly, many fail to recognize the second lie; therefore, they claim God is just to impose laws and use His power to inflict punishments upon sinners. They don't realize that they are presenting Satan's original lie about God and, thereby, are undermining God's law and government and obstructing the eternal gospel.

Some might doubt that the angels could be deceived like this. They may argue that these were brilliant sinless beings who lived in a sinless heaven and, as such, wouldn't be duped so easily by a lie. But that is the point. The angels in heaven had never heard a lie, much less a double lie. Moreover, the lie was being told by their beloved and trusted leader and friend, Lucifer. They were not prepared to even consider that they were being deceived.

But unlike those angels, we have the evidence of human history as recorded in Scripture and the life of Jesus, the living Word, the truth embodied that reveals God's true nature, character, and methods. We must reject the lie that God is not just; He is always just! Yet we also must reject the embedded lie that God imposes made-up laws on His creatures. Instead, God creates reality, and His laws are the protocols reality functions upon.

Furthermore, angels in heaven did not have an imposed list of rules to obey that required God to police and punish them. The same author, EGW, quoted by the lesson above also wrote:

- **But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* p. 109, emphasis mine.

What kind of law can be in operation and beings are living in harmony with it but haven't been informed about it or even thought of it?

This can be only design law—the protocols reality functions upon. Consider Isaac Newton discovering, not creating, the law of gravity and then telling his friends, “Hey, I have discovered the law of gravity.” As he describes that law to them, can't you envision them saying, “Wow, gravity is a law? I never thought of that; it is just how things work”?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks what evidence in Scripture for the cosmic conflict?

- Genesis account of the serpent and temptation
- Job chapter one
- Zechariah and the high priest Joshua
- The parable of the landowner who sows good seed only to find the field corrupted with weeds, and a servant asked, who did this and the landowner says an enemy did.
- Revelation 12:7 war in heaven already cited
- [Jesus] replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Luke 10:18 NIV84
- And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness Jude 6 NIV84.
- Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14
- Other texts?

Consider this one:

- His intent was that now, through the church, the **manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:10-11 NIV84, emphasis mine

The GC theme expands our understanding of the plan of salvation to be more than just the salvation of human beings; it includes the elimination of sin from the entire universe in such a way that all questions are answered and all the sinless are secured in their loyalty, and that requires the revelation of the truth about God's character, methods, and government and this is accomplished through Jesus.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the fall of Adam and Eve in the Genesis account, read the third paragraph,

- In this narrative, we see lies about God's character raised by the serpent, identified as the devil himself (that “serpent of old” [NKJV]) in Revelation 12:7–9. The serpent first uses a question to cast doubt on God's command, nearly reversing what God had commanded in his question.

Then, the serpent directly challenges what God had said, saying to Eve, “ ‘You will not surely die’ ” (Gen. 3:4, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 70.

What do lies do to love and trust when lies are believed?

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationship, character a terminal condition

But it all starts with lies about God and these lies center on God’s law.

Notice the conversation between the serpent and Eve and let’s unpack the lie,

- The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”
 “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
 Genesis 3:2-5 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is the lie? And what is the lie saying? Is Satan’s lie saying the following:

- You cannot die?
- God cannot kill you?

I know that many people have taught, because God told them in the day they eat that they will die, then Satan’s lie is telling them that they cannot die, that they have immortality. But, is that really what the lie is saying?

If I tell someone, “If you pick a dandelion, you will not surely die”—is that the same thing as saying that they cannot die or cannot be killed by God?

The falsehood about natural immortality came later. They had the Tree of Life in the Garden—why? If they had natural immortality, why the Tree of Life? And why the angel to later block their way to the Tree of Life after they sinned?

No, I don’t think Adam and Eve thought they had natural immortality and I don’t think this lie in Eden was to trick Eve into believing she had natural immortality.

The primary purpose of the lie, and what it actually does say is that eating the fruit, disobeying God, breaking God’s law will not **cause** death, will not surely, certainly, unavoidable result in death, that death does not come out from sin, from breaking God’s law. And therefore, the only conclusion left, if death does come, is that God kills, God executes, God is the source of death as punishment. So Satan is saying, you will not surely die from eating the fruit, I am not saying God won’t kill you for it, but

the eating the fruit itself won't cause death. The implication is that God's laws are not built into reality, disobedience to God's law doesn't directly harm.

And this lie is still taught throughout Christianity. Disobedience doesn't cause the punishment for sin, it doesn't cause the death, it causes a legal problem and God causes the death.

But this is contrary to Scripture:

- “Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” James 1:15 NIV84.
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” Galatians 6:8 NIV84.

The Bible teaches directly that sin causes death, but Satan said in Eden it wouldn't.

Further the Bible teaches,

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**. Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father **after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power**. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death**. 1 Corinthians 15:24–26 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine

The Bible teaches that death comes from sin and Satan who is the originator of sin is the one who holds the power of death and that God through Jesus destroys death and Satan's power. But Satan has lied about God and God's law and when Christians accept the lie that God's law functions like human law they teach the lie that God is the one who is the source of death—the wages of sin death—not the sleep death.

TUESDAY

Focuses our attention on Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 which describes Lucifer in heaven and his fall.

Let's examine Isaiah 14:

- “How you are fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer**, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘**I will ascend**

into heaven, **I will exalt** my throne above the stars of God; **I will also sit** on the mount of **the congregation On the farthest sides of the north**; **I will ascend** above the heights of the clouds, **I will be like** the Most High.’ **Yet you shall be brought down** to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. “**Those who see you** will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: ‘**Is this the man who made the earth tremble**, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, Who did not open the house of his prisoners?’ Isaiah 14:12-17 NKJV, emphasis mine.

This is an incredible passage that gives such insight into the controversy.

First note that Lucifer falls from heaven, consistent with Jesus’ statement, Jude, and Revelation.

But notice the method it describes Lucifer uses is the exact opposite of Jesus.

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did **not consider equality** with God something to be **grasped**, but **made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness**. And **being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him** to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Lucifer seeks to exalt himself, this is through claim, proclamation, declaration, he is seeking to impose a rule that claims the throne to rule over others. And all the kingdoms of this world are Satan’s and all of them function with a few elites rising up to take power, impose laws, and exploit the masses for the benefit of the elites in power.

Jesus on the other hand, is inherently equal to God, His position, power, authority, rulership is not declared, not claimed, not imposed, it stems from objective reality that He is by nature God. And notice what He does with power, rulership, He does not seek to rise above, to exploit, to rule over, but surrenders self, humbles self, sacrifices self for the uplifting of the masses. And that is why no earthly government represents the kingdom of God for all earthly governments operate upon imposed laws coercive enforcement with a few ruling elites exploiting the masses.

But note something else, the Bible describes Satan making six moves to elevate self but is brought low, whereas Jesus humbles Himself seven times and is exalted:

- “How you are fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer**, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘(1) **I will ascend** into heaven, (2) **I will exalt** my throne above the stars of God; (3) **I will also sit** on the mount of **the congregation** (4) **On the farthest sides of the north**; (5) **I will ascend** above the heights of the clouds, (6) **I will be like** the Most High.’ **Yet you shall be brought down** to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. “**Those who see you** will gaze at you, And consider

you, saying: ‘**Is this the man who made the earth tremble**, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, Who did not open the house of his prisoners?’ Isaiah 14:12-17 NKJV, emphasis mine.

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did (1) **not consider equality** with God something to be **grasped**, but (2) **made himself nothing**, (3) **taking the very nature of a servant**, (4) **being made in human likeness**. And (5) **being found in appearance as a man**, (6) **he humbled himself** and (7) **became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him** to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is consistent with what Jesus said,

- This is why Jesus responded with “If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up **his cross** and follow me. For whoever wants **to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.**” Matthew 16:24-25 NIV84, emphasis mine.

We must choose which kingdom we identify with, prefer, and practice, the kingdom of love and trust which leads to surrendering self to Jesus and then we will, like Jesus, sacrifice self to save others, or if we reject the truth and don’t surrender in trust to Jesus then we harden ourselves and become like Satan and use the power of the state to promote and protect self, including killing others to protect self.

Finally, notice this section of the Isaiah passage,

- “**Those who see you** will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: ‘**Is this the man who made the earth tremble**’ Isaiah 14:16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

I think this is referencing the final end of all things when all responsibility for sin is placed on Satan, and this is symbolically taught in the sanctuary day of atonement when the high priest, after cleansing the sanctuary, places his hands on the head of the scapegoat and the scapegoat is lead out into the wilderness never to be in the camp with the people again. The symbolism is that the high priest has removed sin—fear, selfishness, lies, distrust, from the hearts and minds of all who trust Jesus and places all of the responsibility back on the originator of sin. And the truth revealed settles the issues in the Great Controversy, all the saved now know that God is not the source of sin, and also not the source of pain, suffering, and death, that all of it goes back on the head of Satan, the originator of sin.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness and exposes Satan’s goal, which is to be the one worshiped, the one adored, the one enthroned into the hearts and minds of intelligent beings.

This is how Satan desecrates the sanctuary, or sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God. He does it by getting people to accept the lie about God's law and therefore accept that God functions like Satan in character, an imposer of punishments and the source of death, a being who cannot truly be trusted without a payment of blood being given to him to pay the legal debt so he won't kill us.

And, because of the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, if we worship a god who is like Satan in character, even if we call that god "Jesus" we will become like Satan in character and that is Satan's goal to destroy the image of God in humans and place his own image where God's should be. He does this through all of the various means to corrupt our knowledge of God and get us to worship the creature instead of the Creator, and as Romans 1 describes, then our minds become darkened, depraved and futile.

But let's unpack just a little more the progressive steps of Satan's strategies, how he tempts and seeks to lead people into sin.

- Step one is deception—he deceived angels in heaven, he deceived Eve in Eden, and he tried to deceive Jesus
- Step two, but if deception doesn't work, he will add inducements; to Eve, "you will become like God" and to Jesus, "all the kingdoms of the world will be yours if you worship me." It will be worth it to compromise just on this one little thing, think of all you can gain, of all the good you can do if you would only compromise on this one little thing.
- Step three, but if deception and inducements don't work, Satan eventually brings threats, pain, suffering, hardship to discourage and coercion. Jesus' was betrayed, mocked, beaten, falsely accused, unjustly tried and convicted and crucified. So too many righteous through history have suffered all kinds of pain and injustice, all intended to get the righteous to rebel, lose faith, become discouraged, and give up, as Job's wife suggested to him, curse God and die.

But God has promised,

- No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV

FRIDAY

Read the quote,

- "Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that **God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin**; that there was **no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government**, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to

defend it. . . . **Had he [Satan] been immediately blotted from existence, they [the inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds] would have served God from fear** rather than from love. The **influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed**, nor would the **spirit of rebellion** have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. **For the good of the entire universe** through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and **the immutability of His law** might forever be placed beyond all -question.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492, 493, 499, emphasis mine.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 8, 2025 2-4 p.m. Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain: A Special Presentation by Dr. Jennings. Where, our ministry building. The event will be streamed live.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 10

Rules of Engagement

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8 NKJV

What does this text mean?

Well let's read a little wider in 1 John, verses 4-9, does this help or does it make it harder to understand?

- Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and **sin is lawlessness**. And you know that He was manifested to **take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever **abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him**. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. **He who sins is of the devil**, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He might destroy the works of the devil**. **Whoever has been born of God does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:4–9 NKJV, emphasis mine.

Does this wider reading clear things up for you? Do you have any questions?

What law lens are we reading this through?

Do we believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, or are God's laws design laws, the protocols the Creator built life to operate upon? Does the answer to that question impact our understanding of this passage?

Sin is lawlessness, which means what? Being out of harmony with the design protocols life is built to operate upon.

And what is the protocol life is built to operate upon?

- He who pursues righteousness and love finds life Proverbs 21:21 NIV84.

- Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40 NIV84.
- “God is love” 1 John 4:8
- Love is not self-seeking 1 Corinthians 13:5
- God’s divine nature is seen in what He has made Romans 1:20

God’s law of love is the template, protocol, life-giving principles upon which reality and life is built. Consider this commentary,

- **It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love.** In the light from Calvary **it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven;** that the love which “seeketh not her own” has its source in the heart of God... *The Desire of Ages*, p. 9, emphasis mine.
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. “I do nothing of Myself,” said Christ; “the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.” “I seek not Mine own glory,” but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life.** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21, emphasis mine.

Do you agree? Have we not demonstrated the truth of this through many examples in nature?

With this perspective in mind—what is sin? Lawlessness, meaning what?

- Whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:9-10 NIV84.

What kind of “rule” is that? Is it an imposed rule? Can love be generated, promoted, obtained, by legislation and through external enforcement?

Paul makes it clear a little later in Romans:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84

So sin is lawlessness and the law is love and therefore sin is anti-love, selfishness, and the law of love is broken when we don't trust, lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness.

So, no matter what the behavior, if it is done out of fear and selfishness then it is not done out of love and trust and therefore is out of harmony with the law of life, the law of love, and is still sin.

So Sabbath keeping based on the idea that God's law functions like human law, a rule that if we break requires God to punish, leads to fear-based self-centered Sabbath rules, don't do this, can't do that, worry and fear "Did I have the water over my knees, was that behavior legal, authorized to do on the Sabbath" etc., all motivated by fear and selfishness. And keeping the Sabbath based on external law, imposed law, legally, leads such worshipers to crucify the Savior and want Him off the cross in time to keep the Sabbath.

Okay, love is fulfillment of the law and we can only experience the love of God filling our hearts and minds and transforming us to live lives of love through trust, thus anything not of trust is sin because such living continues to live out fear and selfishness.

Let's continue to unpack the passage from John, What does "And you know that He was manifested to **take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin," mean?

The Greek work translated "sins" can be translated "sin" or "sinful" or "sinfulness." And in fact the same word is translated as sins and sin in the same sentence. Which do you think is the best translation, "He was manifested to take away our sins, or sin?"

What did Jesus come to take away—the record, historical acts, of sin, the legal penalty God inflicts for sin, or the actual sin, the sinfulness, the infection of fear and selfishness?

As John the Baptist preached, Jesus is:

- "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29 NIV84.

Jesus came to take away the sin, the infection of fear and selfishness, the distrust, the rebelliousness that stems from distrust, fear, and selfishness and restore trust and thereby restore God's living law of love back into the hearts and minds of all who trust Him.

What does "Whoever **abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him**" mean?

What does it mean to abide in Him?

- Does this mean those who have claimed the legal payment of Jesus' blood to their heavenly record to pay their legal debt? No!

- Does it mean those who read their Bible every day, attend church on the right day, and pay a faithful tithe?

It means those who live in trust, who have an intimate love and trust relationship with Jesus and have surrendered self to Jesus. And if someone lives in love and trust with Jesus, then their actions are no longer driven by fear and selfishness, but motivated by love and trust. They are no longer in rebellion. It is not about the specific behavior and how well it is performed, it is about the heart loving and trusting Jesus and following where Jesus leads.

Those who remain in fear, distrust, rebellion, selfishly seeking to do their own thing and go their own way, regardless of whether they call themselves Christian or not, continue in sin for sin is selfishness driven by fear and distrust. And their continued actions in this way demonstrate they do not know Jesus for who He really is—remember knowing is intimacy with.

This gives us insight to understand, what “**He who sins is of the devil**, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” means.

It means those who choose fear and selfishness, distrust of God, are out of harmony with God’s design laws of truth, love, liberty and are therefore in sin and in the camp of the devil who chose to leave love and trust for pride sake and seek to advance self through deceit, no longer trusting God. All who live by the same motives of fear, selfishness, practicing the methods of deceit, manipulation, coercion, are of the devil who is the originator of such methods.

What does this mean? “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He might destroy the works of the devil**”?

What has the devil been working to do? Displace God from the hearts and minds of intelligent beings as the one most loved and trusted and thereby efface the image of God in people and place Satan’s image where God’s should be. Jesus came to uplift the Father, to expose Satan as a liar and fraud and to restore in humanity the living law of God and thereby restore and perfect the image of God in humanity.

Consider this historical quote,

- The life of Christ is to be revealed in humanity. Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God; but **Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image.** *Review and Herald* June 18, 1895, par. 2, emphasis mine.

Laboring is working, Jesus came to destroy Satan’s work, to restore the image of God into humanity while simultaneously revealing the truth that secures the universe unfallen and procuring the remedy to save every single human who trust in Him.

Finally, what does this mean? “**Whoever has been born of God does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he has been born of God.”

What is sin? It is lawlessness stemming from distrust, those who are reborn are reborn with a new spirit of love and trust and thus they are no longer living a life driven by fear and selfishness, but by love and trust. If they have a moment where they fall short, think Romans 7, where one does what they do not want to do, that is not their new self, that is manifestation of old habits, conditioned responses, reflexive actions coming from old brain wiring that was laid down before the heart was reborn to love and trust. Thus, the person who has such an action is grieved in their heart, they immediately call out to God, “What a wretched man that I am who will save me from this body of death?” In other words, these shortcomings are not coming from their true new self who loves the Lord, but from remnants of the old self not yet purged, pruned, and rewired out of their being.

So my paraphrase of these verses when we understand design law:

- Everyone who sins breaks the law of love—the law upon which life was created to operate. In fact, sin is selfishness, which means acting without love—choosing to deviate from the law upon which life is based. But you know that Christ came to heal our hearts and minds and remove the infection of selfishness in order to restore love into our hearts. And in him, there is no selfishness or defilement—no sin. No one who lives in unity with Christ keeps on living for self; no one who continues in selfishness has either seen or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone deceive you. Those who are righteous 'do what is right because it is right'—just as Christ is righteous and always does what is right. He who does what is selfish is practicing the devil's methods and principles, as the devil is the originator of selfishness. The reason the Son of God came to earth was to destroy the devil's work of selfishness and bring the universe back into unity with God and his law of love! No one whose mind and heart have been recreated in Godlike love will continue to live selfishly, for God's character is reproduced in them; they cannot go on living self-centeredly, because they have been renewed in God's very likeness. 1 John 3:4-9 REM.

Read the first two paragraphs,

- A powerful narrative that reveals the nature of the cosmic conflict can be found in 1 Kings 18:19–40, Elijah on Mount Carmel, where the Lord exposes the so-called “gods of the nations.” Yet, there is more behind the scenes about these “gods” than that they are mere figments of pagan imagination. Behind the “gods” that the nations surrounding Israel thought they were worshiping was, actually, something else.
“ ‘They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear’ ” (Deut. 32:17, NKJV). Paul adds, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (1 Cor. 10:20, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 76.

The story of Elijah and the confrontation of Baal worship is quite profound. It has multiple important lessons for us.

Who was Baal?

- Baal was the son of El, (El-ohim, El-Shaadi)
- God of weather, thunder, rain, brought the harvest
- Called the mighty of the Earth
- Fought against the great serpent leviathan
- Fought against Mot the god of death and in that battle Baal dies and rises again to bring life to the land
- What is wrong with Baal worship?
- Baal required appeasement, that offerings be made to him in order to pay for sin, to and merit his blessing
- Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to Christians who worship a punishing wrathful god that must be appeased by the blood of a human sacrifice to keep him from killing us.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following with which I agree:

- **“Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God.” White, E.G., *Faith I Live By*, p. 59, emphasis mine.

God knows that the issues Elijah dealt with were the central issues in the GC and they keep arising through history and thus God had His prophet Malachi write:

- “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” Malachi 4:5-6 NIV84.

This is not talking about the individual Elijah who is now in heaven, it is talking about people who arise before Christ returns to do what Elijah did—call Baal worship false and call people back to worship God in truth. This requires rejecting the lie that God’s law is imposed and returning to worshiping God as Creator whose laws are design laws. If we accept the lie of Romanism, that God’s law functions like Caesar’s, imposed rules, then we teach that God’s justice is using His power to inflict punishment, including death on the wicked, and that God needs a payment of sinless human blood in order to not kill us. That is Baal worship. When we return to worshiping God as Creator we recognize that God does not have to use power to cause death, that as the Bible teaches Satan wields

the power of death, death comes out from sin, and God, through Christ, destroys death and removes sinfulness from all who trust Him. We realize that God is using power to destroy sin, death, Satan, and save all who trust Him and any person who dies in the end dies not when God uses power to inflict harm, but when God stops using power to prevent the destruction that sin brings.

The real historical events of the life of Elijah also serve as powerful object lessons to the plan of salvation.

We already identified how Baal counterfeits very closely the truth, but with the lie about God being a punishing God requiring appeasement. But there are other lessons from these events.

These events document that:

- God cannot win the war with physical might and power. After the fire fell at Carmel all the people shouted “The Lord He is God.” But they did not stay faithful afterward. This is evidence that confirms, along with other historical events recorded in Scripture, that God cannot win this war by using might and power, this is why Zechariah tells us, not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord. What God wants, our love, our trust, our loyalty, our devotion, our friendship and our faithfulness to Him—none of that can be obtained by imposed law with law enforcement. It is only obtained by the living law of love and truth being internalized into the heart and mind of the believer. That is why God writes His law on our hearts and minds—we are won by the evidence of the truth of God’s character of love and in trust we are reborn with new heart and new motives.
- The two altars, one to Baal and one to Yahweh, symbolize two types of hearts and minds.
 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your **bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind Romans 12:1-2 NIV84, emphasis mine.
 - We are to present ourselves as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God. And the two altars represent the two views of God, the true God and the false god, and subsequently what is brought represents the two types of people who worship them.
- The water which Elijah had poured over his altar symbolizes the washing of our hearts and minds with the Word and the Holy Spirit
 - “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through the word**, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” Ephesians 5:25-27 NIV84, emphasis mine.
 - The altar of Baal was not cleansed with water, just as the hearts of those who worship the dictator god do not have their hearts and minds cleansed from fear and selfishness by the Holy Spirit, why? Because they reject the Holy Spirit, they choose instead the spirit of fear and selfishness. The Holy Spirit cleanses by truth and love, and when the truth is rejected people are refusing the cleansing of their hearts and minds.

- Then fire falls and consumes the sacrifice and the altar—this is symbolic not of punishment, not of anger, not of wrath, but the cleansing power of God to cleanse hearts and mind, when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost they saw two streams of fire the fires of truth and love. The physical fire called down by Elijah is the type the Holy Spirit is the antitype that came down at Pentecost but will come down again on the Elijah people at the Latter Rain, which I believe we are going to experience very soon. But the fire of the Latter Rain only falls on the altar, hearts and minds, of those who have been washed by the water, the Word, to be cleansed from the lies about God and worship Him in spirit and in truth, in love and truth. Elijah and the altar with physical fire is the object lesson, the hearts and minds of people being purified by the Holy Spirit is the reality.
- The altar to Baal had no fire fall, because hearts and minds that internalize lies, distortions, fear, selfishness rather than truth, love, trust are not cleansed and are not empowered by the indwelling Spirit, they do not have the power of love burn out the fear, guilt, shame, selfishness and cleanse them, no matter how desperate the people. And they ultimately cut themselves, injure themselves, harm themselves like the prophets of Baal, not necessarily literally, but they cut themselves off from God, cut their souls, wound their hearts and minds with their refusal of the truth and their preference for lies and the methods of evil.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the story in Daniel 10 where Daniel prays for God to deliver his people and 21 days later Gabriel comes and tells Daniel that his prayers have been heard but that the prince of Persia has been opposing Gabriel for the last 21 days.

Let's read some of the text in Daniel 10, Gabriel speaking:

- “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the **prince of the Persian** kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then **Michael**... came to help me, because I was detained there with the **king of Persia**... Soon I will return to fight against the **prince of Persia**, and when I go, the **prince of Greece** will come... (**No one supports me against them except Michael**, your prince). Daniel 10:12-13, 20, NIV84, emphasis mine.

What do you understand is going on here?

The Good News Translation helps us, it reads in verse 13:

- The **angel prince of the kingdom of Persia** opposed me for twenty-one days. Daniel 10:13 GNT.

Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world, (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

So Satan's subordinate fallen angels, assigned to their own territories, are referred to here as princes of Persia and Greece. These are fallen angels who are working against Gabriel—how do they do that?

Another player in the text is the King of Persia, that is Cyrus. Cyrus has to decide to release the Jews and let them return to Jerusalem or not.

Gabriel came to influence him to do this and the prince of Persia is working against Gabriel.

How? Gabriel is influencing with truth and love and the prince of Persia with lies, fears, selfishness, doubt, etc.

You can imagine the types of thoughts Cyrus might be struggling with? *What will be the economic loss of all these slaves? Can my kingdom afford it? Will I be releasing people to turn into a future enemy to attack me?* Etc.

And Cyrus has to decide what he will do.

But, what do you think of the fact that only Michael was able to help Gabriel?

First, who do we understand Michael to be?

Is Michael Jesus in His preincarnate form? The Jehovah Witnesses teach that Michael and Jesus are the same and that Jesus is not fully God but is a created being.

SDAs teach that Michael and Jesus are the same but that **Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, possessing life original, unborrowed, underived, of the same substance as the Father** and having been one with the Father from all eternity. So, our discussion is not about whether Jesus is fully and completely God, we believe He is. The question is, prior to His incarnation, prior to Him becoming human, in what form did He choose to present Himself to the angels?

The Bible tells us that one member of the Godhead chose to manifest Himself in the form of an angel. The following account is Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. Notice that the One who is speaking to Moses from the bush is called both the angel of the Lord and God:

- There **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him **in flames** of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called to him from within the bush**, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”** At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:2-6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The New Testament supports this same series of events in Acts 7:30-38.

In Judges 2 we find Samson’s parents have an encounter with God and again find that He manifested Himself in the form of an angel:

- The **angel of the LORD** went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, **“I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you,’** Then Manoah inquired of **the angel of the LORD**, **“What is your name**, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?”

He replied, **“Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.”** Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, **the angel of the LORD** ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the **angel of the LORD** did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.

“We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. **“We have seen God!”** Judges 13:16-22 NIV84, emphasis mine

Who was the One who delivered the people from Egyptian bondage, led them in the land and formed the covenant with the people? It was God, Manoah acknowledges this in the end.

So we find Biblical evidence that one member of the Godhead has chosen to manifest Himself in the form of an angel. The next question is, was this Jesus, and did He go by the name Michael?

Paul tells us explicitly it was Jesus who led them out of Egypt:

- They were all baptized into **Moses in the cloud and in the sea**. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the **spiritual rock that accompanied them**, and **that rock was Christ**. 1Corinthians 10:2-4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But we have more evidence, Jesus said:

- “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear **the voice of the Son of God** and **those who hear will live**... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will **hear his voice** and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned John 5:25,28,29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Who did Jesus say will call the dead to life? He will. It is His voice that opens the grave and gives life to the dead. Therefore, we can positively identify the member of the Godhead who took the form of an angel as Jesus because the Bible tells us it is at the voice of the archangel that the dead rise, so the angel whose voice sounds must be Jesus:

- For the **Lord himself** will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the **voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first
1Thessalonians 4:16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

So the final question, did Jesus, in the form of an angel prior to His incarnation as a human, use the name Michael? Evidently, according to Jude, He did for Jude tells us it was Michael who raised Moses back to life:

- But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Jude 9 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Further, the name Michael means “who is like God?” or “one who is like God.” Both fit perfectly with Christ who said, “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” John 14:9.

Finally, for those who have a hard time imagining that Jesus could have chosen to present Himself *in the form of an angel*, consider, didn’t He choose to become a human being? And didn’t He do such a wonderful job of being human that most people in His day never realized He was God?

So, we have identified Michael as Jesus in His preincarnate form, the next question is, why is Jesus the only one who can help Gabriel? Doesn’t the Bible teach that 1/3 of the angels fell and 2/3’s stayed loyal? So shouldn’t there be at least a 2 to 1 advantage for the good angels? Then why are there no angels to help Gabriel?

Because the war is not about might and power. It is about truth and love. Gabriel took the position that Lucifer vacated when he rebelled. That position is as covering cherub in God’s very presence. There is not another created being that is closer to God, is more intimate, knows cognitively, but also by experience, more about God, His character, methods, and the power of His love and truth than Gabriel. No other angel could bring a stronger influence of love and truth than Gabriel. The only other being that could, is God Himself, and thus the only one able to help Gabriel is Michael, Jesus, who is fully God and can bring infinitely more truth and love than Gabriel can bring. And ultimately, the influence of fear, lies, selfishness is countered and Cyrus freely chooses to let the people go.

WEDNESDAY

I found the title for this week’s lesson strange, and then this day’s lesson was quite bizarre to me. Let’s read some of the lesson,

- We have seen in previous lessons that, within the cosmic conflict, Satan and his cohorts are temporarily granted significant jurisdiction in this world, limited according to **some kind of rules of engagement**.

These **rules of engagement** limit not only the actions of the enemy—the devil and his cohorts—but **they also limit God’s action** to eliminate or mitigate the evil that (temporarily) falls within the jurisdiction of the enemy. Because the Lord will never break His promises, to the extent **He has agreed to the rules of engagement**—thus affording some limited and temporary rulership to the devil—God has morally limited His future course of action (without lessening His raw power)...

Nevertheless, **there are “rules” that limit what God can do** while remaining true to the principles behind His government. These limits include at least (1) the granting of free will to creatures and (2) the **covenantal rules of engagement, which we are not privy to**, at least now. Such **impediments and limitations on divine action** have significant implications for God’s moral ability to reduce and/or immediately eliminate evil in this world. Thus, we see continued evil and suffering, which can indeed cause many people to question either God’s existence or His goodness. However, once the background of the great controversy is understood, and **the limits God has placed on how He will deal with evil**, we can to some degree better understand why things are as they are—at least until the final triumph of God over evil. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 80, emphasis mine.

What does this sound like to you? Does it almost sound like some system of agreement, rules, regulations, oversight, arbitrary restrictions have been implemented and God has made a bargain, an agreement, a code of war that He has obliged Himself to operate within, similar to human nations who have the Geneva Convention?

I don’t know if that is what the lesson authors intend or not, but if they do then they are completely wrong and such a construct misrepresents God and undermines His power to win.

Any view which suggests there are external rules that God is obliged to abide by undermines God’s plan of salvation because God wins by truth and love, not by might and power. Whenever we undermine truth and love we obstruct God’s healing power.

There are no imposed, made up, rules, regulations, agreements between God and Satan—it is directly and simply how reality works, how the laws that God built reality to operate upon function. God is limited by reality—God cannot create mature character. It is not possible for Him to create a being with mature character. He can create sinless beings, beings without any fear, sin, selfishness, guilt, shame, beings operating only upon pure love and trust. But if character is to be formed, it can only form by the free exercise of the individuality and power of choice of the intelligent being. This is not a rule, an agreement, a regulation, it is how reality works, how love works, how truth works.

If God wants free beings who love and trust Him, then He creates them with freedom to choose and the ability to comprehend and to love. If God wants only robots who appear to be loving in their behaviors, He can certainly do that, but robots cannot develop character, individuality, and cannot love, trust, or become friends.

So all of God's actions are always in harmony with His character of love, and the design laws of reality He has constructed all life to exist and operate upon. There are no arbitrary, made-up rules of engagement. And to present it this way seriously risks misleading people into lies about God.

Any questions about this? Any stories in the Bible that would suggest there are rules of engagement?

THURSDAY

Read Mark 6:5-6:

- He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Mark 6:5-6 NIV84.

And in response to this text the lesson states,

- Some limits or rules of engagement seem to be in place, dynamically related to such things as faith and prayer. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 81.

So there a rule—and the rule says if you don't have enough faith, at least a mustard seed's worth, then God is forbidden from using His power to perform a miracle. The devil has multiple demons, with faith meters going around and measuring the faith levels, "Wait, stop the miracle Jesus, that person's faith is only 19 nanomoles per kilogram of brain tissue. You have agreed to the rules of engagement and only when a person's faith is 20 nanomoles are you allowed to heal them."

Do we think there is some rules of engagement like this? This is quite preposterous.

They should eliminate all such language and simply speak of reality. Faith is the same as trust. And God cannot help people who do not trust Him, not because of some external rule agreed upon with Satan, but because love doesn't operate in hearts that do not trust. It is that simple.

And worse, while God still has power to perform physical miracles on the bodies of people who do not trust Him, what would be the result if He did? If they believed in Baal, or goat-demons, or Beelzebub, or that the ritual of whatever sacrament, and they have placed their faith in those things or systems and Jesus heals them anyway, because He loves them, what does His healing do? Doesn't it reinforce the lies, the falsehood, that their false god sent Jesus to heal them?

Or if they didn't believe in God and they were sick because of wild living and drug abuse and God healed them physically, but they have had no change of heart, what does that result in? More abuse of

self, with more harmful interpersonal and societal actions that addicts inflict on those around them, and all those actions further harden their hearts searing their consciences making them more like Satan in character and less likely to come to repentance. But if He allows them to reap the pain and suffering their own rebellious lifestyles are sowing into their lives, then those consequences may lead them like the Prodigal son to come to their senses and repent and go home to their heavenly Father and experience healing and restoration.

The point is there are not external rules of engagement there is only God and His character of love and His design laws of love built into the operations of reality.

MONDAY

The dragon and beast of Revelation 13.

What do these represent?

If you haven't read our magazine [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17](#), I encourage you to do so. You can download a digital copy online or print versions are available at no cost in the US, South Africa and Australia.

The dragon represents Satan and the beast corrupt powers, but the dragon and the beast have ten horns and seven heads, what do these represent?

The 10 horns represent the 10 powers wielded by the dragon and the beast and they are:

1. Lies—Satan is the father of lies and, since all the kingdoms of the earth are his, all the kingdoms of the earth wield lies. They lie to other kingdoms and to their own citizens. They use propaganda and other forms of misinformation to advance their agenda.
2. Imposed laws—These are made-up rules that require external enforcement and always result in unequal, arbitrary treatment and injustice (Isaiah 1:10; Ecclesiastes 5:8). These human-made laws stand in contrast to God's laws, which are the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate (laws of health, laws of physics, the moral laws) and which treat everyone the same (Luke 6:43–45). Harmony with God's design laws brings life; breaking them automatically injures the lawbreaker and results in death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15; Galatians 6:8). God's law is perfect and brings life to the soul (Psalm 19:7). Satan is not the Creator, the governments of earth are not God's (John 18:36; Matthew 4:8, 9), and the laws of the kingdoms of this earth are also not God's; they are imposed rules. Wielding this power, human governments make up rules that determine what is "legal" and "illegal." And these rules change from place to place and time to time. God and His law never change. All earthly governments are based upon the so-called "rule of law," which are made-up rules requiring external enforcement (Daniel 7:25, Jeremiah 8:8).
3. Police and prosecution—the power to accuse and bring charges (Zechariah 3:1), restrict liberties, enforce fines, and arrest and imprison in order to compel and control a population. God's kingdom does not use these powers (2 Peter 2:11; Jude 9). Jesus explicitly stated that He

would not accuse us before the Father (John 5:45). Satan is the accuser, and his agents used this power when they arrested and accused Jesus (Luke 22:54) and the apostles (Acts 12:3). All human governments use this power.

4. Judicial—the power to determine guilt or innocence, to pardon or convict, and to determine punishment. We see this power wielded by Pontius Pilate in unjustly convicting and sentencing Jesus to death (Matthew 27:19). God’s power is the power of truth. Thus, His judgment is the accurate pronouncement (diagnosis) of what actually is. God’s judgment doesn’t determine the condition of a soul; it confirms the condition of a soul (Matthew 12:33–37; Revelation 22:11). Human governments, however, pass external judgment determining guilt or innocence under their imposed laws—irrespective of actual guilt or innocence. In human systems, the guilty often go free and the innocent are found guilty. God’s judgments are the accurate diagnosis of the condition of each heart and mind.
5. Economic—the power to print money, regulate currency, manipulate its value, and control commerce—all used to exploit populations through taxation, tax incentives and loopholes, currency manipulation, inflation, commerce, and trade. Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24; 22:17–21).
6. War—the use of military force to compel, control, or overcome other states to expand a nation’s wealth and power; the power to raise a military and compel service; all powers bent on attacking and destroying others for the protection of the state (Job 1:14, 15; Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:11).
7. Death—Satan’s kingdoms wield the power of death, the ability to take life in war, by police action, and through execution; the power to deceive souls, cutting people off from God, the source of life, resulting in eternal death. Satan is the “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44); Jesus came to destroy him “who holds the power of death—that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
8. Education—the power to educate the populace, setting a national educational narrative, moral values, and history; the power to deny education/access to truth (e.g., the Bible) to those they want to keep disempowered. Moses was educated in the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). Daniel and his friends were educated in the ways of Babylon (Daniel 1:5). God’s people are to be educated in the ways, methods, truths, and principles of God’s kingdom. Satan uses the kingdoms of this world to educate people in the ways of this world.
9. Ownership (Genesis 47:16)—the power to determine ownership of lands, peoples, goods, resources, activities, and business endeavors—who can own a license to make certain products or open a school, hospital, or refinery, etc. But the truth of God’s kingdom is that all things in heaven and on earth belong to God: “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14 NIV84, see also Psalm 24:1, 50:10, 89:11; 1 Corinthians 10:26). We own nothing. We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him to use His resources for the uplifting of His kingdom (Genesis 1:26–28; Luke 12:42, 43; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:10). It is Satan’s deception to get us to believe that we are the owners, which inflames selfishness, jealousy, conflict, and division.
10. Fear—as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they ran and hid because they were afraid (Genesis 3:10). Every other power (horn) used by Satan’s beastly systems ultimately exploits and works through the power of fear. When lies are believed, they break the bonds of love and trust and result in fear and selfishness, motivating people to protect self at the expense of others.

Imposed laws instill the fear of getting into legal trouble with subsequent inflicted punishment, enforced by police and judicial powers; economic policies incite fear of poverty, debt, foreclosure, and loss of whatever one “owns;” war inflames the fear of pain, suffering, loss, and death; and people are educated to be afraid of going against the state. All beastly systems advance their power through fear. In God’s kingdom, “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 NKJV).

The Seven Heads of the Dragon and Beast

While the ten powers (horns) are used by worldly kingdoms to advance their agendas, the seven heads direct the use of those powers. The head is where one thinks, reasons, and worships. These seven heads, each with a blasphemous name, represent the seven false religious philosophies that have manifested throughout human history and which have directed the formation of the various beastly governments and their use of the ten powers.

In Revelation 17, we’re given more details regarding these seven heads:

- The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while (vv. 9, 10 NIV84).

Why are the seven heads also described as seven hills? In Scripture, hills (i.e., high places) represent places of worship. Zion was called God’s holy hill (Psalm 2:6). But in this case, it is blasphemous worship being represented; in the Bible, hills can also represent places of pagan (false) worship (Leviticus 26:30; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4). Thus, the seven heads with blasphemous names are seven hills, representing the seven false religious philosophies Satan has used throughout history to capture minds in order to separate people from God.

At the time John was writing Revelation, the first century after Christ’s ascension, five of these systems had already been exposed as false by their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. One was in power at the time but had not yet betrayed Christ and fallen into corruption, and one would arise in the future and remain for a short while before Jesus returns.

The seven false religious systems are:

1. Paganism—earth and nature worship, sun and moon worship, idol worship, all forms of beliefs in pagan gods (Baal, Molech, Voodoo, witchcraft, etc.)
2. Godlessness—the belief that there is no God or gods (evolutionism, humanism, scientism, etc.)
3. Eastern mysticism—the mystical religions of spirit worship, ancestor worship, or energy/cosmos worship (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)
4. Islam—while not formalized until much later, this refers to religious beliefs going back to Ishmael and his twelve sons. Islam recognizes Muhammad as the last of the prophets, not the first. Thus, Muhammad did not create Islam; he organized and codified it based upon the religious beliefs of the Arabic people, who have historically believed that the promised Messiah would come through Ishmael.
5. Judaism—it fell when they rejected Jesus as the Son of God, our Messiah, crucified Him, and then persecuted those who accepted Him. Their system was left to them desolate (Matthew 23:37, 38).

6. Roman Catholicism—it fell when it rejected the truth that Jesus taught, a religion based on design law, freedom, and healing, and replaced it with a religion based on Roman law, imperialism, and authoritarianism. It has taken the “rule of law” concept and created a religion modeled after the Roman hierarchy while co-opting Christian language. Thus, the Roman church became beastly and persecuted the saints throughout the Dark Ages.
7. False Protestantism—the Protestant churches that continue to embrace Romanism’s lies about God’s government and methods and seek to advance their self-styled plan of salvation through the imposed-law lie, teaching that salvation is a legal process rather than a process of restoration and healing.

Again, in the first century after Christ, when John wrote the book of Revelation (circa ad 96), the first five of these religious systems had all rejected Jesus, the Son of God, as our Messiah and proven themselves to be fallen into corruption, blasphemy, and lies.

The new head, the sixth—Christianity—was just arising, soon giving way to the Roman church that became corrupt when it embraced pagan Rome’s imperial law as the way God’s law also functions; as a result, it built a false legal system of salvation.

This sixth head was followed by the final head to rise (the seventh)—apostate Protestantism, which, while protesting some doctrinal differences with Rome, continues to embrace and promote the imposed-law view of God’s kingdom, a legal plan of salvation, while wielding worldly methods to forward its view of justice.

It should be noted that true Christianity is not fallen; it is represented by the virtuous woman that fled into the wilderness (Revelation 12:1-6) so as not to be destroyed by the dragon and his beastly powers.

The Chameleon Beast of Revelation 13:1

This beast, depicted with seven heads and ten horns, is actually a composite representation of all the earthly powers that Satan has used and is using to advance his kingdom on this earth. This beast is a chameleon that manifests itself with different attributes, dominating in different places and times in history, but always using the methods and powers of Satan and always working to oppose God.

Remember, heads do the thinking; the horns are the weapons used by the heads to advance their agendas. Thus, in all societies throughout history, it is the religious beliefs and philosophies (heads) embraced by the leaders that direct the governmental powers (horns) to advance their agendas using the powers of Satan (also horns).

- During the Dark Ages, it was the Roman Catholic head that advanced its agenda and controlled populations through the use of various state powers (horns): lies, imposed laws, police (accusations of people, even kings, as heretics), judicial (Inquisition), economic (taxation, indulgences), death (executions), war (Crusades), education (restricting access to the Bible, teaching catechisms), ownership (church ownership of property and wealth), and fear—the fear

of earthly suffering, punishments, and torment *and* of eternal torment and damnation to hell if one rejected the church's dogmas.

- In many Arab countries (Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.), Islamic beliefs (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In much of ancient Rome, Greece, and Africa, it was pagan beliefs (head) that directed the horns (state/tribal powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In communist countries (China, Cuba, etc.), the godless beliefs of evolution and humanism (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In modern Israel, the Jewish beliefs (head), including that the Messiah has not yet come, direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.

This first beast is a chameleon; it changes and adapts as social, political, and religious circumstances change. At one point and place in history, the Roman Catholic head dominated; at another point and place, the godless head dominates; at another point and place, the Islamic, Jewish, or false Protestant heads dominate. But whatever head dominates, it is the same beast using the same beastly powers to compel, coerce, control, and oppose God and His people—because this beast receives its power from Satan, the dragon.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the book of Job,

If you haven't read our pamphlet [The Book of Job and the Last Days: A Cosmic Overview](#) I encourage you to do so. It also is available for digital download on our website or for free in print in the US, South Africa, and Australia.

The pamphlet outlines seven lessons from the book of Job, and each of these are unpacked and discussed in the pamphlet, but seven end-time lessons for us are:

1. The War Is Bigger than Us
2. The Enemy Force Is Led by a Supernatural Deceiver
3. Pain, Suffering, and Death Originate with Satan—But God Gets Blamed
4. Family and Friends Can Be Used to Tempt and Discourage
5. Bible Perfection Is About Unshakable Love, Trust, and Loyalty to God. It Is Not About Task Performance or Rule Compliance
6. Health and Wellness Are Not Evidence of Righteousness
7. The Highest Calling for Each of Us Is to Say of God What Is Right

And we could add an 8th,

- And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Job 42:10 NKJV.

The righteous overcome in the end by being restored to Christlikeness within, they love God and others and they will pray for those who abuse them, they will not love their lives so much as to shrink from death, but have the love of Christ in their hearts which overcomes the fear that Satan tries to inflame. And no matter what we lose in this world, for all those who trust God, He will restore far more than what was sacrificed.

FRIDAY

The lesson quotes a paragraph from EGW, let's unpack it:

- “Fallen man is Satan’s **lawful captive**. [what law? Imposed, legal condemnation? No, it is very simple, the law of life is broken, and human kind is under the law of sin and death, no longer naturally operating upon the law of love. This is why we must die to self and be reborn with a new heart and right spirit. Notice what is said next.] The mission of Christ was to **rescue him from the power of his great adversary**. [Satan’s power is not legal, it is the power of fear, selfishness, greed, lust, deceit, it is the power that operates in the inner man and obstructs the truth, obstructs love, and obstructs our ability to trust God.] **Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan’s suggestions**, [Because of the fall we have a heart that naturally prefers fear and selfishness, thus are inclined to sin, bent toward doubt and survival drives] and he cannot successfully resist so terrible a foe unless Christ, **the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him**, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. [When we are reborn we receive the life of Christ, new animating energy of love and trust via the Holy Spirit that empowers us to say no to the old life of fear and selfishness.] God alone can limit the power of Satan. He is going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. He is not off his watch for a single moment, through fear of losing an opportunity to destroy souls. It is important that God’s people understand this, that they may escape his snares. Satan is **preparing his deceptions**, that in his last campaign against the people of God **they may not understand that it is he**. 2 Corinthians 11:14: ‘And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.’ While some deceived souls are advocating that he does not exist, he is taking them captive, and is working through them to a great extent. Satan knows better than God’s people **the power that they can have over him when their strength is in Christ**. When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believer in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host. He is too cunning to come openly, boldly, with his temptations; for then the drowsy energies of the Christian would arouse, and he would rely upon the strong and mighty Deliverer. But he comes in unperceived, and works in disguise through the children of disobedience who profess godliness.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 341. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 82, emphasis mine.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 8, 2025 2-4 p.m. Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain: A Special Presentation by Dr. Jennings. Where, our ministry building. The event will be streamed live.

PODCAST—Designed4More: Please share our new podcast with others. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 11

What More Could I Have Done?

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title, Jesus asking, "What More Could I Have Done?"

Can you imagine Jesus asking this of every lost person? What about to Satan?

What is the answer? Nothing! There is nothing more that Jesus could have done and that is the point.

Consider how this author expresses how God could do no more than He has done through Christ to save everyone and that if anyone is lost it is not because of some deficiency in God:

- The gift of God to man is beyond all computation. **Nothing was withheld. God would not permit it to be said that He could have done more** or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven. God's Amazing Grace p. 176, emphasis mine.
- The Father gave **all His divine resources** into the hands of Christ in order that the **richest blessings of heaven** might be poured out upon a fallen race. **God could not express greater love** than He has expressed in giving the Son of His bosom to this world. This **gift was given to man** to convince him that **God had left nothing undone that He could do, that there is nothing held in reserve, but that all heaven has been poured out** in one vast gift... He is the costly sacrifice that has been given for the reconciliation of man. The universe of heaven, the worlds unfallen, the fallen world, and the confederacy of evil **cannot say that God could do more for the salvation of man than He has done. Never can His gift be surpassed, never can He display a richer depth of love.** Calvary represents His crowning work. It is man's part to respond to His great love, by appropriating the great salvation the blessing of the Lord has made it possible for man to obtain. We are to show our appreciation of the wonderful gift of God by **becoming partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We are to show our gratitude to God by becoming a coworker with Jesus Christ, **by representing His character to the world....** Lift Him Up p. 232, emphasis mine.

Will Jesus ask, "What More Could I Have Done?" Not as an inquiry for Himself, but perhaps as a rhetorical question so that everyone else will recognize that there was, in fact, nothing more He could have done.

Read the first two paragraphs,

- Some years ago, an insightful children's story was printed in Guide magazine. The story focuses on a boy named Denis, an orphan living as a foster child with a family in medieval times. Denis passionately hates the king of his land because, when his parents were sick, the king's soldiers carried him away, and he never saw them again. Only later did he learn that the king separated them in order to spare the living all the horrors of the Black Plague. The truth about the king sets Denis free from the hatred that he had harbored almost his entire life. The king had always, and in every case, acted out of love for his people.

Many people today view God somewhat like Denis viewed the king. The evil they have witnessed or experienced brings them to hate or dismiss God. Where is God when there is suffering? If God is good, why is there so much evil? The cosmic conflict sheds light on this crucial issue, but many questions remain. Yet, when all our attempts at answers fail to satisfy, we can look to Jesus on the cross and see in Him that God can be trusted, even with all the questions that remain unanswered for now. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 84.

Have you ever been confronted with people who are like Denis, something bad has happened and they view it as coming from God and thus their love and trust for God is undermined, in fact they may distrust and hate God?

Any examples?

I have had many patients who were raised in church-going homes, (you notice I didn't say Christian homes), in which the parents were anything but like Jesus, in which the parents were in various ways unreliable, inconsistent, unpredictable, some were overtly abusive—and in particularly around things that were deemed to be religious in nature. Others were leaders in the church and kept up an “perfect” public appearance but were cruel at home and taught the children it was all about the public appearance, not the quality of the character. Others were cheating on their spouse while preaching from the pulpit and so on.

And when this happens, is it the fault of the children that they come to think about God in false and distorted ways?

And how do we help people like this? It depends on who we are to them and when we encounter them.

- We can always model Christlikeness in our own lives
- Children in such homes can be positively impacted by the consistent, kind, and Christlike love to them and for them from others in their environment.
- As adults they must learn to differentiate who God is in Jesus from whom they learned God to be from their parents.

Often such individuals have had their ability to trust compromised by being hurt and betrayed by parents and thus they fear trusting again. This needs to be worked through—and every case is different in exactly what is needed for them to resolve. But we must be consistent in both love and truth. And sadly, sometimes Christians can be duped into perpetuating harm by over-empathy and allowing

compassion to collude with pathology and not, in love, setting and keeping healthy boundaries, which is part of helping such individuals learn that others can be trusted.

What about after a death in the family and a well-meaning Christian, even a pastor, says to the grieving family, “Jesus took your mommy/daddy to be with Him”? Could this be misconstrued to suggest God killed their loved one?

Or worse, after the death of a loved one a, perhaps not so well-meaning, Christian said to the grieving family, “What sin did your child not confess that God didn’t protect them from that accident?”

Are there any Bible examples of God acting like the king in the story, doing something to protect, but people haven’t understood all the factors and believes God is harming?

From the Bible, I think many of the stories get told in this false light, like:

- The Flood
- Sodom
- The 10 plagues on Egypt
- Korah and the other rebels
- No rain for 3.5 years during Elijah’s time
- The 70 year captivity

Could all of these be viewed by some as God being the enemy, God bringing punishment for sin, God threatening and coercing, God causing the harm? But what is the truth? How do we understand God’s actions through history in their true light that always glorifies God in His true character of love as Jesus revealed?

And what about this text?

- Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.** Isaiah 53:4, NIV84.

Is it taught by some that God killed Jesus as our substitutionary Savior for justice sake? But God warned this would be a misunderstanding.

The lesson rightly suggests the Great Controversy perspective helps, setting things in the larger view than just the immediate circumstance or even the salvation of humans alone. But it is more than that, it is a comprehension of the nature of the war, that the war is not over might and power but over methods, principles, and who we love and trust. It is truth, love, freedom, and trust in God warring against lies, fear, selfishness and rebellion.

This type of war is waged in hearts and minds and cannot be won by physical might and power. Understanding this, then, we must inquire, if God cannot win by might and power as Zechariah 4:6 tells us, then why did God use so much might and power throughout human history?

Because humanity, in Adam and Eve, did not make an informed choice like Lucifer did in heaven. Adam and Eve were tricked, deceived, duped, but because of how God's design laws work, their choice to distrust God and rebel in action against Him, even though done from deception, still changed them, infecting them with fear and selfishness. Thus, there was hope for them in the truth about God displacing the lies and restoring to trust healing them from the damage to their heart, mind, and character that sin has done.

The point being that because they were deceived they, and many of their offspring, were savable if God's truth and love could be presented to them and a remedy that actually fixes the damages is provided. But in order to do that Satan and his forces must be restrained. So, God used power at times to restrain evil forces from destroying redeemable but deceived people in order to allow those people to make their own freewill choice and to simultaneously keep open the avenue for Jesus to be our Remedy.

God cannot win by might and power, only but truth, love, and freedom. But God can use might and power to restrain satanic forces that take away freedom and establish and free environment for people to make their own choice. This is what God has done through history.

Consider this historical quotation, do you agree?

- But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. **Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory.** To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. **Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final.** There was no more that God could do to save him. But **man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry.** The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was **hope in a knowledge of God's love.** By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. *The Desire of Ages* 761, emphasis mine.

What is described? Do you hear anything in this description about man's hope being in a blood payment made to God by Jesus to pay our legal sin debt? What is the basis of our hope? God's character of love being revealed, understood, and experienced which wins us to trust Him and in that trust we open our hearts to be reborn, recreated, renewed by the life of Christ.

Why was there hope for man to be redeemed from sin, but not for Lucifer?

Is it that God and Jesus loved humans more than angels and Jesus wouldn't die for angels? No, for the Bible tells us,

- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84.

The death of Christ was for the benefit of the heavenly beings as well, but Christ's death couldn't benefit Satan, why not?

Because Lucifer understood God's character, understood God's love, goodness, mercy, and chose to reject it and seek selfishness and pride instead. There was no reserve of truth about God left, any further revelations of love to those who have chosen to reject it, after truly understanding it, is seen as weakness, and met with disgust, not rejoicing.

And our understanding of why this paragraph is true and why God cannot win by might and power requires that we understand design law, reality, how hearts and minds operate, how love and truth work against lies and fear and selfishness, and the circumstances of the events in question in the knowledge of the true condition of humanity after Adam's fall and the need of Jesus as our Savior.

SUNDAY

The lesson directs us to John 18:37, but let's start with verse 36:

- Jesus said, "**My kingdom is not of this world.** If it were, my servants would **fight** to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now **my kingdom is from another place.**"

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying **I am a king.** In fact, for **this reason I was born**, and for this I came into the world, **to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**" John 18:36-37 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What do these verses tell us?

What does it mean that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world?

- Did He say that "My kingdom is not of this world, except for the nation of Israel, Israel, with the Levitical laws set up by Me through Moses, is my kingdom"?
- Did He say "My kingdom is not of this world today, but one day about 1700 years from now, a nation will arise that will be a city on a hill of religious and civil liberty and that nation will be my kingdom"?
- What is meant by kingdom—Christ's is not of this world, but He claims a kingdom from another place—What is meant by "kingdom"?
- What did Jesus mean by the following, and does it shed light on what Jesus' kingdom is?
 - "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' **because the kingdom of God is within you.**" Luke 17:20-21 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- What kind of kingdom is this?

- Does it operate upon laws? In the New Covenant God writes His laws on our hearts and minds—what does this mean?
- Where are the laws of the kingdoms of this world written? How are the laws of the kingdoms of this world enforced?
- What is the enforcing power of the laws that are written upon the hearts and minds? Is it not the law of love, the love of Christ compels us?
- What happens if one violates God's law of love—is there punishment? From where does the punishment come? See Gal. 6:8. Do any types of external legal rulings or pardons change that punishment, why or why not?
- What does change that punishment? Being reborn, dying to the old life of fear and selfishness and being recreated in harmony with God and His law of love, i.e., having it written upon the heart—being restored to spiritual health.
- And how does one partake of the love of Christ? Is it not by the Holy Spirit dwelling within? Notice what Paul wrote:
- So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.** Galatians 5:16-18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? It means that if we have not been reborn with hearts that love and trust God, then we are still operating on the carnal motives of fear and selfishness. Those who operate upon the me-first principle of survival of the fittest need external laws, imposed laws, that set rules for behavior: don't do this, don't do that, with threats of punishment and external enforcement. But those who have been reborn with hearts that love, that have God's living law of love written into them, no longer need a written law to tell them not to murder, steal, bear false witness, commit adultery, or any other violation of God's design laws, because they recoil at the idea of it.

God's kingdom is not a kingdom of imposed laws, external rules, inflicted punishments, penal/legal systems of judicial oversight, that method is only for those who have not been reborn to love and trust. That is Satan's kingdom, the kingdoms of this world that all operate upon imposed laws with coercive enforcement. God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom and that operates within the hearts and minds of people.

And Jesus makes it clear, if His kingdom were like the kingdoms of this world, then His followers would fight, would use the methods of power over, would seek to force their way upon others and even kill those who won't submit to their authority. And sadly, almost the entire Christian world teaches that God's government works just like this and in the end, they teach that God will use power to inflict punishment and death.

But Jesus said His kingdom is from another place and that it is the kingdom of truth and love, and that He was born into the world to make this difference clear and restore humankind back into harmony

with His kingdom by living the truth. And all who love the truth will accept, embrace, internalize, and follow Jesus for He is the truth.

Jesus defeated Satan in conflict—how?

- Jesus always chose truth, love, and freedom in governance of self. He did this as a human being, using only human abilities and not accessing His own divine abilities. And as a human He won by always choosing to trust His Father and live in harmony with God's design laws that life is built to operate upon.
- Jesus first defeated Satan in His humanity, as the second Adam, confronted Satan and overcame Satan where Adam failed and as the second Adam He redeemed, reclaimed, the human species from sin and restored the human species to sinless perfection and perfect unity with God.
- Jesus also defeated Satan's power of death by revealing the truth and destroying the lies that when believed cause people to distrust God and prevent people from knowing God. See John 17:3; Hebrews 2:14
- Jesus also defeated Satan's war against the heavenly beings by revealing the truth about God not only in His verbal teachings, but more importantly in His loving sacrificial choices. All the universe knows that Jesus is fully God and that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father and that though Jesus had all power, Jesus never, for an instance, used power to protect self, but would rather allow creatures to torture and kill Him than use power to take away their freedom—even their freedom to do injustice. Jesus proved God is totally trustworthy will all power.
- But God leaving people free to do injustice does not leave them free from the consequences of those choices because those consequences are the results of God's design laws that govern the operations of our beings. When a person chooses to reject truth and love and embrace lies, fear, selfishness, they change themselves, sear their conscience, warp their character, harden their heart. They are free to make such choices, God doesn't use power to stop them, but they are not free of the results of those choices and the result of those choices, if not healed by God through their choice to repent and surrender, is eternal death.

Do we understand what God has done for us? It is incredible.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God being just and the justifier of sinners, what do you understand the idea of God being just and the justifier to mean?

Does the law lens one holds impact the way we understand justice and justification?

What do people conclude justice is if they believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require legal enforcement through inflicted punishments? It is punishment, which in this case is death, which is taught as being inflicted by God for sin. And then justification is what? The legal

declaration of pardon for those who claim the legal blood payment of Jesus' death to their account in heaven.

It is really sad, because so many good-hearted people have been led to believe in a system of theology that has no power to save and heal, a legal adjustment in books in a faraway place in the universe while their hearts and minds remain just as sick and diseased in sin as ever.

But when we return to design law we realize that justification is putting right what is not right and in this case it is humanity itself. Humanity, in heart, in mind, in character is not right with God. Our natural state is enmity to God. And thus God sent Jesus to become a real human in order to restore the species human back into perfect unity with Him. To set humanity right in reality. God accomplished this in Jesus, who became a real human being, descended from Adam and in His humanity He was tempted in all points like we are yet without sin. So in Jesus, God perfected humanity, He took humanity broken, damaged, sin-infected and cleansed and restored humanity; He set humanity right with Himself by His own work in the person of Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, He also provided the remedy to all humans that through faith, trust in Jesus, we can be reborn with new hearts and right spirits, we can have our hearts and minds set right with Jesus as individuals as we partake of the divine nature.

In this process of being restored, set right, justified or made right, Abraham is our model. Abraham's natural heart, like every other human being descended from Adam, was enmity to God. But Abraham experienced a change of heart where he trusted God. And only after Abraham's heart was changed from distrust to trust, did God recognize or account that Abraham was justified or set right because, in fact, Abraham was set right with God; Abraham's heart was no longer enmity but right and just in that Abraham trusted God.

This is reality, the penal legal system if fantasy. But sadly, many of the legal ideas get translated into the language by the translators, and this is done with all integrity and honesty as the words for righteousness and justice in the Greek are the same. But let's consider these verses from the NIV and then the REM:

The lesson asks us to read Romans 3:23-26, but let's start in verse 21:

- But now a **righteousness** from God, apart from **law**, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This **righteousness** from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a **sacrifice of atonement**, through faith in his **blood**. He did this to demonstrate his **justice**, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand **unpunished**—he did it to demonstrate his **justice** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who **justifies** those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 NIV84.

Thoughts about this? The Greek for righteousness and justice are the same, but do you see how righteousness and justice sound differently? When we think through the human law lens then

righteousness means something like right legal standing and justice is the right inflicted punishment, and justify is to declare legally right those who have claimed the legal payment made by the blood of Jesus.

But that explanation is fiction and is based on a false premise that God's law functions like human law. When we return to design law, we realize that righteous is about our heart and mind, our state of being, and God restored righteousness, His living law, into humanity through the life and work of Jesus and through that sacrifice God is able to then set us right with Himself, thus He is right to do so and the one who sets us right through Christ. This is how I paraphrased those verses:

- But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Romans 3:21-26 REM

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Isaiah 5:1-5:

- I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. Isaiah 5:1-5 NIV84.

What lessons do we draw from these verses?

Who is being referred to by the vineyard? The Israelites to be sure are directly being spoken about and spoken to by God through the prophet Isaiah. But is this applicable *only* to the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or do those historical people stand as representatives in OT of all the people God has called?

Have God's love and blessings only been for Israel throughout history, or has He demonstrated His grace, mercy, love, and active interventions to bring salvation to all human beings?

- God promised the Messiah in Genesis 3:15, was that promise only for the Jews or for all humanity?
- Is the promise of John 3:16 only for the Jews or for all humanity?
- Was God interested in saving only the Jews at the time of the Exodus, or the Egyptians also? Weren't the plagues demonstrations and evidence for the Egyptians as well as the Hebrews? And didn't a mixed multitude leave to follow Yahweh?
- Did God invite all the peoples of the world to follow Him and weren't the Jews to be a kingdom of priests to evangelize the world?
- Didn't God send Jonah to Nineveh?
- Didn't Elisha witness Naaman?
- Didn't God intervene from heaven to bring Nebuchadnezzar to repentance?

So we must conclude that the vineyard represents all the peoples whom God has called to bear Him fruit, and that ancient Israel were called to a special mission but not exclusive salvation, and so are represented by the vineyard.

What do the good grapes represent? Fruit of the Spirit, a mature character that is like Jesus.

What does the Watchtower represent—the system of instructions God gave through Moses, including the sanctuary and sacrificial system to educate and teach.

What is the outcome of this parable when the vineyard doesn't produce fruit? What does God do? He stops protecting them and lets them go to reap what they have chosen. And what happens when people deviate from God's design laws and He no longer actively seeks to protect them and lead them back to health and healing? Destruction!

And is this parable only for the Jews or is this parable for all humanity, that if any people reject God's love, truth, mercy, grace, and insist on going their own way, God will respect their freedom and eventually stop holding back the results of their rebellion and let them go and they will reap what they have sown into their own lives.

Now let's read the last paragraph, which highlights an important aspect of this passage:

- Isaiah 5:3 shifts to God Himself speaking, inviting people to “judge” between Him and His vineyard. And, in Isaiah 5:4, God Himself sets forth the all-important question: “ ‘What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it

to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?’ ” (NKJV). What more could He do? How fascinating that He even asks others to judge what He has done. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 87.

Who is doing the judging? We are! What does this mean? How is it that we are to judge God? Is this a legal tribunal? No! it is how reality works, we are assessing evidence, truth, facts, and concluding, judging for ourselves who is telling the truth, God or Satan, who is trustworthy, who do we believe, who do we judge to be reliable, who will we choose to align with and whose methods do we judge to be right, holy, just, and good, the methods of truth, love, freedom, or imposed rules with inflicted punishments?

Paul wrote in Romans 3:4:

- God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome **when You are judged.**” Romans 3:4 NKJV, emphasis mine.

Why is it a necessity that we judge God? What is the Great Controversy over? God’s trustworthiness. Satan is the father of lies and his lies are about God, thus every person must decide, what do they believe about God? And our beliefs about God have a direct impact upon us, changing us, this is the law of worship, by beholding we are changed.

So God is calling on people throughout human history to make a right judgment about God, to stop judging God to be like Satan, a dictator who makes up rules and inflicts penalties.

This is the message of the 3 angels, do you recognize the message of the 3 angels is a message to stop judging God wrongly, the time has come for people to make a right judgment about God?

How do you explain these messages?

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made** the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Revelation 14:6-7 NIV84, emphasis mine
- A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! **Fallen is Babylon** the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” Revelation 14:8 NIV84, emphasis mine
- A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone **worships** the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his **wrath**. He will be tormented with **burning sulfur** in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the **smoke of their torment** rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” This calls

for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Revelation 14:9-12 NIV84, emphasis mine

How do you explain these?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Jesus' parable of the landowner who planted a vineyard:

- “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.” Matthew 21:33-39 NIV84.

What do we learn from this parable?

What does it mean “Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him”?

Certainly, this represents the rejection of Jesus and His crucifixion by the Jews 2000 years ago, but is that all?

What about Christians who teach the following:

- Sin is breaking God's law and God's laws are His imposed rules
- God's justice requires that God give proper punishment for sin, someone has to die to pay the legal penalty.
- All of our righteousness is filthy rags, we can't die to pay or legal penalty
- Oh, Come, let's kill God's innocent and sinless Son and then offer God the blood of His sinless Son so He won't kill us. Then God will be happy with us as He sees the blood of His Son and we can receive our inheritance.

Is that any better than what the Jews did other than the Jews focused on earthly kingdoms and Christians who teach this focus on heavenly kingdoms but both are trying to get there through either killing and eliminating Jesus or killing Him and offering His blood to God?

THURSDAY

Read the last two paragraphs,

- In the end, God is vindicated at the cross and through the entire plan of redemption. In the pre-Advent judgment, God is vindicated before the onlooking universe.

Then, in the post-Advent judgment, during which the redeemed will even “judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3), God is vindicated, as the redeemed have been given the opportunity to review the records and see for themselves why God has acted as He has, and that all of God’s judgments have always and only been perfectly righteous and loving. Who among us doesn’t have a lot of questions that need answering? Before it’s all done, we will have those questions answered (see 1 Cor. 4:5). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 89.

What is the pre-Advent judgment? Is it a legal process?

Do angels in heaven need it?

No doubt the angels need to see the truth revealed that answers all the questions about God and settle them in their loyalty to God, but wasn’t that settled for the angels at the cross when Jesus said,

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

Wasn’t this when the angels were solidified in their loyalty to God?

The commentary, *The Desire of Ages* states the following:

- Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open **before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe**. He had **revealed himself as a murderer**. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, **he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted...** The **last link of sympathy** between Satan and the heavenly world was **broken**. *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine.

So, do the angels in heaven need this?

Some have suggested the angels in heaven need to investigate us in order to know, have confidence, be at peace that we will be good neighbors in heaven, that we will be save to live next door to. What do you think about this idea?

Is this really something the angels need, or is this an example of FOTAP, the fallacy of the assumed premise, and the premise is that God’s law is like human law and sin is recorded in record books, and the investigative judgment is going through legal books to determine who has had the proper legal payment?

Will angels actually wonder if the saved from Earth are safe to be in heaven or will it never be a question because it is a self-evidence manifestation of reality—only those who are healed, restored, recreated, i.e., safe, are able to enter heaven and stand in God’s presence?

What happens to the unrighteous when they are exposed to God’s life giving glory?

To sin wherever it is found our God is a consuming fire—and if a person has solidified into themselves fear, selfishness, rebelliousness, hate, villainy then when they experience infinite truth, love, grace, kindness they respond by running, by seeking the mountains to fall on them, they flee. God doesn’t do anything to them, they actively run away and don’t want to be in God’s presence. No, the angels don’t need to investigate us to know who is safe, it is self evident.

But, do we sinners need to investigate the evidence and decide whether God is safe, whether God is good, whether God is trustworthy? Yes, and that is what we have just examined of the 3 angels message a call for people to investigate and judge God to be exactly as Jesus revealed Him to be and then to surrender self to God in love and trust.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 8, 2025 2-4 p.m. Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain: A Special Presentation by Dr. Jennings. Where, our ministry building. The event will be streamed live.

PODCAST—Designed4More: Please share our new podcast with others. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 12

Love and Justice: The Two Greatest Commandments

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20 NIV84

Is this true? Why? Isn't it possible to love God and not love another person? Aren't we supposed to have a different attitude toward the vile and evil person, surely toward Satan, or are we supposed to love Satan too?

What about Jesus, do you think that Jesus still loves Satan?

Jesus said,

- "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 4:43-44 NIV84.

Would it be a problem for us if we didn't love evil people, if we held onto any attitude other than love toward our enemies? What would be the problem for us? Would it be a legal problem? Would God say, "I gave you a rule, a command even, to love your enemies, and I see you still are looking forward to the Nazis burning outside the city. I'm sorry, but you broke my rule and the law that I imposed, that you have broken, now requires Me to torture and kill you too." Is this the problem?

No--what happens inside a person who doesn't love their enemies? If we don't forgive and have a heart that desires their deliverance, their healing, their transformation to be like Jesus? If we hold to hate, resentment, bitterness, grudges, then we become like them! And why did the Nazis kill the Jews and so many others? Because of hate, jealousy, fear, and selfishness. Thus, if we are not reborn with a new heart and right spirit that loves others, including our enemies, and longs for their salvation, if instead, we retain a heart of resentment, hate, and desire for vengeance, it is evidence that we are not reborn, are in fact becoming more like God's enemy, and saying that we love God while we cling to hate for others is a lie.

Does having a heart that loves mean we trust our enemies?

Does loving others mean we surrender our choices to them?

Does living out love mean that we do what others want us to do in order to keep them happy with us?

Read first two paragraphs,

- Though we have confidence that God will make all things right in the end, it still matters what we, as Christians, do in the here and now. Though there may be many injustices and evils that God will not now eradicate (because of the parameters of the cosmic conflict), this doesn't mean that we can't be used to help alleviate whatever suffering and evil we come across, at least to whatever degree possible. In fact, we are obligated, as Christians, to do just that.

As we have seen, love and justice go together; they are inseparable. God loves justice. Accordingly, if we love God, we will love justice, as well. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 92.

We absolutely believe that God is love and God is always just, always does what is right, and that true, genuine, godly love cannot function unjustly.

And we believe that those who love God in truth are the righteous, the just who live by faith, who trust in God, and their lives of love do what is right or just.

But, consider this, how do you think the people referred to by Christ in this passage would answer the question as to whether they love God and are seeking to do God's justice?

- "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matthew 7:21-22 NIV84.

In whose name do these people believe they are ministering? Would these people believe of themselves that they don't love God or are doing injustice?

But what is an evildoer? Aren't evildoers doing injustice?

Is it possible that Satan could use **the pursuit of love and justice as a means** of getting people to side with him and in their pursuit of love and justice they end up enemies of Jesus? How could Satan do this?

Can you think of a way that Satan could get people to pursue God, pursue Jesus, pursue love and justice but introduce some corruption, some lie, that ends up causing these people to actually be promoting Satan's kingdom of injustice, of evil while they are proclaiming by words the name Jesus?

During the Dark Ages, is it likely there were some people who genuinely believed it was right and just to burn heretics at the stake? That in doing so they were only seeking to honor God and promote eternal salvation, in fact the only reason they were doing it was because they wanted to save souls from eternal hell?

Do you think such people were on the side of Jesus because they sincerely believed what they were doing was right?

In more recent times, were there people in our own fellowships, families, communities, who had in their hearts motivated to save lives, and with their desire to save lives they used their influence, position, authority, power to coerce the consciences of others to participate in medical experimentation?

Is it in harmony with God, Jesus, and their kingdom of love to coerce the consciences of others?

Contrast these two examples with the true story of the doctors who treated George Washington when he died of pneumonia, and describe why the examples above were evil, but what the doctors did to George Washington was not.

When George Washington got pneumonia the doctors bled him and leeches him to bleed out the evil humors trying to save his life, but of course they destroyed his immune system and accelerated his death. Why is this action, while medically harmful, not evil and how is it different that burning people at the stake or pressuring people into taking a medical experiment?

1. The doctors were acting in love, in good conscience, to do all in their power to save and they had no evidence or knowledge that they were denying or ignoring that would have exposed what they were doing as harmful.
2. They did not force George Washington against his will to take this treatment, they did not use coercion to compel another's conscience.
3. In other words, they practiced the principles of God, love for others, applying the truth as they currently comprehend it with honest hearts, and leaving others free to make their own choice.

Satan's methods are driven not by love, but by fear, which leads to selfishness, and the need to force others to comply or destroy those who won't because their very lives of righteousness condemn the guilty, or as during COVID, the lives of the unvaxxed who were recovered with naturally immunity were seen by the vaxxed as a threat to the vaxxed and thus in order to make self feel safe we must force others to do what we want. Additionally, Satan's methods will ignore, deny, and distort evidence and truth already available that would refute the action being taken—during the Dark Ages the Scriptures were available that refuted the practices that were being carried out. But more than this, the actions themselves were objectively wrong, they counter our own consciences and the Holy Spirit would convict that this is wrong. Anyone can tell that love cannot be obtained by force, by threat, by infliction of punishment even without the Bible.

So, what if it is for a good goal, a godly goal even, like saving lives, if people use coercive power for a good goal are they operating in harmony with Jesus? Are they advancing God's kingdom? Are they doing justice or injustice?

Consider this Bible commentary, do you agree?

- God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon **goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these **principles** is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine.

Do we agree that God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and justice?

But is there evidence that people can think they are operating in God's kingdom of love and justice while they are actually supporting Satan?

What is the key to actually being in God's kingdom? What is the difference between the two? What is the truth that people must know to differentiate the two?

What law are they operating upon? God's or Satan's?

What is it that determines whether something is just, what defines justice? The law of that domain, land, system.

- It is right and just to drive 140mph on the Autobahn in Germany, but unjust on the interstate in the USA.
- It is right and just to punch someone in the face in boxing but unjust in baseball.

The question is always about God's law. What we believe about God's law **directly determines** what we believe about God's character, government, methods, and how love functions justly. And that determines whether we believe God can be trusted or whether He needs something done to Him to not hurt us. So, all those who teach we must trust God, but teach that God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering in order to enforce His imposed law for justice sake, are actually creating obstacles to trust, because the functional outcome of that teaching is that God is the one who will hurt us and that means we need someone to do something to God in our behalf.

And this sets up for the rise of the beast of Revelation. Those who follow that beast will not follow it thinking they are doing in justice. It does not rise to do injustice, it rises to do justice, but it replaces the design laws of God with imposed laws, laws that require the infliction of punishment. And this leads good-hearted people to believe that justice is judicial, is using power to kill, and the people who believe this end up worshipping an imposter god, Satan masquerading as an angel of light. They will

eventually support the use of power to torture and kill those who won't recant, won't repent, won't bow down, won't worship the god they think is Jesus.

And this is how Satan infects hearts and minds to believe they are serving God while they are in reality serving God's enemy.

But the method of law and law enforcement cannot win the war. Understand, God **cannot** achieve what He wants. He cannot win the war and bring an end to sin through law and law enforcement. Why not?

Because what God wants for all of us is the restoration of His character of love into our hearts. He wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, and agreement and none of that can be achieved by external law enforced through punishment. Any attempt to use might and power destroys what God wants. That is why the Bible tells us, it is not by might and power but by God's Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love that God wins (Zechariah 4:6).

Paul dealt with this repeatedly in his ministry, the question of law versus trust/faith. Trust or faith is the surrender of oneself to God to be reborn with a new heart, a new spirit, a new life of love that brings new animating energy to give a new life that grows and develops in harmony with Jesus. But the penal legal salvation doctrine obstructs that reality and leads people to seek legal adjustment through law keeping, if not by the sinner, then by legal-loophole law keeping by Jesus who they claim as their legal substitute and payment.

Paul wrote,

- All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:20-11 NIV84.

The righteous live by trust, by faith, and receive a new heart and right spirit in which God's living law is written upon their hearts and minds and they are transformed to actually, in reality, love God and others, including their enemies. The image of God is restored in them.

The ones who think they are serving God but who are in fact are evil-doers are those **who are not reborn with hearts that love**, but who instead claim a legal solution to their sin problem through a legal payment to a god that they believe is required by justice to use power to punish sin. And they believe this because they believe God's law functions like human law and imposed law requires imposed punishments.

Consider these historical quotes:

- **The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle**

between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. *The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine.

- **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.** Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. *Prophets and Kings* p. 625, emphasis mine.
- The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God,** and men are led to **worship the creature rather than the Creator,** may be traced in all the history of the past. Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers *The Great Controversy* p. x1, emphasis mine.
- The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; **the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth** *The Great Controversy* p. 22, emphasis mine.
- I tell you, God is testing us now, just now. **The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. That light** is shining now, and how hard it has been for proud hearts to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour; how hard to get out of **the rut of a legal religion;** how hard for them to **grasp** the rich, free gift of Christ. **Those who have not accepted this offering will not understand anything in regard to that light which fills the whole earth with its glory.** Let every heart now seek the Lord. Let self be crucified, for rich and glorious blessings are awaiting all who shall maintain contrition of soul. With them Jesus can abide; they will let nothing interpose between their souls and God. *7LtMs*. Letter 10, 1892.892.25, emphasis mine.

We are entering the very final moments of the controversy here on Earth, and the final movements are going to be rapid. Those on the side of God's enemy will believe they are doing justice, that they are doing what is right. But their form of justice is the justice of law and law enforcement and that is the justice of the kingdoms of this world, and Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world.

God's justice is something completely different, it is the justice of design law, of healing, cleansing, renewing, restoring, making what is sick healthy, what is wrong right, what is dirty clean, what is impure pure, what is unfaithful faithful, those who are untrustworthy trustworthy, those live in fear and selfishness people who live in love and trust.

God's justice is delivering the oppressed not punishing the oppressor, why? Because without God's divine action to redeem, cleanse, heal, and restore, the punishment from sin is unavoidable. As the Bible teaches, sin brings death, not God (James 1:15, Galatians 6:8, Romans 6:23).

If love and justice cannot be achieved by the imposition of law and through a legal justice system that enforces those laws, then why did God give so many laws through Moses?

And this was the question the Jews had and what Paul wrote so much about, and it is the question that derailed the Reformation at 1888 Minneapolis General Conference: Why then the law?

Paul, throughout his writings, constantly contrasts the righteousness that people seek to obtain through law versus the righteousness that comes through trust/faith. And his point is that there is no righteousness that comes through law, true righteousness only comes through faith.

Well, what is righteousness? It is being right, in heart, mind, character, and conduct. And what does it mean to be right, it means to be just, and a person who is restored to rightness, or rightified, is one who is justified or restored to justice. And in the Greek NT the word for righteous and justice is the same, there is only one word.

God cannot restore people to rightness with Him through external law, it is only through trust, through faith, that He can restore within people His design law, His living law of love, truth, freedom, and trust. That is why the New Covenant is God writing His law on hearts and minds.

In 1888 GC, the truth of real righteousness by faith, of people actually becoming righteous, was presented, but it was rejected by those who held to the lie that God's law functions like human law and replaced with the lie that we do not actually become the righteousness of God as 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, but we get declared to be legally righteous while we remain unrighteous.

If we want to finish the work, if we want to lighten the world for Christ's return, we must reject the Romanization of Christianity, the idea that God's law functions like human law and return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we understand His law is design law.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the two great commandments to love God with our entire being and neighbor as ourselves.

What do you understand these commandments to mean?

Can love be commanded? So what is going on?

Are these rules, imposed laws, or protocols for life?

These are simply and only describing how life is built to operate. God is love and all life is built to operate upon love. If we want to live we must be restored to love and love lives to give, it is not self-seeking. This means our natural inclinations, drives, desires, motivations inherited from Adam of me-first fear-driven survival-of-the-fittest must be replaced with a new life, a new motive of love and trust.

And we cannot do this by force of will, by working hard, or any legal adjustment. It is only experienced by restoration to a trust relationship with Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells the rich young ruler that in order for him to find eternal life he needs to sell all he has, give it to the poor and follow Jesus. Why did Jesus tell him this?

Was Jesus setting up a rule for all humans?

Jesus was not setting up a rule to be obeyed that says that if we want treasure in heaven we must give away all earthly possessions. He is accurately pointing out to this young man that the man valued his riches and trusted in material things more than he loved and trusted Jesus. He trusted his wealth, in part, because it was taught that wealth was evidence of being right with God, while poverty meant one was cursed by God. But eternal life cannot be found in earthly wealth, power, position, or status—only in surrendering the heart fully to Christ.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- According to Jesus Himself, the two greatest commandments are love for God and love for one another. And carrying out these commands involves sacrifices that tangibly show love to others, which is what following in the footsteps of Jesus is really about. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice* p. 94.

No doubt those who are like Jesus will live sacrificial lives of love and service for the benefit of others. Does that mean everyone who is doing actions that are sacrificial and have benefit to others are followers of Jesus, or have a heart that loves?

Can actions that bless others be done, not out of love, but out of selfishness?

Can a politician do such actions to get votes?

Can a co-dependent who fears rejection do sacrificial actions to get approval and praise for self?

How can a person tell if they are doing something out of love or out of fear for self?

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 135:13-19:

- Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, through all generations. For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. O house of Israel, praise the LORD; O house of Aaron, praise the LORD Psalm 135:13-19 NIV84.

The lesson points out the OT taught to love God above all else and contrasted it with the greatest sin, idolatry.

Why is idolatry the greatest sin?

Because of the law of worship—by beholding we are changed. We become like the God we admire and worship and whose methods we practice.

We are created to be image bearers of God, living temples where God dwells by His Spirit, and Satan wants to destroy the image of God in people and place his image where God's should be. Satan wants to enthrone himself into our hearts and minds as the one most loved and trusted and then shape our characters to be like his. And he does this by getting us to worship anything other than God as Jesus revealed Him to be. And this is why idolatry is the greatest sin, not because it hurts God's feelings, but because it destroys the image of God in us.

How successful has Satan been at doing this to humanity?

How does Satan do this? What tools or methods does he use?

Lies about God that break love and trust and incite fear and selfishness, and fear and selfishness lead to forming beliefs and attitudes about God that seem just, like law and order and just punishments, but which perpetuate the lies about God.

What are the weapons of God that we are to use that defeat Satan?

Truth, love, freedom—the Word of God, prayer, faith/trust in God, the power of choice.

What does winning look like?

What is it that Jesus dislikes so much that He states it makes Him sick enough He wants to vomit?

- “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, **because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.** Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelations 3:14-22 NKJV, emphasis mine.

What makes Jesus want to vomit?

What does it mean to be lukewarm? Mixing hot and cold? Appearing to be hot for God’s truth with hearts that are cold in selfishness?

Claiming to be rich in truth, wealthy in righteousness, holy in character and in need of nothing more because we are God’s specially chosen people blessed with a prophetic messenger, the true Bible Sabbath, a special end-time message, the sanctuary message, health message, schools and health care institutions, we are the remnant of God—we are rich and in need of nothing!

But have we been duped into choosing the imperial Roman view of law and teaching that God is the source of inflicted pain and death and that we can only be saved by paying this god with human blood so he won’t kill us? Have we been tricked into believing that salvation is claiming legal justification, telling people that they are legally declared righteous while they remain unrighteous? Is this it?

This would be like telling people dying of cancer that if they get a healthy person to be examined in their place and legally declare that person their legal substitute, then the doctor will declare them to be cancer free even though they are still dying of malignant cancer. If someone was teaching this, and led millions of people who are dying of cancer to refuse a real and free treatment that would cure them, and instead have them claim that they are declared to be healthy and cancer free and thus they all felt good and in need of nothing, wouldn’t that make you sick? That is what Jesus sees when He sees the legal religion replacing the truth of His design law kingdom of love.

What is His counsel?

- Buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Revelation 3:18 NIV84

The gold is symbolic of Christlike character refined through trial; but how do we **buy** the life of Christ, the character of Christ? It is the barter method, we exchange our sinful life for His sinless life, our corruption for His incorruption, our fear and selfishness for His love and trust—and then it is no longer “I that live but Christ lives in me” and we “become partakers of the divine nature.” When we do this then we have a new heart and right spirit, the old is gone the new has come and we are covered

by the life, the blood of Christ, the robe of Christ's righteousness and our eyes are anointed with the discernment of the Holy Spirit and we understand reality as God built it.

Consider this commentary, about being covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness:

- When we submit ourselves to Christ, **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 311, emphasis mine.

This is reality, healing, renewing, regenerating in the believer the life, righteousness, spirit, animating energy of Jesus that purges fear and selfishness and replaces it with love and trust and then we live the life of Jesus.

There is nothing penal legal going on, there is something divine, recreational, regenerative going on.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 82:

- God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods": "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler." Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. Psalm 82:1-8 NIV84.

What do you hear in this psalm?

Who are the gods referenced here? These are the false gods, the pagan gods, which are all inspired by demons.

And how do all the false gods govern? What type of law do they rule by? Imposed law and what is the result of all imposed law? Injustice to some—some innocents are prosecuted and punished, some guilty go free, the laws benefit some and harm others. Judges rule differently on the same set of facts—even when all are being honest.

All such systems not only do injustice when everyone is doing their best, but they can be corrupted. A judge can knowingly pardon the guilty and convict the innocent. And all human government have

corruption like this, where the laws get manipulated, misapplied, ignored, applied to harm one's opponents.

But design law doesn't do this. Design laws, the laws built into reality, treat everyone exactly the same, the difference in outcome is never because of the law, it is because of the choices of people in relationship to the law.

If a Jew, Christian, and Muslim all jump out of an airplane together, does gravity treat them differently? If one of them wore a parachute and the other two refused a parachute that we freely offered them before they jumped, now does gravity treat them differently? No, gravity hasn't changed, but the parachute, interacting with the air causing drag slows how fast gravity pulls the one with the parachute through the atmosphere and that changes the outcome. The outcome difference is not in the law, it is in the choices of the people.

What is justice in human law? Punishing the oppressors, the wicked.

But what is the justice in this psalm? Delivering the oppressed, bringing healing to the wounded, setting the captives free, binding up the broken hearted, which is the outworking of God's truth and love through Christ in harmony with the design laws built into reality.

Is there a righteous use of imposed human type law? Can you describe it? Where can imposed laws be used righteously?

In sinful spaces with people who need restraint...

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 23:23-30, and asks

- What does Jesus teach here about what is most important? What do you think He means when He refers to "weightier matters"? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 96.

So let's read that section and consider the questions

- "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’” Matthew 23:23-30 NIV84.

What is Jesus teaching that is most important? What are the weightier matters?

Is Jesus making a distinction between deeds, rule-keeping, law-keeping, and motivation of heart?

Are there two kingdoms contrasted here? In these passages do you see the kingdom of Satan being contrasted with the kingdom of God?

Is it possible for those serving in the kingdom of Satan to carry out the same duties, perform the same activities, observe the same rituals, celebrate the same festivals, worship on the same day, pay the same tithe, use the same language, proclaim to be worshiping the same person as those who are part of the kingdom of God?

What is the difference? What is Jesus trying to get all of us to understand? Are the two kingdoms different because they will always have two different behaviors or because they operate upon two different types of law?

If one accepts the lie that God’s law functions like human law and justice is inflicting punishment, then one can take all the right doctrines, rituals, festivals, activities and perform them from fear, from obligation, from selfishness and despite doing the activity that God directed one to perform, because the motive is from fear and selfishness the person becomes more like Satan. This is exactly what happened to those religious leaders who crucified Christ.

But those who return to worshiping God as Creator, understand that the heart must be renewed, reborn, recreated, that God’s laws are design laws, and the law of love is a living law that cannot be understood on stone, but only realized in a living being who operates upon that law—just as Jesus did. And then, when the heart is renewed the actions done from love, from trust, to benefit others and glorify God are part of the maturing, developing, and transforming experience, not because the deed itself has power, but because the motivation to love and live truth becomes solidified in the believer when they choose to live out the truth in love and trust.

Those who read these verses from the penal legal model will often read the “woe” as a threat from God, that they are breaking God’s law and they are piling up crimes that one day God will punish. But that is not what Jesus is describing at all. Jesus is describing reality to them. Just like saying to a

smoker who keeps on smoking, woe to you for the only outcome from such action is pain, misery, and suffering.

This is my paraphrase of these verses:

- "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You keep rules, such as proudly paying a pre-tax tithe and even giving a tenth of the herbs in your garden, but you fail to do what actually matters—to live in harmony with God's Law, which is his design for life. You fail to 'do what is right because it is right.' You are not merciful but judgmental and critical, and you cannot be trusted to protect those struggling with sin. You should have lived lives of love for others, without neglecting the simple instructions of God. You are truly irrational and unthinking teachers! You are so focused on keeping the rules — such as dietary laws — that you fail to understand that their purpose is to promote health. You're so confused that you actually think it would be a virtue to die of starvation rather than eat something not on the 'approved' list.

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You work so hard to make yourselves look good on the outside, but the inside—the heart—is full of selfishness, arrogance, and greed. You truly don't understand anything about God's kingdom! The mind, the character, the heart — they all must be cleansed first, and then the outside will also be clean.

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You are like highly polished burial vaults: they look beautiful on the outside, but inside are nothing but the bones of the dead, and everything that defiles. You are just like that. On the outside you appear to people as good and righteous, but on the inside you are full of lies, selfishness, and evil. You are great counterfeits!

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go to great lengths to give praise and honor to God's spokespersons and church leaders of the past. You say, 'If we would have lived back then, we would never have rejected God's spokespersons or joined those who killed them.'" Matthew 23:23-30 REM.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- In direct contrast to the enemy, who grasped for power and sought to usurp God's throne, Jesus lowered Himself and identified with those under sin, injustice, and oppression (without being infected by sin), and He defeated the enemy by giving Himself in love in order to establish justice as the One who is just and the Justifier of all who believe. How can we claim to be concerned about the law that Christ died to uphold if we are not concerned about what Christ

calls the weightier matters of the law? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 97.

How did Jesus, by giving Himself in love, establish justice and defeat the enemy?

How did Jesus' death uphold the law?

Have you heard He died to uphold the law by paying the legal death penalty so we wouldn't have to? Is that what it means to uphold the law? That is the type of law creatures make.

Is there another way to understand how Christ's death establishes justice, is just, and upholds the law?

Let's be clear: Jesus' vicarious, self-sacrificial, substitutionary death provides for our salvation, for our redemption, rebirth, and cleansing from sin.

Let me be explicitly clear on this point: No human being could be saved from sin without the substitutionary sinless life and sacrificial death of Jesus.

I believe that Jesus became a real human and voluntarily put Himself into a position that was not naturally His own for the purpose of delivering us from the position that was naturally our own; that is, He took our place. He substituted Himself. We should never deny this—for it is eternally true!

The question is: Why was His death required to save us?

My view is that Christ's death was to accomplish what the apostle Paul described:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

According to this passage, the reason for Christ's substitutionary sacrificial death was not a legal one; it was not for a penal reason. It was not a payment. It was not to assuage God's wrath or propitiate His anger, for God was never our problem. God has always been for us (Romans 8:31); God was in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). God was not changed by Adam's sin, nor did His law change. Rather, it was the condition of Adam that changed from sinless, loyal, faithful, and trustworthy to sinful, disloyal, unfaithful, and untrustworthy; he became a fear-ridden and selfish being. Adam no longer had a pure heart and right spirit!

Thus, Jesus became our human substitute, taking up the humanity that had been damaged by Adam, so that we might *become* the righteousness of God, so that humanity might be cleansed from sin and restored to His perfect ideal.

But why is it that Christ's substitutionary death was required for us to become righteous? Why was Christ's death necessary to save humans from sin? How did Christ's voluntary and substitutionary sacrifice achieve the righteousness of God in humanity?

After all, if God is love and He loves the world so much that He sent His Son (John 3:16), if God is merciful—full of mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31), pardons freely (Isaiah 55:7), and does not keep a record of our wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5)—then why couldn't He just forgive us outright without the death of Jesus?

First, God *did* forgive us outright! It was His love and forgiveness that sent His Son to do what was necessary to save us.

But God's forgiveness, extended freely from His loving heart, *does not* remove sinfulness from us! And salvation is something more than forgiveness—it *is* healing! Salvation requires that sinfulness, fear and selfishness, in us be replaced with sinlessness, love and trust, resulting in righteousness, purity, and holiness.

Thus, as John the Baptist said, Jesus is

- “the Lamb of God **who takes away the sin** of the world.” John 1:29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus came to take away sin, to destroy death (2 Timothy 1:10) and the cause of death (Hebrews 2:14), thereby healing this creation. And the fear and selfishness, which is the corrupting, elemental aspect of sin infecting, tainting, polluting, and decaying our spirits (hearts) and souls (minds), must be purged, removed, destroyed, eliminated, cleansed from humanity.

Jesus had to provide **the truth** to free our minds from the lies of Satan—in order to win us (morally influence) to trust in Him—but He also needed to provide, in order to save *the human species created in Eden*, **a cleansed, purified, renewed, and perfected human spirit** (life, heart, motivational energy) that we receive through our trust in Him.

When Adam sinned, he corrupted himself, infecting his life with sin. His spirit (life, heart, motivational energy) became contaminated with fear and selfishness; his energizing motives to action were no longer love-driven selflessness but were fear-driven selfishness, the survival-of-the-fittest instinct.

And every human being is an offspring, outgrowth, extension *of that same life (spirit)!*

We are all born infected with sinfulness, with fear and selfishness, with unholiness (Psalm 51:5). In order to save us from this terminal sinful condition, Jesus had to not only restore our trust in God by a revelation of truth, but He also had to purge, cleanse, remove, eliminate, eradicate, destroy the sinfulness (fear and selfishness) from humanity.

And in order to do that, Jesus had to partake of the humanity, of the very life (spirit) given to Adam in Eden, that Adam had corrupted and to purify that life.

God can create new species any time He wants. After Adam sinned, God was free to gather up some dirt, form a new body, breathe the breath of life into that body, and create a new sinless human being—but such a being would not be part of the creation He had made in Eden. It would not have been related to Adam and Eve but would have been a new, similar, yet distinct creation. Creating a brand-new human would not save Adam, Eve, and their descendants from their terminal sin condition; it would not save the creation God had made in Eden. It would not purify the life given to Adam.

So, what was needed to save humanity from this terminal sin condition?

A human being who is part of Adam, part of *this* creation, a human being who partakes of that same life, that same spirit or life-energy, that was breathed into Adam in Eden, that life which is now infected with fear and selfishness, and who then overcomes and eradicates the contamination and purifies that life, thereby destroying the terminal condition, purging the fear and selfishness, and restoring God's perfect, pure, undefiled love back into this human creation, by perfecting/cleansing the spirit—the life given to Adam and shared by all of us.

Thus, Jesus came as the second Adam, partaking of the very same life that was given to Adam and passed down through David (Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:14). He received His human life through His mother Mary—a humanity, life, that has been damaged by sin, infected with fear and selfishness, and terminal because of Adam's fall (Galatians 4:4). Jesus' human lineage through Mary is how He was able to be tempted in every way just like we are (Hebrews 4:15), and we are tempted by our own evil desires (James 1:14). Jesus' humanity, life, received from Adam was capable of tempting Him with fear and selfishness, which was revealed in Gethsemane when He suffered terrible human emotions and anguish tempting Him to act in self-interest and not go to the cross.

But because the Father of Jesus' humanity is the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18–20), Jesus was also born with, invigorated with, a pure, undefiled spiritual life-energy. As a real human being, partaking of the life passed down from Adam *and* the life given by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to face temptation and use only His human abilities to say no to every temptation coming from the infection in the human spirit (life) he received from Adam and yes to God and live a holy, pure life (Hebrews 4:15) in harmony with the Holy Spirit. (We receive that same ability to choose to live in harmony with God at conversion when we are reborn with a new heart and right spirit—when we receive the new life/spirit—by the indwelling Holy Spirit.)

And on the cross, Jesus chose only the pure life, the pure energy of love, that He received from the Holy Spirit and, thereby, destroyed the death-causing infection, the impure corrupting quality, character, inclination, motivation of fear and selfishness contaminating the life-energy breathed into Adam (2 Timothy 1:10). At the cross, Jesus destroyed the carnal terminal sin nature and arose in a purified humanity and became the new head of humanity (Hebrews 5:9), and He now stands in God's presence, not only in His pre-incarnate position as the Son of God but also as the representative head of humanity—Jesus, a real human being, sinless and perfect. He stands in the heavenly counsel as Adam's substitute, fulfilling the role that God had originally designed for Adam.

Now through faith, each one of us can receive that same pure, divine life-giving energy (spirit—life) via the indwelling Holy Spirit, who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us, invigorating us

with a reborn new spirit. Christ is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5), who, being grafted into Christ by faith, receive the new invigorating spirit (life) from Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We die to the old spirit of fear and selfishness and live a new life with a new spirit of love and trust. As Paul wrote,

- For **Christ's love compels us**, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves** [no longer live the life of selfishness] but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

We, with our new life, our new spirit, our new purified spiritual energy are motivated, animated, compelled with new desires, attitudes, and priorities so that we become literal partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). As our spirits, our internal life-energy, our motives, drives, desires now come from Jesus and no longer come from what we inherited from Adam, we grow daily in godliness and, despite ongoing temptations from our old habits and conditioned responses, our renewed reborn spirits are no longer captive to fear and selfishness.



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 13

Love Is Fulfillment of the Law

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title?

Have you ever had confusion between love and law?

How do you understand the relationship between law and love?

Do parents who love their children impose rules, that for the child are the law of the home, rules like bedtime, teeth brushing, no play until homework is done, no dessert before dinner, no playing in the street etc.?

If the child breaks these rules, and if the parent loves the child, what will the parent do?

Will the parent impose some penalty, some artificial punishment? And for what purpose? Is the punishment intended, in this context, simply as law-enforcement—you broke the rule and the law requires enforcement? Or is the punishment imposed in love as discipline, to teach?

So, it is not punishment as in punitive to exact vengeance for law breaking or inflict just and legal payments that the law demands, it is done to educate, to teach, to protect.

And why, if the parent loves the child, do they do this? What happens to the child if the parent does not do this? Does harm come to the child if the parent does not impose rules like teeth brushing, dietary rules, bedtimes, not playing in street? From where does the harm come if the parents' rules are not imposed and not enforced? From breaking of the design laws that life is built to operate upon.

And if a child does break one of the parents rules like no playing in the street, and the known imposed punishment for playing in the street is a spanking, but this time the child is hit by a car and has multiple broken bones, does the parent, in order to be lawful, in order to be just, get out their belt and beat the child? Why not? What about God—if we break His commandments, does law and justice require God to use His power to inflict punishment, or does transgression of God's laws cause the harm, the pain, the suffering, and ultimately the death unless healed by God?

If the child has been hit by a car after disobeying their parents' rule, what is the loving action for the parent to take if the child's own disobedience resulted in their getting hit by a car? What is the just and right action for the parent to take? Why is it both loving and also right and just for the parent to do everything to heal the damage and not seek to inflict punishment?

Is the parent legally allowed to do everything to heal and save their child if their child's injuries are from the child's disobedience? Does the law require someone to be punished in the child's place? While the loving parent would never think of getting out a belt and beating their child who has been hit by a car, does the law require that the father get a legal substitute, perhaps the injured child's brother, and spank that child in place of the injured child and only then, once the law has been satisfied is the father able to heal and save the child? What about God? Is God lawful in seeking to save and heal sinners or is He restricted in His ability to save and heal sinners until someone pays Him the legal penalty that the law requires?

And what if that injury resulted in the child having both kidneys destroyed and they are going to die of renal failure unless they receive a kidney transplant, what is the loving action for the parent to take? Donate a kidney! And what is the just and right action for the parent to take to save this child from the result of their own disobedience—donate a kidney, use power to kill them, or let them die from the result of their choice?

Is it lawful to donate the kidney? What law demands that a healthy kidney be supplied or else the child will die? And if the parent does do the right and just action of donating the kidney to save their child, could we say that the parent paid a high price to save their child? Was that a legal price?

In this entire scenario is love involved? Is law involved? And are there two types of law involved in this scenario, the design laws of love, of physics and health, but also the parents' imposed laws? Are the parents' imposed laws, in this scenario, evidences of love?

Does this given insight into God's love and law and God's use of law through the Bible?

Can you think of any Bible examples that don't fit with this or seem to be confusing?

What happens in people if they don't understand design law, if they don't understand the reason for God adding laws, like the Ten Commandments?

What happens to a child if they don't understand the reason the parent had rules in the home? If a child believes there is nothing wrong with not brushing and flossing except parents get mad and will punish? If that is what a person always believes and they never learn the truth about dental decay, what would happen as they grow up?

Will they come to appreciate, love, and trust their parents for protecting them from harm when the child was unable to protect themselves, or will they come to resent the parent as a control freak, come to distrust the parent as one who demands people do what they say or they will punish? Could they misconstrue love as conditional on their behavior; their acceptance based on their performance, and could this misunderstanding lead to rebellion and distancing themselves from their parents?

This is what happens when we teach God's laws are imposed laws that require God to use power to inflict punishment for sin. No, God uses power to heal and save people from what sin naturally does.

Sin naturally harms, injures, severs our connection with God, sears the conscience warps the character, hardens the heart, and results in death unless God uses power to hold at bay its consequence; God used His power—of truth and love—to intervene by sending His one and only Son to eliminate the infection of sin and restore humanity to health, to being right, to righteousness.

The Bible teaches God disciplines those He loves, not punishes. Like a loving parent, God will not let us destroy ourselves without first intervening in every possible way to teach us and lead us back to life. But, if in the end, we insist on going our own way, of rejecting truth, rejecting love, embracing fear, selfishness, and evil, God will eventually let us go, set us free to reap what we have chosen and the Bible says that those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction Galatians 6:8.

Any questions about love and law?

Can people be tricked into believing they are loving God by keeping the law when they are in reality acting against God, breaking God's law, and causing harm?

Any examples?

Consider the Pharisees in Christ's day—if they were asked, what is the greatest commandment, what would they have said? We have a story that at least one of them answered as follows:

- On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"
He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luke 10:25–28 NIV84.

So, some of the Pharisees understood that love to God is the greatest commandment, then why did they think that Jesus and the apostles were law-breakers when they healed on Sabbath, picked heads of grain on Sabbath, didn't wash their hands ceremonially before eating etc.?

Did they have confusion about God's law and how it functions? Did they think God's law is imposed and love is manifested by rule-keeping, and justice is inflicting punishment for rule-breaking?

What is God most concerned with, rule-keeping or heart motivation? Perfection in task performance or perfection in the heart's attitude of love and trust in Him?

Is disobedience about breaking a rule, instruction, commandment, directive given by God or about breaking trust with God?

Paul wrote in Romans 14:23:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84

Sin is not primarily about the behavior, the deed, it is primarily about the heart attitude, are we doing whatever we are doing because we are motivated by love and trust seeking to honor God and bring glory to Him, or are we doing whatever we are doing because we are motivated by fear, selfishness, pride, and are seeking to protect or advance self in some way?

If we believe sin is primarily deeds, breaking rules, because we believe God's law functions like human law, then we get tricked into believing our love is manifested in rule-keeping and rule-enforcement and people can engage in such religion without any change of heart, and end up behaviorally observing the right rules with unconverted hearts and then they end up warring against God while claiming they are on God's side.

Consider Jesus' response when His disciples were criticized for picking grain on the Sabbath, and our goal is to understand the relationship between love and law:

- One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"
He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."
Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:23-28 NIV84.

What did Jesus do here? Didn't He point out a contrast between heart motive and legally authorized behavior? It was not legally authorized behavior for David to take the showbread and give it to his men. But David is never reprimanded during his life by God for doing this; and in this text Jesus validates that David did not sin in disobeying the rules God gave through Moses. Why was David's action in disobeying rules given by God not sin?

What was the reason David did what he did? Was he trying to rebel against God, seek glory for self, take the place of the priests, create a new religious system, or was his motive to love God by loving and providing for his men by giving them the bread provided by God?

And within the context of the symbolic system of the Old Testament, what was symbolically acted out by David doing this? What do the loaves of showbread symbolically represent? Jesus—the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven, the Word of God that was made flesh. And what happens when people internalize Jesus into their being? They receive life. So, it was not only done out of a motive to love, it was also in keeping with the lesson that whomever ingests Jesus into their being will be saved from death.

But Jesus uses this example in direct answer to how the disciples were behaving on Sabbath, so how does this lesson relate to the Sabbath and Sabbath keeping?

First question—is the Sabbath an imposed law, like parents’ rules for not playing in the street, or is it a design law of some kind? Does rejecting the Sabbath as holy cause a legal problem with God that He is required to enforce through inflicted punishments, or does desecrating the Sabbath cause direct injury to people in some way? And is the desecration of the Sabbath primarily from behavior, like pulling heads of grain, or from heart attitude?

Isaiah 58:13 tells us that to genuinely observe and keep the Sabbath one must delight in it. Can delight be achieved through external enforcement and rule-keeping? Parents can pressure and force children to eat spinach, can the parents force the children to enjoy and be delighted by eating spinach?

Who were the ones desecrating the Sabbath, Jesus and His apostles when they pulled heads of grain, or the Pharisees who were angry, resentful, jealous, bitter, and were plotting to murder Jesus on the Sabbath? But were the Pharisees doing forbidden work on Sabbath? Were they doing anything behavioral that was forbidden?

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, what does that mean?

Do you understand the Sabbath to be an expression of God’s love—how?

What sets the Sabbath apart from the other days of the week? Are there a different number of hours in the day? Does time pass at a different rate on the Sabbath? Does the sun shine differently on the Sabbath? Do any of the laws of health or physics operate differently on the Sabbath? Does God have more love in His heart on the Sabbath? What makes the Sabbath different from the other six days of the week?

How did the Sabbath become set apart from the other days of the week? It is the day when God stopped using power, when God rested. Why is that significant?

How are imposed laws maintained and upheld? Through the use of external power inflicting punishments—that is the use of Newtonian physics. Can the use of external power to inflict punishment cause people to love and trust? In fact, what happens when external force is used to coerce someone to go along with something they don’t want to do? Rebellion, resentment, destruction of love.

The Sabbath is set apart from the other days because it is the day when God **stopped** using power. He had just created a sinless world in absolute perfection, with immeasurable amounts of might and power, but then God rested, God stopped using power—in the middle of Satan’s rebellion and war. God did not use power to force Satan to bend the knee. He did not use power to intimidate, to enforce His rule, or force His way, or punish sin. He left all His intelligent beings free—why? Because God’s kingdom of the kingdom of truth and love that govern the internal operations of hearts and minds—and truth and love cannot be forced through external means, through Newtonian physics, truth and

love must be chosen by the intelligent being and can only be experienced through trust, through connecting one's inmost being with God through the quantum strings, the invisible chords through which God's Spirit works on the inner man. Thus each week every person can choose to trust God, rest in His goodness, choose to celebrate the methods and principles of God—love, truth, freedom, of which the existence of the Sabbath proves, or one can choose to stay focused on self, self-advancement, pleasure, fear, and this focus gets wired into the substructure of the brain and we may keep the day ritualistically, like the Pharisees, but the heart is not changed. Might and power cannot change hearts, only truth and love.

Remember Elijah after the great display of physical might and power at Mt. Carmel—Newtonian physics, and all the people said, The Lord He is God! But what happened with the people thereafter? Were they loyal and faithful? No, they went back into rebellion and pagan worship. Because might and power, Newtonian physics, cannot change the heart and mind and heal a sinner from sin.

And after that great victory, Elijah runs away discouraged and ends up in a cave where there is a great wind—Newtonian physics, but God is not in the wind, and a great earthquake—Newtonian physics, but God is not in the earthquake, and a great fire—Newtonian physics, but God is not in the fire, and then there is the sound of the still small voice—quantum physics, the quantum strings that interact with our quantum energy, our spirits, and that is where God is. That is the Spirit of truth and love working on our inner being to lead us to choose the truth, to choose to trust, and when Elijah finally experienced this—he was translated into heaven without seeing death.

The final movements on Earth before Christ returns will lead us through a similar experience.

The final message goes forward as Malachi prophesied, the prophet Elijah comes again, the Elijah message that God is not like Baal, not an imperial dictator god whose law is imposed and who requires legal payment, but God is the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water. We are called to stop worshiping God as a dictator and return to worshiping Him as Creator, which means we reject the imposed law lies and embrace God's laws as design laws.

We will see the second beast of Revelation 13, the one who speaks like a dragon while pretending to be the Lamb of God, call fire down from heaven, the use of Newtonian physics, might and power. But we will know that God cannot win by might and power; that the true power of God is what Paul wrote about, the gospel is the power of God, the good news about God's character and government that wins to trust and reconnects us with the Spirit of God. And this is all embodied in the Sabbath, built into time as a gift to humanity, the day when God rested, when God ceased using physical might and power.

And all true Sabbath keepers will embrace the truth, the evidence, the love, the gospel power that the Sabbath is a sign of—God's divine living law of truth, love, and freedom and they will Remember the Sabbath, Remember God rested and God did not force Satan and his angels to bow, did not use physical might and power to force His way, and they will Remember that at the Cross Jesus did not use physical power to stop the injustice being inflicted through the imposed laws of this world, but left His tormentors free to kill Him, and we will likewise live out God's living law of love, truth, and

freedom and refuse to side with the end time system of imposed law that seeks to do justice through law and law enforcement.

Do you see a relationship between love and God's design law and the gift of the Sabbath built into the fabric of time itself?

SUNDAY

The title is The Law of Love, how would you explain that to people?

The law of love is not a rule, it is a design protocol that life is built to operate upon, it is functional, and it is only fully understood in living beings and living systems. God's law cannot be fully understood on stone.

The Bible tells us that love is not self-seeking, if it doesn't seek self, what does it seek? Others, love is giving, beneficent, outward moving.

And the Bible tells us that God is love and that God's divine nature is seen in what He has made, Romans 1:20. Thus, God who is the Creator, who is love, when He built reality built it to operate upon the living law of love. It is the law of life.

- The water cycle
- The pollination cycle
- The breathing cycle
- The food digestion fertilization cycle
- The object lesson of the sacrificial system

Every living system in order to live must give, break the circle of love, the circle of giving and death is the natural result.

What do you make of this commentary about God's law and character:

- God **requires perfection** of His children. **His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character.** This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and **when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments.** Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven. Clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, they have a place at the King's feast. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 315, emphasis mine.

What does it mean? First question, what does it mean that the law is a transcript of God's character? What law is referenced? The Ten Commandments; the first four are description of our

relationship/love to God and the last six are our relationship/love to people. So, the two great commandments, love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, strength and neighbor as self are contained in these ten.

But is a transcript of something the totality, the fullness, the fulfillment? Or is a transcript an educational tool, something useful to enlighten, teach, and guide, but it is not the fulfillment, in fact, it leaves a lot out?

Consider, many people today have had their DNA sequenced, gene site testing. And with that testing we could get a printout of their DNA sequence, which is unique to every individual. That DNA sequence is a transcript of that person, and from it we could learn things about them, like their eye color, sex, blood type, hair color, various liver metabolism pathways and so much more. But, by studying that transcript of their DNA do we know the sound of their laugh, the joy of their smile, the trust of their friendship, the kindness of their compassion, the loyalty of their commitment, the strength of their bond, the quality of their character? Do we actually know them?

Yes, the Ten Commandments are a transcript of God's character of love, but it is so inadequate to reveal God to us. And just like you cannot know a person by studying their DNA sequence, people can never know God and experience eternal life (which is knowing God John 17:3) by studying the Ten Commandments. That is why we must look to Jesus, who is the living Word of God, God's love, truth, law, lived out in human form. It is in Jesus that we know God; it is in Jesus that we know God's law; it is in Jesus that we know God's character, truth, love, and justice—because God's law is not imposed rules, **God's law is a living law that can only be understood when operational in a living being.** And this is what **we** were created to be, living repositories of God's living law of love, the place where God Himself dwells by His Spirit.

MONDAY

The lesson title is taken from Romans 7 and the lesson references Romans 7 about the law being holy and righteous and good and explores the point Paul is trying to make between law, justice, justification, and daily struggles.

Many people get confused when, after they have given their heart to Jesus, they sometimes find themselves slipping up into pre-converted behaviors out of harmony with God's design laws of truth, love, and freedom. This often brings fear, guilt, shame, doubt.

What is happening is that a person can choose to respond to the Holy Spirit of truth and love in a moment. They can choose to respond to the truth, the evidence, the conviction of the Holy Spirit and surrender self to Jesus in a moment. When that choice is made the tubulin substructure of the microtubules of the neurons experience a conformation change and their quantum harmonic comes into closer alignment with the Holy Spirit and they are more sensitive to the Holy Spirit, their sense of self, their identity, their preference, their desires, longings, motivational energy—their spirits/quantum energy has been changed from fear and selfishness to love and trust. This is conversion, this is

justification, setting a sick distrusting heart/spirit right with God, changing a heart from distrust to trust. And every person who has been converted has experienced that internal peace, joy, presence, renewal of God's spirit within.

That can happen in a moment, but that substructure change, that occurs through trust, does not change the neural wiring of the patterns of behavior, the habits, the biases, conditioned responses, reflexive actions that have been practiced throughout life prior to one's conversion. Therefore, despite having a heart that now aligns with Jesus, now wants to live in harmony with God, that spirit, that heart, that individual reborn in Christ is still operating upon a brain that has wired in patterns that are not healthy. And it takes time to unlearn and relearn, to break old habits and learn new ones, and that is a daily walk with Jesus in faith. Daily we die to self, daily we surrender to our Lord and Savior, daily we choose the new healthy way and say no to the old way, and when we do we daily receive divine power through our quantum connection to God to succeed and over time our brains rewire and we are matured. This is Romans 7.

Let's read a section from Romans 7 from The Remedy:

- Therefore, your selfish, fear-ridden heart died when you accepted the truth revealed by Christ's death, and you received a new heart from him who was raised from the dead, in order that you might grow in character—to be like Jesus—and live to honor God. For when we were controlled by the infection of fear and selfishness — which resulted from distrust — the destructive passions revealed by the law were ravaging our bodies, we were terminally ill and spreading death wherever we went. But now, as we die to the distrust, fear and selfishness that once bound us, the law no longer diagnoses us as infected and terminal. In fact, the law now confirms that we have a new heart—not by observing rules, but created within by the Spirit. We are now healthy and loving like Jesus.

What shall we say then? Is the law evil and selfish because it increases the amount of evil and selfishness we see? Absolutely not! I would not have known what evil and selfishness looked like if it wasn't for the diagnostic efficacy of the law. I would not have realized that coveting was evil and selfish if the law didn't say, "Don't covet." But selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the law is only a diagnostic instrument—and not a Remedy—magnified every covetous desire within me. For apart from the diagnostic ability of the law, sin is unrecognizable. Once I thought I was healthy and free from the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness, but then the commandment examined me, exposed how utterly infected I was, and diagnosed me as terminal. I discovered that the very commandment given only to diagnose my condition I had unwittingly attempted to use as a cure, and thus my condition only worsened. For selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the commandment could only diagnose and not cure, deceived me into thinking that I could be cured by working to keep the commandments; but instead, my terminal state only worsened. So understand this: The law diagnoses perfectly, and the commandment is the standard of what is right and good, set apart by God to reveal what is evil and destructive.

Did the law, which did good by diagnosing what was wrong with me, become the source of my terminal condition? Of course not! It only exposed what was already in me, so that I could recognize how totally decayed, putrid and near death I was, and so that through the lens of the commandment I might become utterly disgusted with evil and selfishness, and long for a cure.

We know that the law is consistent, reliable and reasonable; but I am inconsistent, unreliable and unreasonable, because the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness has warped my mind and damaged my thinking. I am frustrated with what I do! For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, my old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. What is happening is this: I have come to trust God, and I desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses — which present almost reflexively in certain situations — have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. Romans 3:4-17 REM.

Read the first paragraph,

- Love is the foundation of God's law. When God upholds the law, He upholds love. This is why Jesus died in order to save sinners, so that He could uphold the law while also extending grace to us. Thus, He could be both just and the justifier of those who believe (Rom. 3:25, 26). What an expression of love! Accordingly, the law is not invalidated by the process of redemption; rather, it is further confirmed. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 102.

Could one understand this paragraph completely differently depending on whether they believe that God's law is imposed or design law? What would be the difference?

What does it mean for God to uphold His law? Why is upholding God's law the same as upholding love? Because love is the law, it is the protocol to life.

Why did Jesus have to die in order to save sinners and how is that related to love, law, and justice?

Doesn't the answer to this all hinge on how we understand God's law functions?

The lesson references Romans 3:25,26 let's read it from a several versions:

- God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:25,26 NIV84

What does this version communicate to you? How do you hear it?

What about this version

- God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus. Romans 3:25,26 GNT

Do you hear this version differently? What is different?

What about this one?

- God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness. Romans 3:25,26 NET

What do hear in this version—is it different from the two previous?

And then from The Remedy:

- God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus. Romans 3:25, 26 REM

TUESDAY

Law and Grace—what is the relationship between law and grace?

What is grace?

Grace, in the context of sin, is the work of God for salvation; it is God's actions to remove sin and save sinners. Thus the giving of the written law is a manifestation of grace, given to diagnose and protect, and lead us back to Jesus for healing and restoration.

Everything God has done and is doing is a manifestation of grace, of His work to save sinners from sin and eliminate sin from the universe.

- Creating the Sabbath in Eden was a manifestation of grace
- The promised Messiah in Genesis 3:15 was grace
- Removing Adam and Eve from the garden was grace
- The Flood was grace
- The first death, sleep death, was the outworking of grace; it is how God leaves the sins committed beforehand unpunished as Romans 3:25,26 says
- The thundering at Sinai was grace
- The written law and ceremonial system were grace
- The Babylonian captivity was grace
- The 66 books of the Bible are grace
- Jesus is grace
- The Holy Spirit is grace

God's grace is the work of God to save, and everything God has done and is doing is for the elimination of sin and the saving of sinners—it is all grace!

The bottom green section asks, “What is your hope in the judgment?”

Of course, our hope is Jesus, no question about that. But how is Jesus our hope?

Is it that in the judgment we have hope that Jesus will stand up and plead to His Father in our behalf and through His pleadings and the offering to the Father His blood He convinces the Father to pronounce pardon upon us?

Is our hope in the judgment that the Father will not look at us, but will look at His Son and judge His Son as perfect and then declare that we are legally righteous because we have claimed Jesus as our legal substitute?

Is our hope in the judgment that all our sins have been erased out of the God's record books so when the records are opened there is nothing there for the Father to judge against us?

Or is our hope in the judgment that we have been reborn, renewed, recreated, died to the old life and become alive to the new life in Jesus such that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me, that we are partakers of the divine nature and we are healed and sealed so that when the Father examines us He finds us right with Him, He finds His law operating within us, He finds the righteousness of Jesus alive and functioning inside of us, He finds we are bearing His image in character and thus are His true children and thus He diagnosis us as healed?

Consider this commentary,

- This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us... By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's

commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us** He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. *Christ's Object Lessons* 311, emphasis mine.

What is your hope in the judgment? To be one with God and Jesus, to be healed, to be reborn, to have Jesus living within!

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The relationship between love and law cannot be overstated. Indeed, according to Scripture, to love is to fulfill the law. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 104.

This is only true when we understand God's law as design law. Satan advances his war against God through infecting the minds of people with the lie that God's law is imposed and therefore love and justice is through properly inflicted punishments, which leads to injustice, and distrust of God, the destruction of love and rebellion. This is the history of the Christian church after it Romanized and accepted the idea that God's law functions like human law, look at what the church did in the name of God who they claim is a being of love.

And no branch of Christianity has freed itself from this infection, the entire world is drunk on this intoxicating wine, this delusional driving falsehood, and the final message to the world is a call to return to Creator worship which requires we reject the imposed law lie and understand all of God's laws are design laws.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on love operating in community.

If one loves as God loves can this be done by set rules or will the specific actions love takes change based on the situation?

In a family, if parents love all their children with the most perfect godly love, will they treat them the same or differently?

If one child has leukemia but the others do not, will all the children be treated the same or differently if the parents act in love?

Why will the child with leukemia be restricted from many activities and also be subjected to painful procedures?

Well, what if it isn't leukemia but differences in temperament, attitude, mindset?

What about things like Sabbath-keeping, if we live God's law fully in community will we always avoid work on the Sabbath, or will we sometimes to work on the Sabbath?

If there is a natural disaster, like the hurricane and flooding that came through the southeast last year, if we live God's love and people are stranded in Sabbath, do we wait until after Sabbath to rescue them? Or do we work to save them on Sabbath?

Can we love others by rule-keeping, or can rule-keeping lead us to do what is right by the rules but is actually wrong by God's character and design laws of love? Didn't the Jews in Christ day do this all the time?

Where are we vulnerable to do this today?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain: This program is now available online and slides are available for download.

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2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols - Lesson 1

Some Principles of Prophecy

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

When you have studied Bible prophecy, what are the principles that you have found helpful?

In the aftermath of my program entitled [Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Physics, and Your Brain](#) I have noticed many critics of the program have trouble differentiating when to take something literal and when to take it symbolically, allegorically, as an analogy, metaphor, object lesson, illustration, or simply representing a concept or idea.

For instance, the language of being in someone, like the Holy Spirit being in someone or casting out a demon, many people think very concretely. To them the language of being in someone means being inside the body, inside the cells. Some people have a hard time understanding this language is about who we have in our heart and mind as the one most loved and trusted, whose principles we align with, whose methods we prefer and practice, whose animating energy have we internalized and act upon; it is not describing having another person inside our body.

Likewise, when it comes to understanding Bible prophecy it is important to differentiate symbols from the reality those symbols represent. If the symbol of metaphor doesn't connect directly to some reality, helping us understand that reality more clearly, then it is not symbolic or metaphorical, it is fantasy, pretend, make-believe, in other words, falsehood, myth, and that is Satan's world. He is the father of lies. He gets many people trapped in falsehood by getting them to believe in the metaphor or symbol but not the reality to which it points.

And the next important step, after we agree that the symbol or metaphor must be accurately linked to the reality to which it points is to correctly decode the symbol.

And one of the principles for that is that the Bible is its own decryption key, the Bible is its own decoder, its own standard for what the symbols mean. In the same way an English dictionary is the standard for English, and using a foreign language dictionary to define English words would introduce error, so too, using non-biblical sources to decode the symbols will introduce error.

Notice what I said and didn't say. I didn't say non-biblical sources, Bible commentaries, other Christian writers, cannot be used to gain insight into the Bible and its prophecies, they can be used, but when reading those other writings, we must confirm their interpretations are found in and harmonize with the Scripture.

For instance, Jesus said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have not part with me. John 6:53. Jesus was not talking about cannibalism, this is a metaphor, symbol. If we take it literally, we get offended and disgusted, like the Jews did who heard this. If we attach the wrong meaning to it, we misunderstand and fail to benefit, like Frankish abbot Paschasius Radbertus, who in 831 released a paper titled *De corpore et sanguine Christi* (Concerning Christ's body and blood) in which he taught that Christ cannot lie so when taking the symbols of bread and wine they must turn into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus. Or many today, who believe that there is power in the red corpuscles, that if we could get a shroud with Jesus blood on it we would have power over sin. Another wrong meaning is that the blood represents His death, the legal death penalty paid which then is taught that Jesus offers to His Father in heaven to pay for our sins.

Both the superstitious relic collecting and penal legal blood payments lead hearts and minds away from the reality that Jesus taught. It is when we return to understanding the reality to which the symbols point, as decoded by Scripture, that we grow in truth and grace.

Jesus is the Word made flesh as John describes. Thus, the flesh of Jesus is symbolic of the Word of God, the truth. As we partake of literal food, flesh or bread, it becomes building blocks of our body and gives us strength. As we partake of truth of God it become building blocks of our minds, characters, and each truth we embrace and apply changes the substructures of our neurons, our tubulin molecules realign, and this changes our quantum resonance making our hearts more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. As we embrace enough truth to win us to trust and accept Jesus in trust thereby opening the heart, then we receive the new heart and right spirit, the new animating energy, the new life, which is symbolized by the blood, as the Bible tells us the life is in the blood Leviticus 17:11.

Another example is the symbol of the veil in the temple separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place which was torn in two when Christ died.

- Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... Hebrews 10:19, 20 NIV84

Do we enter by the death penalty payment into God's presence, or do we enter by the sinless, holy, righteous life of Jesus that we ingest, as Paul wrote, "It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" or as Peter wrote, "we become partakers of the divine nature."

What is it that enables us to enter into God's presence? God getting paid by a blood payment so He gets His anger and wrath under control and doesn't hurt us? God getting a legal payment so He isn't required to enforce His law with external power and execute us? Or we are reborn, transformed, purified by the life of Christ so that we can stand in God's life-giving glory and thrive?

And what about the curtain, what does it represent? It is commonly taught that the curtain represents Jesus' body, and that at the cross God used divine power to execute Jesus for our sins to enforce the law and pay the legal penalty.

This symbol is interpreted in this way because people use outside the Bible tools; they use human law as the basis of understanding God's law; and they assume that it was Jesus that was torn by God at the cross.

But think through the symbolism of that system. The daily priests, dressed in white, working in the holy place represent who? The priesthood of believers who have the righteousness of Christ, symbolized by their white robes. And the holy place, covered in gold, represents the church on Earth.

So, a priest, working in the holy place, longing to see God more fully, to enter into God's presence and be reconciled to God, literally looks toward the most holy place and sees what? A curtain, a barrier, something is obstructing his view and access to God, and that something was destroyed, ripped open by Jesus' death.

Do you think that Jesus is the one obstructing our way to the Father and God had to kill Jesus and get Him out of the way so that we could have both a clear view of the Father and clear access to the Father? Or did Jesus teach,

- I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do... I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. John 17:4, 6 NIV84.
- "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him... Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? John 14:6-7, 9-10, NIV84.

The curtain is the only element of the entire sanctuary system that God used power to destroy. So if we use the Bible as our interpreter, what is it that the Bible says God destroys through Jesus' death?

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil Hebrews 2:14 NIV84.
- Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84.
- The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 1 John 3:8 NIV84.

What separates us from God and causes death?

- The lies we believe about God that break love and trust and cause fear and selfishness.
- Our own fallen fear-infected, selfish, carnal nature, the unclean life with which we are born which Jesus destroyed and replaced through His sinless life and sacrificial death.

The obstruction that blocks our way to God is not Jesus, it is the lies told by Satan that we believe that prevent us from trusting Him, and our own fear-ridden, selfish carnal nature, the spirit of fear and selfishness inherited from Adam. Jesus destroyed the lies and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and restored into humanity the sinless, righteous, holy, life, spirit, animating energy of pure love and trust, and we become partakers of that through faith, through trust, and are reborn with a new life, the life of Christ. And thus, the obstruction, the barrier, the veil that prevented us from returning to the full presence and unity with God was destroyed by Jesus at the cross!

And the angels on the veil, represent the spiritual war going on, the battle between the forces of heaven and the forces of Satan warring for every soul, as described in Daniel 10, when Gabriel and the angel prince of Persia were using their quantum energy to influence the spiritual energy of Cyrus. Godly angels can war with evil angels to influence us with love, truth, and trust in God, but godly angels could not reveal the truth about God—only God could do that. And godly angels could not be born as a human and destroy the infection of fear and selfishness in the human spirit and restore a perfect, sinless, holy, righteous spirit into humanity. Only Jesus could do that. Thus Jesus is the way through the veil, not the veil.

- Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body... Hebrews 10:19, 20 NIV84

His body in the text can refer to either the veil or the new and living way—the reader must decide to which it is referring. My view is that Jesus' body is not the veil, His life, His death, His achievement is the new and living way through the veil. Thus, I render this text in the Remedy as:

- Since Jesus died to bring us the truth about God and to eradicate selfishness from humanity, we no longer need to be afraid but can confidently enter the Most Holy Place—God's very presence—because Christ's death revealed the truth about God and ripped open the veil of lies told by Satan that blinded our minds, and destroyed the infection of selfishness that separated us from him. Hebrews 10:19,20 REM.

If we use other sources to decode and apply other meanings it leads us away from the truth.

Let's, as practice, list some of the Bible symbols and decode their meaning:

- The sacrificial lamb
 - Jesus John 1:29
- A dove
 - Both Jesus as a sacrificial animal but also the Holy Spirit who descended in the form of a dove Mt 3:16
- A sword
 - The Word of God Heb 4:12
- A rock or stone 1 Cor 10:4; 1 Pet 2:6-7; 1 Pet 2:4-5

- Jesus: Rock that gave water and chief cornerstone
 - The redeemed: living stones built together into a house for the Lord
- Ladder or Stairway
 - Jesus the connecting link, path, way, from heaven to Earth Gen 28:11-13; John 1:51
- A throne
 - Rulership, upon which Jesus sits, and God's throne is depicted as sitting upon rotating wheels, which symbolizes the living law of love, Isa 6:1; Eze 10:1; Rev 4:2
- Wind
 - The Holy Spirit, the animating energy of God that gives life. John 3:8; Acts 2:2
- Fire
 - The Holy Spirit, the purifying and cleansing energy of truth and love that burns out lies, fear, and selfishness purifying the heart and mind. Acts 2:3
- Water
 - Holy Spirit and Word of God Isa 44:3; Matt 3:11; Ephesians 5:26, the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, which inspired the Scriptures, so the Holy Spirit cleanses through the truth, which is revealed in the Word of God. As we partake of the Word, lies are removed, our tubulin substructure is changed, our resonant harmonic is changed, and our spirits, our animating energy is change through truth, love, and trust. We detach our identity, our self, from being motivated by fear and selfishness and live motivated by love and trust through the empower and indwelling Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Christ.
- Lampstand
 - The Word of God Ps 119:105
 - The central post of gold—Jesus the living Word, the Word made flesh
 - The six bowls attached to the central stand represents humanity that Jesus partook, connected to Christ—7 bowls, perfection, humanity being perfected by Christ
 - The lamp also represents the church, the people connected to Christ who are to be a light to the world and let our light so shine that others see God's glory through us
- Oil
 - Represents the Holy Spirit that transforms the heart and mind and empowers a person to shine brightly for the Lord. Just like wind is energy so too oil is energy that animates, motivates, and moves. And thus the oil represents the animating energy of the Holy Spirit of truth and love that establishes trust. And the oil also represents Christlike character built within the person through the individual choosing to following the leading of the Holy Spirit—this is why the foolish virgins cannot get oil from the wise virgins, but they must assimilate the truth for themselves and say yes to the Holy Spirit and develop their own character in harmony with God.
- Serpent
 - Satan Gen 3:1; Rev 12:9;
 - Jesus Num 21:9, the bronze serpent, representing Jesus taking the terminal sin condition upon Himself and destroying it
- Yeast
 - Sin, fear, selfishness, pride, lies Mark 6:11, 16

- The kingdom of heaven, the principles of truth, love, freedom the animating Spirit of God Matthew 13:33
- How is yeast symbolic of both sin and the truth, love, and trust? Because yeast gets inside the dough and makes changes in the base material altering the result, sin, fear, selfishness works in the heart and mind altering the spirit, the animating energy, drives, motives which deforms and destroys the character. Likewise, truth, love, and trust when chosen, when taken into the heart and mind change the tubulin substructure of our quantum matrix, altering our resonant harmonic, bringing us into harmony with the Holy Spirit, and with the new animating, motivating energy of the Holy Spirit, of love and trust, we make different choices and this transforms the character. So, both work on the inner man making changes in the bread, the character, the person, the outcome.
- Dragon
 - Satan Rev 12:9
- Beasts
 - Nations or people Daniel 7 (also lamb and dragon are beasts)
- Harvest
 - Second coming and the reaping of souls Joel 3:12-13: Matt 13:29-30
- Tearing garments
 - Anger/sorrow Gen 37:29,34
- Shaking dust off
 - Rejection Matt 10:14
- Sitting in sackcloth
 - Repentance Ps 69:11

When we think about Bible prophecy there are some other principles that I find helpful:

- If one part of a passage is symbolic or metaphor, then the rest is symbolic or metaphor unless clear reasons to be literal are expressed in the text.
- Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, this means that we, in our natural, fear-ridden, selfish motivation, our carnal animating energy are unable to accurately comprehend Scripture. Without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit we will always misconstrue and misread Scripture, bringing in carnal and worldly interpretations to what we read. Thus, to accurately comprehend Scripture we must always humbly submit ourselves to God and willingly ask for and following the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- The theme of Scripture that of the conflict between Christ and Satan in the larger setting of a universe wide war. This larger view must be included in our understanding, it makes a big difference in understanding the meaning correctly.
 - Understanding this larger view immediately causes us to realize that the war is not over might and power. The devils know who has the power and it terrifies them. The fact that God didn't use power immediately in heaven to destroy Lucifer and his rebel angels, is evidence that proves the issue isn't a legal one that can be resolved by legal solutions and imposing legal penalties. To destroy sin requires more than destroying the originator of sin, it requires destroying his lies from the hearts and minds of all

intelligent beings in the universe. If God were to use external power to inflict punishment, to destroy His enemies, it would be a violation of liberty that would destroy love and incite rebellion and destroy individuality, which would spread sin, not remove it. This is why God wins, not by might and power but by the Spirit (Zech 4:6). It is only by the outworking of the Spirit of truth and love working on the inner being bring intelligent beings to be fully settled in their own mind, intellectually and spiritually into the living law of God, into unbreakable trust, that God wins. And this is why we have this long history with God providing such costly evidence to win us to love and trust and provide us a new life, a new sinless spirit restored into humanity by Jesus.

- If we don't understand this larger view and how reality works, the design laws of God, then we can take the various symbols of Scripture and misconstrue them to teach God is like Satan alleges, an imperial dictator who is the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted as so-called just punishment for sin. And that view undermines trust and perpetuates rebellion and sin.
- God's character of love never changes, therefore accurate interpretations will never result in God being represented in a character other than love.
- God's law of love never changes, therefore accurate interpretations will always be in harmony with God's law of love.
 - Understanding both God's design laws of love, liberty, truth, worship and all others, and God's character of love, become standards, boundaries, benchmarks, touchstones, litmus tests, tools we can utilize to test interpretations of the Bible. Any interpretation of the Bible which causes one to conclude God is other than love is in error. Any interpretation that causes one to place God in the position of violating His design laws, like the law of liberty, is in error.

Other principles you have found helpful?

What is the purpose of the Bible in general? It is the revelation of God to fallen and sinful human beings for the purpose of communicating the truths essential for salvation from sin.

The Bible is not given to teach mathematics, or how to build internal combustion engines, or textile manufacturing, or any of a myriad of other worthy lines of study. The Bible is about salvation, which is about healing hearts and minds, which is about character development, maturity, health and wellbeing, which when the truths of the Bible are internalized, are applied to the individual, not only heals that person, but results in them advancing in any other line of inquiry or industry they pursue—why?

- Because the reborn Christian is animated by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth and love.
- This Spirit leads them to be a lover of truth, thus they will eagerly pursue truth in all domains, they will be quicker to recognize falsehood, they will be more sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit which brings greater insights and knowledge of reality.
- They will be people of integrity, honesty, loyalty, faithfulness, who see the best in others, who invest in helping others and building others up. They will forgive those who wrong them, and will take ownership over their own shortcomings, which means they mature, grow, and continue to develop themselves, which means they will have less conflict, less interpersonal stress, and are healthier.
- They care for their spirit temples, don't abuse their bodies with toxins, drugs, tobacco, alcohol; they eat healthy diets, exercise regularly; take regular rest to sleep and Sabbath rest each week with God so they don't burn out, and thus they are physically healthier, which makes their minds more efficient and sharp. And this enables them to be more efficient in all they do, no matter what field of personal application.
- They actively ask for God's leading, partnership, and seek to glorify God in their work and thus they receive God's oversight, protection, and blessings
- They apply the design laws of God, truth, love, freedom and create atmospheres where creativity, individuality, and personal development thrive and improve.

So while the Bible is not a book on all subjects, it is the book on the most important subject, the truth about God and His design laws, methods, principles, the sin problem—which is the cause of all pain, suffering, and hardship and death, and God's solution for it, and how we can cooperate with God to experience healing, recreation, rebirth, a new life with new motives and divine power to succeed, and when we do that then no matter what vocation we engage in we will be advancing God's kingdom and have fulfillment with a life of meaning and purpose culminating in eternal life.

But within the plan of salvation which is the overarching theme of the Bible, what is the purpose of Bible prophecy?

- Is it to predict future events?

Jesus said,

- I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. John 14:29 NIV84

Was the reason Jesus gave so they could predict the future, or when the events He predicted occurred they would look back and realize Jesus was not caught off guard, He really does know the future, He really is in charge, we don't need to doubt, have fear, or wonder, but we can have ever increasing confidence, faith, and trust in God?

So, is the primary purpose about prognostication, or is the primary purpose to give us confidence in God along with hope for eventual deliverance from this world of sin? In other words, as we recognize

fulfilled Bible prophecy, does it serve as evidence to us, especially those of us living in the last generation, those who are alive when Jesus appears, so that we have confidence/trust in God and won't give into fear and break trust when the final events of the beastly system arises, that we will be like Daniel and the three worthies and stand faithful to God, trusting Him, knowing He has a plan, even if we are threatened by death?

Are there other benefits to studying Bible prophecy? Yes, understanding the landscape of the war and learning to recognize the methods of evil in contrast to the principles of God, to discern the weapons of Satan and His forces and differentiate them from the weapons of God. To learn how to wield the weapons of God in governance of self, and to keep our hearts daily surrendered to God.

Can Bible prophecy be used by Satan to interfere with God's plan?

Did the Jews, 2000 years ago, misinterpret Bible prophecy in such a way that it was one of the factors that led them to reject Jesus? Didn't they interpret Bible prophecy to teach that the Jews would become a ruling power, dominating the world, and the Messiah would rule the nations with a rod of iron, using physical might and power to crush their enemies; and therefore when Jesus came advancing a spiritual kingdom, not a physical one, their understanding of Bible prophecy contributed to their rejecting Jesus?

What about today? Could Christians misconstrue Bible prophecy in such a way that it could lead them to side with Satan when he impersonates Christ? Any thoughts on how that could happen, how prophecy and the Bible could be misconstrued?

What about the idea that God's law functions like human law and that justice is the infliction of just penalties? If people believe this, then will they be vulnerable to a supernatural being who comes with miraculous signs and wonders and proclamations of love, but who also says, that justice requires all those who refuse to repent and worship him to be justly punished, so they will be imprisoned and threatened with death?

Could some be deceived by believing the second coming of Jesus is going to be a secret thing?

But Jesus warned against this, yet millions today ignore Jesus' warning and are looking for a secret coming. Jesus said to His disciples, prophesying about His second coming:

- If **any man** shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; **believe it not**. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in **the secret chambers**; believe it not. **For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.** Matthew 24:23-27 KJV, emphasis mine.

What is the purpose of this prophecy? To encourage us that Jesus is coming again, and also protect us from the counterfeits, and the false teachings about the second coming that will deceive, all but the elect.

MONDAY

The title for the day's lesson is "God Wants to Be Understood."

What do you think about this title?

I totally agree—no question about it, why does God want to be understood?

Do you want to be understood by your spouse, your children, your colleagues, church members, and friends? Why?

Doesn't being understood mean that we are known for who we are?

And what happens to people when they come to know God for who He is?

- Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 NIV84

What does it mean to know God? It means to have an intimate friendship with Him, to be restored to love and trust, and when this happens we surrender our hearts, open ourselves to receive a new heart and right spirit, to be healed, recreated, and renewed.

God wants to be understood NOT because God has a need and if He is not understood He will feel inadequate, deficient, lonely, bitter, resentful, angry or any other selfish motive. No, God wants to be understood because He is truth and love and the source of life and to understand and know God is restoration of love and trust, this is restoration to unity with God, this is life. It is for our good, for the healing of the universe, for the elimination of sin, because sin is based on lies about God, which break the circle of love and trust. Thus God wants to be understood so the lies about Him will be removed from hearts and minds and all those He loves, you and me, will be healed and saved from sin.

The lesson makes the case that God is an infinite being and therefore beyond our ability to fully or completely know, but the lesson makes the following critical and excellent point:

- "Thought we will never understand everything, we can understand what is necessary for our salvation." *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 8.

We are not saved by having a complete knowledge of all truth. In fact, when Jesus comes there will not be one saved person who correctly understands every detail of Scripture. We will all have things to

learn and unlearn regarding various facts, details, interpretations of Scripture. Meaning, we are not saved by knowing right doctrinal facts—we are saved by knowing God and Jesus. If one knows right Bible doctrines, like the Sabbath, tithing, approved foods, etc., but doesn't know God and Jesus, then they will end up like the Jews who crucified Christ—knowing the right doctrines but being enemies of God.

The saved will come from every nation, tribe, kindred, and people, from all backgrounds and cultures, and from many divergent denominations, which means the saved will not all believe the exact same doctrines. But all of the saved will have baseline requirements to salvation in common. All the saved will:

- Have responded to the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and truth
- They will all have hearts that love truth and are willing to move forward in godly truth as they comprehend it
- They will have all been reborn and been recreated with new hearts and minds that are animated by the life of Jesus that they receive through the indwelling Holy Spirit—this is having the law of God written upon the heart and mind, the living law of truth and love that is restored only through trust, only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- And they all live lives of love for others

The wicked die in the end because, as Paul wrote, they did not love the truth and thus be saved. 2 Thes 2:10. Paul didn't say they didn't love their church, their religious system, their creeds, fundamental beliefs, doctrines, ceremonies, or rituals—he said they did not love the truth.

The Jews that crucified Christ loved their nation, their temple, their religion, their Scriptures, their doctrines—but they did not love truth, meaning when truth was presented that differed from their understanding, truth that would require them to advance, to surrender old false ideas, and to reinterpret Scripture in new light—they resisted and rejected it and thus their hearts hardened and whatever light they had became darkness to them.

This demonstrates a trap of Satan that our lesson is trying to help protect us against. Because God is infinite, because we will never become God and never know all things, there is NEVER a time when we come to know all truth, there is NEVER a time when there is no more truth for us to learn. Understanding this then, the righteous, those who love God, those who are led by the Spirit of God, are lovers of truth, we love the truth and are eager and willing to move forward and advance in truth at the earliest possible moment our finite minds can comprehend new truth.

But the lost set up their creeds, their fundamental beliefs, their religious systems, which the beastly system of Revelation will be, and any new light, new truth, that arises from the study of God's word that contradicts the current creed is not only resisted and rejected, it is often labeled heresy for questioning the authority of the religious leaders and institution, just like the Jews did to Jesus 2000 years ago. We saw this during the Reformation when truth was advancing and those in the organized system rejected it and called those advancing the truth heretics and sought to burn them at the stake.

Do we find this happening today in our various churches today? I have seen it.

But the lovers of truth never stop growing, advancing, and developing in the truth as God reveals it to us. And just a couple of verses after Paul describes how the wicked perish because they refuse the truth that would heal them, he wrote this:

- But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to **be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.** 2 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Notice, it is by the truth we are sanctified, the truth sets us free, we are washed by the Spirit and the Word (Ephesians 5:26). As the Holy Spirit brings the truth to our minds and we say yes, as we accept it and choose to apply, it is then that we experience encoding of that truth in the tubulin substructure of our brains and our spiritual energy, quantum resonance, changes coming into closer harmony with God and the Holy Spirit and we become ever more sensitive to the movements and empowerment and leading of the Holy Spirit. We are literally being transformed and healed by the truth. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of truth, is cutting away our individuality from the spirit of fear and selfishness and merging it, connecting it, bonding it, marrying it, to the Spirit of love and trust.

Consider how the Bible describes this very reality:

- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to **dividing soul and spirit**, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is why Satan hates the truth and wants us to instead encode lies and false beliefs into our brains, for by the false beliefs, the lies, we encode a different harmonic of fear and distrust which perpetuates selfishness and keeps our spirits unclean.

I found this quote in the Bible commentary *The Desire of Ages* and thought it expressed this reality quite profoundly, and was particularly impressive in light of our understanding of neurobiology and how beliefs get encoded into the tubulin substructure of our neurons altering our spiritual energy.

- The Comforter is called “the Spirit of truth.” His work is to define and maintain the truth. **He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth**, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. **It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character.** Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses **truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul.** It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. *The Desire of Ages* p. 671, emphasis mine.

With this in mind, do you see the assault on truth occurring around the world by various humanistic theories? The idea that a person's own feelings, attitudes, wishes, desires, opinions, and beliefs are "their truth" and thus are to be respected and recognized as legitimate. And anyone who rejects another person's sincerely held feelings about themselves is a bigot, sexist, hater of some sort?

Our opinions, feelings, wishes, dreams, hopes, and wants do not change objective reality. While people are free to choose to believe anything they want, it is not true that all beliefs are equally healthy, they are not. Some beliefs are positively harmful, first because if they are false and the lies imbed into the brain which corrupt the spirit and increase fear and selfishness thereby corrupting the character, and second by leading to behaviors that are harmful to self and others because they violate the laws life and health are built upon.

Just look around at the outcomes in our society where people are given license to live out their feelings as if those feelings define reality—what is demonstrated? Increasing dysfunction, worsening mental and emotional health problems, greater relationship problems, more addictions, more chaos in communities, and a general breakdown in the fabric of society, community respect, love, and trust.

All who have eyes to see and ears to hear, who retain the ability to reason and think for self, who can still differentiate facts from opinion, truth from feelings, reality from propaganda, can see all around us the destruction that comes when people believe the lie that their feelings are the barometer of truth. No, in fact, the Bible teaches that our feelings lead us into temptation, that the human heart is deceitful above all things and utterly wicked. And the evidence is clear for all who want to be lovers of truth to see.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Daniel 12:4

- "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." Daniel 12:4 NIV84.

What does this mean?

That the understanding of the meaning of this book will not be understood until the time of the end, but once humanity reaches the time of the end, then the knowledge and understanding of this prophecy will increase.

Has this happened? Yes, it is a fact of history that starting in the late 18th and into the early 19th century, through study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, that the Great Awakening occurred, which caused the Christian world to begin preaching the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But more specifically, the understanding of the prophecies of Daniel increased since that time, which is a biblical fulfillment that gives us confidence that we are in the last days. Jesus is coming soon.

Are there other prophecies and fulfillments of Scripture that confirm, in addition to Daniel 12:4, that we are in the last days?

1. SCOFFERS

- “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:3, 4 NIV84).

This sign was fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the Enlightenment, which directly opposed the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious movement that called people’s attention to the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But this movement was countered by the Enlightenment, in which godless scientific views and human reason replaced a belief in God, and godless evolutionism spread throughout the world. In the wake of godless evolution came communism and other godless philosophies that scoff at the idea that Jesus is coming again.

Not only is the world today filled with scoffers, but the critics of God have come to dominate the scientific, educational, and media landscape, creating a societal attitude that those who continue to look for Christ’s return are less educated, ignorant, or foolish.

2. The 1260-year prophecy of Revelation 13, which began in 538 AD and ended in 1798.

3. Prophecy of Daniel 8:14, 2300 years which ended in 1844.

4. The rise of the King of the North as prophesied in Daniel 11 and taking the power of the king of the South.

5. LOVE OF MOST WILL GROW COLD

- Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Because of the increase in wickedness – which is all the violations of God’s designs, laws, methods, and principles – the love in the hearts of most people grows cold. Because of the denial of God and the rise of the lies of secularism, humanism, socialism, evolutionism; because of the breakdown of families; because of the assault on our common heritage and community values, love is dying in the human heart.

6. SO CAUGHT UP IN ENTERTAINMENT AND LIVING, PEOPLE ARE UNAWARE

- As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84.

Incredible! The people before the Flood knew nothing about what was going to happen despite Noah preaching for 120 years and building a giant boat. How did they not know? Because they were consumed with pleasure-seeking, eating, drinking, and marrying. They were too busy either being entertained or living their lives to be bothered with eternal realities.

This is exactly the state of the world today: It is caught up in increasing consumption of mind-altering substances, or leaving reality behind for their preferred fantasy world of video games, social media activity, TV shows, movies, sports, concerts, amusement parks, or anything else to consume and distract the mind. This is the world today – ignoring the warnings of Jesus, ignoring the signs of the end all around, and living merely for the pleasures of the moment.

Other fulfillments or signs that confirm we are at the time of the end?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson gives a great illustration on Bible study, in the second paragraph we read,

- In some ways, studying the Bible is not unlike assembling a large jigsaw puzzle. If you gather just two or three pieces together, it is nearly impossible to discern the entire picture.” *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 10.

Isn’t that true? I have found this to be true so often when talking with people that opinions and beliefs are formed on one text, two texts, or a few, but not incorporating and balancing the entire weight of Scripture, in harmony with the integrative evidenced-based approach.

The more data points we can hold in our mind and bring to bear on the question the better and more accurate our picture will be.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks the following question in the third paragraph,

- “What remains to be answered, however, is why God would speak in symbols instead of being forthright? Why for example, would Peter cryptically refer to the city of Rome as Babylon, in 1 Peter 5:13?” *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 11.

This is the outworking of the law of exertion, if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it. If you want strong musical ability you must practice your instrument, strong language skill you

must speak the language, if you want strong ability to think, reason, discern, and comprehend then one must think, reason, and discern for themselves.

One does not learn mathematics by memorizing an answer key to the questions, or by someone telling them the answers. They must be instructed on math and then apply it through problem solving.

The Bible is written in such a way that it not only contains the truth essential to salvation, but is presented in such a way that it requires us to think, to weigh evidences, to develop our minds, abilities, to mature.

Nothing is so designed to help our minds develop that the prayerful and humble study of the Bible integrated with science and life experiences.



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols - Lesson 2

The Genesis Foundation

SABBATH

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ ” (*John 1:29, NKJV*).

From the Lesson: “One of the key problems with modern interpretations of Bible prophecy, such as in Revelation, is that they fail to recognize the ancient roots of Revelation. The author assumes a knowledge of the Old Testament and uses concepts that would have been well-known to his audience. While searching the entire Bible for passages that resemble the text you are studying in Revelation is useful, there are also core texts that set the stage for understanding the book better than other texts do. This is particularly true of Genesis, which lays out the path by which our world descended into sinful chaos. Nearly every key concept mentioned in Revelation appears—in some form—in the opening chapters of the Bible.”

- While Lucifer/Satan/The Serpent is present early in Genesis, does the “Cosmic Controversy” concept appear in Genesis, or are more OT books needed to fill in some information?
- Does Satan’s origin as the covering cherub, a once holy angel, appear in Genesis, or do we have to read Job / Ezekiel for that??
- Genesis does show the origin of life on this Earth, but don’t we need more insights from other books for nuanced understanding of God’s government / Laws / Principles??

SUNDAY

The Principle of “First Mention”.

From the Lesson: “Most academic programs begin with a general survey course (often given the number “101”), a course that covers broad and basic principles that will form the basis for further study as you dig deeper into the subject. Likewise, when you read through the entire Bible, you quickly discover that God also has a general survey course in the book of Genesis, where He introduces ideas that will be examined in more detail throughout the rest of the Bible.

Generally speaking, the first time a concept or symbol is mentioned in the Bible—particularly in the opening chapters of Genesis—you will discover that it establishes a general understanding of that concept, which will help you understand how it’s being used later on.

Some Bible students refer to this as the “law of first mention,” although it would more properly be labeled a principle (or a pattern) rather than a law, because it is certainly not ironclad, and there are many exceptions to the rule. The pattern that seems to emerge, both in general Bible study and in Bible prophecy, is that God slowly feeds His children information over time, beginning with a basic concept and then enlarging on it many times over the years, or even the centuries.”

This principle of “first mention” answers my questions in Sabbath’s lesson. It’s also known as “progressive disclosure” — the process of introducing concepts that are easier to comprehend, then adding more difficult ones. Paul alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 3: 1-3, using the imagery of the believers needing to move beyond basic teachings [milk / baby food] to a deeper understanding of expanding truth [solid food].

The lesson asks us to read Isaiah 40:7, 8; Malachi 3:6; and Hebrews 13:8. These texts reveal the consistency / unchanging nature of God [aka always Love], and this is foundational for understanding Scriptural prophecy.

From the Lesson: “When God establishes truth, however, He does not change His mind. Once He begins teaching His people truth, we can count on the fact that repetitions of the same biblical principle or theme do not change its meaning but, in contrast, shed further light on that meaning. It makes great sense in studying prophecy, therefore, to develop a good understanding of the book of Genesis, where you find many key concepts explained for the first time, and then take that foundational understanding with you as you explore the rest of the Bible.”

I would have stated the first sentence differently. God is Truth - eternity past, present, and eternity future. God *reveals* Truth to his intelligent created beings and only reveals as much as we can assimilate.

From the Lesson: Why is it so important that we not allow anyone or anything, no matter how smooth or logical, to weaken our faith in the Bible and the infallible truths it teaches? What are subtle ways that this weakening can happen?

Are we to have faith in the Bible, or the men who wrote it, or the Spirit who inspired it? Is faith in Scripture alone necessary, or are we called, by Scripture [John 1:3 & Psalms 34:8], to integrate different threads of evidence into our understanding?

MONDAY

Understanding God’s Love.

The first paragraph contrasts God’s perfect Love with our imperfect love. I would suggest that any human love is an outgrowth of allowing God’s Love to flow through us.

From the Lesson: “Understanding the nature of love is an important key to understanding Bible prophecy. One of the key themes in the great controversy is the existence of a substantial misunderstanding about God’s character. Ellen G. White, after all, ends her summary of *The Great Controversy* by writing: **“The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Page 678.**”

The lesson references the story of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac as the first mention of “love” in Scripture and asks what does this teach us about the nature of God’s love. Any thoughts??

Does this passage add any insights?

God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him. – PP 147

Read the entire chapter - 13 - The Test of Faith, in Patriarchs and Prophets for deeper insights.

From the bottom section in Monday’s lesson: How do we even begin to manifest to others the kind of self- sacrificing love that God has for us? Why, for most of us, is this kind of love not necessarily basic to us? Excellent questions. Any thoughts from the class??

TUESDAY

Isaac’s Question: Where is the Lamb?

I don’t think many [in this class] have any issues with the metaphor of “The Lamb” being Jesus of Nazareth. For a review of biblical metaphors / symbols see last week’s lesson [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIskXEik8Ok>]. The bottom section of Tuesday’s lesson makes the point, twice, that Jesus is our “Substitute”. Many critics of our ministry say we deny the substitutionary nature of Christ’s life / death / resurrection. How would you respond and why??

From the Lesson: “Why is knowing that Jesus is our Substitute so foundational to our salvation? What hope would you have without Him, as that Substitute, especially in the judgment?”

First: Is “knowing” that Jesus is our Substitute enough? Demons “know” this and tremble. Knowledge alone seems inadequate. Any scriptures come to mind?? Like Genesis 4:1 “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’” Or John 17: 3 “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” The word “knew / know” here implies something more than a superficial or didactic knowledge. It’s an intimate “knowing” of Christ/God — a living knowledge that “is eternal life...”. The contrary is also true. Adam and Eve developed in intimate “knowledge” of evil by taking the forbidden fruit. Humanity now “knows” sin and evil.

Second, does our understanding of how God’s Law functions affect our understanding of “substitution”?? If we hold to the penal “substitution” theology, then we see Jesus “substituting” himself as a legal payment to solve His Father’s anger [with sin] problem. Even in a human justice system, it is anathema to consider putting an innocent person to death for the “crimes” of the guilty, yet many believe this is how God’s government functions.

If we believe God’s Law is the Law of Love and it functions for the benefit of others, to do what’s Right because it’s Right, then we understand that only one equal to God could restore mankind back to its original design that Adam corrupted. Since the the controversy in Heaven was with Michael / Jesus, then He was the one who came and revealed His Father AND eradicated the sinful nature from the human species. The entire Godhead planned this from eternity past. God gave his Only Son [John 3:16], Jesus volunteered [Philippians 2: 6,7], and the Holy Spirit makes the Remedy effective for us [John 14:26].

Jesus is our “substitute” because NO human being [not even Enoch or Elijah] could do what was needed to restore mankind back to its original nobility.

See <https://comeandreason.com/christ-our-substitute/> for further insights.

WEDNESDAY

Dealing With Death.

From the Lesson: “Perhaps the cruelest aspect of living in a world detached from its Creator is the way that death lurks in the background of every life, ready to strike at any moment. It is the “wages of sin,” the penalty that we pay for having been disconnected from the only Source of life in the universe: the Creator.”

Does the author / editor mix two types of death in the above passage?? Seems like it. What of those who die three deaths?? Revelation 1:7.

“They also which pierced him”, those that mocked and derided Christ’s dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient. – GC 637.

With a mature understanding of Scripture, we should regard death [sleep] as a marvelous act of God's grace. It's a powerful metaphor regarding the second death in the end, and it limits the spread of sin [evil ones don't live forever] — see below.

In order to possess and endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct. It was Satan's plan that Adam and Eve should by disobedience incur God's displeasure; and then, if they failed to obtain forgiveness, he hoped that they would eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate an existence of sin and misery. But after man's fall, holy angels were immediately commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light having the appearance of a glittering sword. None of the family of Adam were permitted to pass the barrier to partake of the life-giving fruit; hence there is no immortal sinner. — PP 60

How are Christians to “deal with death” [1 Thessalonians 4:1-14]? Are we to develop a cultural understanding of death or a scriptural one? What does scripture tell us about death [Matt. 9: 24, John 11:11, 13, Romans 6:23]? How many deaths are there? [Revelation 2:11, Rev. 20: 6, 14, Rev. 21:8].

THURSDAY

The Serpent.

The lesson references Genesis 3:1-5, and Revelation 12: 1-9 regarding the “serpent / dragon”, but have you ever wondered about the texts Job 41:1 or Isa 27:1. Many translations have “Leviathan” meaning “likely crocodile” in the margin, but what if the authors meant something else?

From the Lesson: “There are two accounts in the Scriptures in which Satan leads the whole world astray. In Genesis, at a moment when there were only two people in existence; and then in the account given in Revelation 12 and 13, in which Satan is identified as the one who “deceives the whole world” (*Rev. 12:9*) and as the one who enables the sea beast power so that “all the world” marvels and follows it (*Rev. 13:2, 3*). One of the themes found in Bible prophecy is the unchanging nature of the great controversy. God's character and Word do not change, and neither do the ambitions of the devil.”

How has Satan [aka The serpent/dragon/leviathan] deceived the “whole world”? Will he deceive the “whole world” at the end of time, or will there be some living on Earth that are so settled in to the Truth about God's government, and Satan's attempts to overthrow that government that they will not be deceived?? See Revelation 12: 11. Also read Ch. 39 — The Time of Trouble and Ch. 40 — God's People Delivered from the Great Controversy for some insights.



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 3 Images From Marriage

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the second paragraph,

- Modern conceptions of love and marriage have skewed our ability to appreciate what God is trying to teach us through the marital covenant. Though human sinfulness has greatly perverted marriage (and just about everything else), marriage can still be a powerful way of revealing truth, even prophetic truth. More than just to make us happy, marriage should be a school in which we learn deep lessons about ourselves and our relationship to God. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy*, p. 22.

Multiple points in this paragraph worthy of exploration.

Let's start with a description of our understanding of God's original design and intent for marriage?

- Between one male and one female
- Established upon mutual love and trust, thus healthy marriages require trustworthiness, which requires truthfulness, honesty, love, maturity, willingness to learn
- Relationship built upon God's design laws of not only truth and love, but also liberty, respecting the individuality and autonomy of the spouse
- Healthy relationships require healthy people. God's original design was in perfection with perfect health in all aspects of human experience.
- A joining of hearts and minds in mutual love, partnership, commitment, devotion, loyalty, trust, and friendship—an intertwining and entangling of soul and spirit with uniting in love to share their love physically in producing beings in their own image.
- A relationship in which both parties celebrate the other and find joy, reward, pleasure in doing objective good for the other, helping the other, building up the other, sharing experiences with the other, promoting the welfare, development, growth, and advancement of the other.
- Coequals in authority, neither ruling over the other.
- While equal in authority, God purposely designed husband and wife different, but complementary, attributes and qualities which when united in love and trust result in the two becoming more and achieving more than either one could alone. Together their entire being expands, in ability, experience, and development.
 - Together they can procreate
 - Together they can grow in love, compassion, empathy, and know the joy of the impact love has on another and they can experience the joy of being loved by another.

- Together they can share differing perspectives, insights, questions, ideas, and grow in areas of personal development that neither would have on their own
- Together, joining their strengths, they can accomplish more than either could by themselves
- Together they can challenge each other's ideas with new insights, creativity, and inspiration motivating development of mind

Other aspects of God's original design?

How has sin skewed our understanding of marriage and God's purpose for marriage?

- Sin broke the circle of love and trust causing fear and selfishness to become the primary motivation, the primary animating power, in Adam and Eve. Their spirits became corrupted, contaminated, defiled, unclean with fear and selfishness and this resulted in their running and hiding from God and seeking to save themselves, covering over their nakedness with leaves.
 - In the context of marriage, the fear and selfishness caused Adam to blame Eve and Eve to blame God. Instead of motivation to love God and others, they naturally now are motivated to protect self, even if it hurts the other.
 - Thus, in fear and selfishness, the stronger partner will, without God's grace changing the heart, dominate the weaker partner and the weaker partner will submit to the stronger as a means of finding protection and security in an unsafe and threatening world. And marriages became damaged. And God announced this after they became infected with fear and selfishness.
- Fear and insecurity cause codependency relationships rather than love relationships, relationships based on what one feels like they need to make themselves feel whole, a relationship built on taking rather than giving, driven by fear of loss, abandonment, rejection, rather than love.
- Marriages built on falsehoods, in which people pretend to be something they are not because their fear causes them to doubt anyone could love them if they really knew them so people try to hide the things about themselves they dislike the most, but this leads to conflict, control, manipulation and lack of trust ultimately destroying love in a marriage.
- Polygamy
- Marriages in which betrayal occurs, where partners are untrustworthy in character and are not willing to take ownership and mature
- Marriages in which abuse occurs
- Marriages as a legal contract rather than uniting two people in love and trust
- Cohabitation without marriage
- Marriages between people of the same sex
- Women treated like property in many cultures throughout history
- Backlash against the mistreatment of women in which healthy masculinity is called toxic and men are feminized and emasculated
- All attacks on human sexuality, pornography, prostitution, fertility cult worship, virtual relationships, and of course the lie that precious souls who are struggling with issues of identity and body dysmorphia are somehow in the wrong biological body. In other words, promoting

the lie that gender is just a choice of one's internal feelings, rather than recognizing the truth that anyone confused about their gender is a precious soul to be loved, not attacked, but their confusion is evidence of a mental health problem not a physiological problem of their sex.

- By their own definition the trans community claim that something is wrong with them that needs fixing. I agree they have a problem that needs healing, but it is not their biological sex, it is their sense of self. Dressing up a man to look like a woman does not create a woman.
- We would never allow a blind person to tell us what a rainbow looks like, or a deaf person to tell us what a violin sounds like, why are we allowing these confused people to tell us anything about normal human sexuality? We should not for if we do it will cause damage to the minds of all who submit their thinking to the distortions of God's design for humanity.
- And the science shows that when so-called gender affirming care is given to these people it worsens mental health, increased depression and anxiety and suicidality all worsen. As I have said regarding all mental health problems, if the diagnosis is wrong then the treatment will be wrong, and things will get worse. And that is what the evidence demonstrates and it is completely predictable. If you want reference for this I have included the link to a recent study of over 100,000 people documenting these findings. <https://academic.oup.com/jsm/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/jsxmed/qdaf026/8042063>
- Other damages to marriage?

And do these corruptions to marriage, that have resulted from the corruption of the hearts with fear and selfishness, cause any misunderstandings about God and our relationship with Him?

Wasn't it true that before Adam and Eve sinned, that Adam was physically stronger than Eve? Yes, and did his greater physical strength in anyway, before sin, change the balance of authority between them or undermine Eve's ability to trust? Or, before sin, were they still co-equals true partners neither to rule over the other? Why wasn't Adam's physical strength a problem for their relationship? Why wasn't Eve intimidated by his greater physical strength? Because the quality of the relationship is not built on physical strength, it is built on love and trust and Adam was trustworthy and loved her perfectly—before sin.

Is there a lesson in this for our relationship with God?

While it is true God is supreme, omnipotent, infinite in power and knowledge and we will never become God, does that mean God wants to rule over us in a authoritarian way, does God want us to be intimidated by His power, to relate to Him out of fear of what He will do to us if we mess up? How can we not relate to God in this way if He is all powerful? What prevents us from being fearful and terrified of such a powerful being? Isn't it the truth about His character of love as manifested in the life of Jesus? Hasn't God proven that He would rather let us kill Him than to use His power to stop us? Isn't He safe with all the power? And hasn't He showed us that the reason He would rather do this is because He is love and love only exists in freedom?

Does God want us to be joined in relationship with Him in a way, let me say this carefully—We are never to become God, we are never to presume we are God and will never have the full powers of God, but does God want to be joined in relationship with us in a way that we are treated and function as equals, as real friends, as God originally designed Adam and Eve to function?

Does the Bible give any evidence of this?

- Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ loved the church** and gave himself up for her **to make her holy, cleansing her** by the washing with water through the word, and **to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless**. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as **Christ does the church**—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” **This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church**. Ephesians 5:25–32 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Does Jesus treat the church as part of Himself, love the church more than self, and seek to elevate, exalt, uplift His followers? And to where does Jesus seek to uplift His followers?

- To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. Revelation 3:21 NIV84.
- Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. Revelation 4:4 NIV84

Do we believe that the saved will be treated as equals, united in love with Christ, or do we view heaven as a place of subordination, living under law and imperial authority, living in fear of rule-breaking and legal punishment? Or perhaps lemmings, mindless drones, who don't think but do what the sovereign says?

Does Christ really want us to relate to Him like godly spouses are to relate to each other?

If so, what does this mean in regard to what salvation is? If Christ's goal is to have humans relate to Him like Adam and Eve were to relate to each other in Eden, then what is required to achieve this?

Is the obstacle to this unity God's anger and wrath, and therefore is salvation getting God to have a kinder more friendly attitude toward us? Or is the obstacle to this unity a legal one in the court system of heaven and so to achieve this godly unity requires a heavenly marriage license, to get a legal pardon entered into your record in heaven? Or does restoration of this unity require winning rebellious humans back to trust and healing the damage in our hearts and minds?

How does God do this? What means, mechanism, processes are used by God?

Can a man win a woman who he wants to be his wife to genuine love and trust by imposing laws and threatening to punish her if she breaks his rules?

Can God win people to love and trust by imposing laws the threatening to inflict punishments for breaking his laws?

How does a man win a woman to be a loving and trustworthy spouse?

Doesn't he have to spend time with the woman who herself must freely choose to spend time with him?

And what is the only action a Christlike man can take if a woman refuses to respond to his invitations, requests to spend time, expressions of love and instead rejects him completely? And what happens to all humans who reject God's love, refuse to spend time with Him, and harden themselves against Him—what does God do?

SUNDAY

The title of the lesson is One Flesh, what does this mean?

- A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, **and they will become one flesh**. Genesis 2:24 NIV84, emphasis mine

What does this mean? How did they become one flesh? Were they Siamese / Cojoined twins? Were they the same individual? Or were they two individuals that somehow are united? How are they one? Is this only talking about physical sex or something much more?

What did Jesus say is life eternal? That we come to know Him and His Father (John 17:3), because when we come into a genuine experiential knowledge of God we discover He loves us and is trustworthy and this brings us to the point of decision, do we choose to trust Him as eleven of the apostles did, or do we choose to reject and despise Him as Judas did? And when we choose to trust Him, we open the heart and He enters bringing His Spirit which transforms us.

And then Jesus prayed to His Father,

- “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that **all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you**. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me**. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? How do all of us become one and have Jesus and the Father in us? What kind of oneness is this?

And when the husband and wife have formed a love relationship, they become one flesh, are united in heart and mind, and there is a uniting of flesh—what happens as God designed in this unity? They bring about new life.

And this physical joining of husband and wife that brings forth new life is a different type of joining, of connecting, of bonding, of uniting than we have in any other relationship. If done as God designed, after the hearts and minds are united in love and trust—then there is a deep bonding that occurs that goes beyond just the bonds of other human love, a unity of spirit, of mind, heart, purpose, and a sharing of their physical selves to produce beings in their image, which further unites them in common purpose of parenting their offspring, which as God designed, results in growth in their character and deeper bonds of love, appreciation, and trust of each other.

What about when we are united with God and become one with Him, what happens? We are reborn, a new life comes forth that bears the image of God, because God has planted His seed, the seeds of truth and love, in us!

- He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work**. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because **God's seed remains in him**; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:8-9 NIV84

What has Satan been working to do? Humans were created in the image of God. We are designed to be like Him in character, method, principle, spirit, to have the spirit of love and trust be the animating energy that motivates us to action such that we develop fruits/character of the Spirit and look like our heavenly Father.

Satan has been working to corrupt the image of God in humans and place his likeness in humanity so that we bear the image of Satan. He does this by the lies we believe about God that breaks the circle of love and trust and corrupts our spirits with fear and selfishness. And as we are animated, motivated, live and move from the energy and power of fear and selfishness we form beliefs, values, methods and character that are like Satan's. But, when we are won back to trust and open ourselves in trust, in faith to God, like a woman who opens herself in love and trust to a trustworthy husband, God enters our heart via His Spirit and plants His seed, His new life, the spirit of love and trust and we are reborn with a new motivation, a new spirit, and we begin to produce the fruits of that new life and develop a character like Christ's and thus we are children of God.

- Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14 NIV84

We receive through trust in God a new life, a new animating energy, that we choose to respond to and act upon and we are transformed to be restored to true image bearers of God.

So, what does it mean to have God's seed in us?

- “The **time is coming**,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though **I was a husband to them**,” declares the Lord. “**This is the covenant** I will make with the house of Israel **after that time**,” declares the Lord. “**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘**Know the LORD,**’ because they will all **know me**, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:31–34 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Notice the significance of this passage—these are the saved, which know God, which, as Jesus said, is life eternal, and what do they have? The law of God written upon their hearts and mind, which is God's seed, God's living law of love is placed within bringing a new life that begins to grow within the believer.

And this is describe in another way,

- Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

God's Spirit is the seed or life of God that is implanted in us and brings us a new life, the life of Christ and we become children of God who bear His image. But this is also described as being a temple where God lives.

Can you think of some aspect of the theatrical sanctuary service which enacts this aspect of the plan of salvation, the aspect of God's Spirit bringing people into wedded unity with Jesus?

What happens at a wedding—the two become one, and is there a part of the sanctuary service where oneness happens? The day of At-one-ment is the time in history when Jesus is married to His bride, which means it is the time in history when the people of God collectively are matured, are healed, are settled by the Spirit of truth and love into eternal loyalty and trustworthiness to Jesus. They are settled both intellectually and spiritually so that nothing can move them from their loyalty to Jesus. This is the time in which we are living today!

Our memory text for this week is,

- Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” Revelation 19:9 NIV84.

What is the difference between the wedding and the wedding supper? The wedding supper is the celebration that occurs after the wedding, it is the celebration that occurs after the second coming. The

wedding is the union, the joining, the bonding, the settling into heart loyalty to Jesus that we become one with Him before He comes. The supper is the celebration that occurs after He comes.

If you would like a comprehensive review of all of this with biblical references, please read our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride](#) which is available online at our website, you can download a pdf, read it online, or request free copies to be shipped to any US postal address, but it is also available in Australia and South Africa.

So if being married to Jesus means accepting into our hearts the truth and love of Jesus through His Spirit such that we are reborn and mature to a committed bride that has the fruits of a Christlike character, bear His image, and are united with Him being so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that we cannot be moved, then what then would constitute adultery? And what is prostitution?

Revelation states,

- “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” Revelation 17:1-2 NIV84

Adultery is betrayal, taking into oneself someone other than one's spouse. And in this case, it is taking into one's heart the seeds or principles or laws, methods and practices of someone other than Christ, such that these people live lives that don't give birth to the fruits of the Spirit and Christlikeness of character, but instead give birth to a beastly character that bear the image of Satan.

And what is prostitution? Selling oneself for money. Thus, the adulterous woman described in Revelation is not merely betraying her declared spouse, she is selling herself for profit. This is not referring to the godless who deny a belief in God, but those who claim Jesus as their Savior, those who claim Jesus as their husband but who instead implant into their heart the methods, practices, principles, and laws of Satan and do so for profit, whether personal profit or institutional profit, whether the profit of money, or power, or position, or domination and control over others.

And while the righteous woman is also described as a temple, living stones built together in a house for the Lord, the wicked, who internalize Satan's seed of fear, selfishness, imposed laws and coercion of others become his temple and bear his image,

- I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Revelation 2:9 NIV84

What does it mean to be a synagogue of Satan? To have internalized his seed and bear his image and then you are his child, as Jesus said to the Jews in John 8, that Satan was their father.

Read second paragraph,

- On an occasion when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, He quoted the Genesis account of Adam and Eve's marriage, to which the Pharisees quickly raised the question, " 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' " (Matt. 19:7, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 23.

From whom did the divorce instructions come? Moses was the one through whom the people received these instructions, but did these instructions originate with Moses or was he giving the instructions that God told him to give? These instructions came from God, but God says in Malachi 2:16 that He hates divorce, yet He gave them instructions on how to divorce, why?

Jesus answered, because of the hardness of their hearts—what does this mean?

A good analogy is doctors amputating limbs. Doctors hate to amputate limbs, but doctors still do it in certain circumstances and have specific guidelines and rules about when and how to do it. Why if doctors hate doing it do they not only do it but have specific guidelines and rules on how to do it?

Limbs get amputated when gangrene occurs, because if the dead limb isn't removed it spreads and infects the rest of the body leading to death. Gangrene occurs when blood flow is obstructed. Doctors would rather restore blood flow and save the limb, but if that is not possible then better to lose the limb and save the life.

Divorce happens when hearts harden and love no longer flows between the spouses and it is better to end a toxic, abusive, destructive marriage to save the individuals who still have tender hearts that are slowly being destroyed, then to keep the connection that is destroying them. But it would better to restore love into the hearts and heal the marriage.

Read the bottom pink section,

- Here are three principles for marriage. First, forgive your spouse, however undeserving, just as Christ forgives us, however undeserving. Second, accept your spouse, faults and all, just as Christ accepts us, faults and all. Third, just as Christ put us before Himself, put your spouse before yourself. How could all three of these gospel-based principles help us not only to understand how God relates to us but also to help any marriage? *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 23.

What do you think of these three principles?

Hmmm...I believe these principles are listed with good intention and desire to be a blessing, yet if implemented as listed will almost certainly harm rather than heal.

Let me tell you about Kate. She came to see me distraught, fearful, anxious. Her husband had just cheated on her for the sixth time. Each of the first five times when she found out she threw him out and he ran to her pastor, fell down and cried, told the pastor he had committed a terrible sin, that he

had asked Jesus to forgive him, but his wife had thrown him out. Each time the pastor took him and they went to Kate and the pastor said to Kate,

“The Lord has forgiven you for your sins, and we are told that we are forgiven as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Can’t you forgive your husband?” And he said, “Jesus accepts us as with all our faults, can’t you accept your husband despite his faults? And Jesus puts us before Himself, can’t you put your husband first?”

And so each of the first five times she took him back, and each time he cheated again. And this time she is in my office distressed and anxious because she is expecting a visit from the pastor.

Is this advice to forgive, accept, and put the husband first as stated in the lesson and applied in the scenario above godly and helpful or is it harmful? Why? What is the problem, what is missing?

Truth, objective reality! Forgiving someone doesn’t change them, it doesn’t make them trustworthy and for a marriage to work, to be successful, it must have trust. Kate’s husband is not trustworthy. Yes, she needs to forgive him in her heart so that she can heal, so she won’t be embittered. But, she needs to throw him out and divorce him because he is unfit to fulfill the role of husband and to stay with him is destructive to all parties, to herself, but also to her husband. And this brings us to the second point.

She should not accept her husband with all his fault, she should love him enough to stand up to him and say that his infidelity is searing his conscience, warping his character, hardening his heart and she loves him too much to accept this as part of his character and she will not give approval by staying with him. And in doing this she is putting his eternal welfare before herself.

Thus Kate forgave him and divorced him.

These types of principles applied without the truth, without understanding design law, reality, how sin injures and harms the sinner can lead good-hearted people into positions in which they are not only exploited, but they actually collude with the pathology and promote the sin and the destruction of the one they love.

TUESDAY

Read third paragraph,

- God’s choice for words makes it seem obvious that he is not only trying to show us what we’ve done wrong but also sharing how it makes Him feel. Those who have been betrayed by a spouse can begin to grasp the feelings of devastation that our infidelity to Christ might stir in the courts of heaven. Perhaps the most amazing part of Hosea’s story is the lengths to which the prophet went to redeem his wayward wife. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 25.

Most Bible scholars agree that Hosea was a real person, these events are historical, and that God directed Hosea to do this as a lived-out object lesson for us. What are the lessons we learn from the life of Hosea and his wife?

- Hosea would be enacting or taking the role of God and Gomer, his wife, would be taking the part of fallen human beings.

What lessons do we learn from this?

Is the lesson about showing us what we have **done** wrong or about what **is** wrong? And what the solution is to the problem?

What came first in the life of Hosea and Gomer, their marriage, or her prostitution?

Which comes first in every human life, our being united in marriage with Jesus or our sinfulness, our fear, selfishness, and having other priorities and loyalties more important than Jesus?

Is the problem for Hosea that he married a loyal, mature, faithful, healthy in heart, mind, and spirit wife, or he married a seriously damaged, broken, insecure wife who felt so ugly and dirty about herself she couldn't believe anyone would really love her?

Do we really think that before Hosea marries Gomer that she would have thought what she was doing was good, righteous, holy, mature, that her prostitution caused her to be ennobled? Or did she know it was not good, not healthy, not elevating, not restorative but destructive?

So was Hosea, in marrying Gomer, intended to show Gomer what she was doing wrong? No, she already knew this. Then is the object lesson primarily about showing humans what we are doing wrong? No, it is about what **is** wrong, for every one of us already knows that we **do** wrong, but we don't all know what **is** wrong. Why do we do wrong? Because of what is wrong, and what is wrong is the condition of our hearts and minds.

We are born in sin conceived in iniquity Psalm 51:5. Did you or anyone you know ever choose to **become** a sinner? No, we are all born with this terminal sin condition of fear and selfishness. Why? Because Adam and Eve chose to implant the seeds of lies, fear, distrust, selfishness into their beings at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—they chose to know the evil, rather than choosing to implant the seeds of God, of love, trust, loyalty, devotion, and truth into their hearts and thus know good. Had they done that they would have been united in the bonds of marriage to God as sinless beings, but they chose instead betrayal and became infected with fear and selfishness and all of us are born with this infection of our spirits.

Consider and HIV infected man and woman get together and have a baby born HIV infected, what did the baby do wrong? Nothing! The baby has no guilt for its condition, but the baby still has a terminal condition that without remedy will manifest various symptoms ultimately resulting in death. That is

the condition of every one of us, we are born with a condition that without remedy will have various symptoms and ultimately result in death.

This is the story of Hosea, he marries a prostitute, a person who has imbedded into practice, into heart, into method and motive, into character, fear, selfishness, betrayal, disloyalty, and inability to love and trust. And such attributes bear fruit. Her disloyalty to Hosea is the fruit, the natural result, the outgrowth of the seeds she has planted into her heart throughout her life before she married Hosea. Thus the problem isn't what she is doing, what she is doing is the fruit of the problem, the fruit of who she is.

She needs to be converted, changed, transformed, and the relationship with Hosea is the means whereby she can experience the truth, not of what wrong she has done in the past, but the truth of who she is—a child of God who is loved and who in God's plan, vision, ideal deserves a better life. But that better life is only possible through her being transformed within.

She needs is to have her spirit of fear and selfishness replaced with a spirit of love and trust and love and trust cannot be restored into a person through law, through legal declaration, through a marriage license, through another person having love in their heart, through power, might, control, it can only be restored by truth presented in love that is then experienced, chosen, and accepted by the person.

Hosea acts the role of God, who is love and truth and God acts to take a broken and damaged wife for the purpose of pouring His healing truth and love into the lives of all who accept Him as Savior and spouse, and despite our brokenness, the truth and love of God for us manifested over time, and especially after our biggest betrayals—like David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, or Peter's public denial of Christ with cursing—is when we are fully exposed and no longer able to pretend to ourselves that we are not this sick in heart and it is then that we see Jesus, His love, His patience, His kindness, His concern for us that we are finally won to love and trust, die to self and are reborn with a new heart and right spirit and genuine healing begins and we come into true unity with Jesus.

And with this reality-based, design-law, understanding of the problem in mind, we can now understand and comprehend the second part of the paragraph, that is understanding the impact our infidelity has on Christ in the heavenly courts.

The lesson suggests we consider those who have suffered betrayal here on Earth by their spouse and what they would have felt or experienced in order to grasp the feelings of those in heaven.

But this is flawed logic, because most humans who have been betrayed, because of our weakness, insecurities, struggles with fear and selfishness almost always have a reflexive reaction of personal hurt, anger, outrage, with concerns about how the betrayal hurts them, how self has been wronged.

But Jesus is not concerned with self. Jesus can certainly feel the pain of loss when those He loves rejects Him, but heaven's primary pain is not "How could you betray me?" It is not concern with self; it is concern with what sin does to us. Jesus' primary concern when anyone rejects or betrays Him is how can you do this to yourself, "don't you realize that your rejection of me, your betrayal, your going

after other gods sears your conscience, hardens your heart, warps your character, and destroys your soul—O, don't you realize how much I love you and because you are hurting yourself so badly, my heart grieves for you." As Jesus prayed at His crucifixion, "Father forgive them they don't know what they are doing...They think they are killing me, they are really destroying their own souls."

This is the reality of what sin does and why God hates it. And the book of Hosea documents this, the prophet wrote,

- My people are obsessed with turning away from me; they call to Baal, but he will never exalt them! How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? Hosea 11:7-8 NET.

God's heart is for us and Hosea documents the length God has gone to reach us, but He cannot cause us to love and trust Him, we must choose to.

Read the last paragraph,

- When we see the final cry to humanity, calling God's people to come out of Babylon, it is noteworthy that He is calling *His own people*, and not strangers. He knows them intimately. He loves them. And as the world pitches toward its worst hour, he is still offering the redemption price that He has paid in order to purchase us back with His own blood. The cross of Christ, more than anything else, should show us just how earnestly the Lord wants to save His wayward people. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 25.

The paragraph is talking about the people God knows intimately, not the people God knows everything about. God knows everything about everyone, but this is referencing those whom God knows intimately. Life eternal is that we might know God and Jesus Christ, John 17:3. This is the reuniting of heart and mind with God. This is the marriage of the bride to Christ, the two becoming one, having God's life, spirit planted in our inmost being and being reborn to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Then we are known intimately by God for we also now know and trust Him.

And these people who are united in love and trust with Jesus are in Babylon and are called out at the end of time. What is this Babylon that they are called to leave?

Babylon is not only a real historic civilization, but symbolizes religious imperialism, those religions who, like Nebuchadnezzar after the fiery furnace, accepts the reality of the God of the Bible, but instead of true conversion of heart and practicing the design law principles of God, promote the God of the Bible with imposed law lies—as Nebuchadnezzar did.

Babylon represents Christian, Jewish, and Islamic systems that proclaim a belief in Yahweh, but teach Yahweh runs His universe like Babylon runs its nation, imposed law and inflicted punishments.

The people of God have lived in religious systems like this, just as the captives of Israel were 70 years in Babylon. Many of those captives stayed in Babylon, but a remnant came out. This serves as an object lesson for the righteous at the end of time. God calls all those who have intimacy with Him to leave Babylon, to sever their hearts loyalties to systems that would use the power of the state or their own systems and organizations to coerce the consciences of people, who say bow down to this idol or be thrown in the fiery furnace.

And what of the price Jesus paid to save humanity from sin, to whom was that price paid?

The lesson rightly identifies the metaphor for the price is the blood of Jesus, it is not the red corpuscles, but what the blood represents.

And to whom did Jesus say His flesh and blood is given for salvation, where did Jesus apply it?

- Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.” John 6:63-57 NIV84.

The blood and flesh are applied, given to, sinners, we receive the ransom price—why?

Because the ransom is the price that sets captives free and we are held captive by the lies about God that we believe and by our own carnal fallen fear ridden sinful nature. Thus, the price to set us free is the truth, symbolized by the flesh and bread, and once we are won by the truth to trust, then we open the heart and receive a new life, a sinless life, the life of Jesus, which is symbolized by the blood and wine. As Paul wrote, it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me, Galatians 2:20.

Thus the price was paid to you and me!

MONDAY

Who is the beautiful bride of Christ?

How does the bride become beautiful?

Read the fourth paragraph,

- This is a recurrent theme in the Bible: God’s bride is beautiful, not because of anything she has done but because God has showered His favor on her and made her that way. In a similar way, believers appear beautiful in the estimate of heaven, not because of anything we have done to earn it but because of the favor of God, the salvation that He has showered on us. We are

beautiful because we are covered in His righteousness, the “righteousness of God” Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 24.

No doubt that our beauty of character is only because of God and His intervention through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

But what does it mean to be covered in His righteousness? Is this a covering over the defects, a shroud, a blanket, an erasure of records in heaven, a legal adjustment, a declaration of righteousness for those who are in reality unrighteous, or is it healing, transformation, cleansing, purification of people so that they become righteous, so that we are like Jesus in heart, mind, and character?

The lesson referenced 2 Corinthians 5:21 in conjunction with being covered in the righteousness of Christ, so let’s read it:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Does it say that we become covered in the righteousness of God—is that what it says? NO! God’s plan is to make us righteous, not cover us with Christ righteousness while we remain unrighteous.

So, how do we become the righteousness of God? Through faith, which means trust, and how is it we come to trust God? Through truth, through examining the truth and choosing to say yes to the truth and open the heart to God and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit who comes with a new life, a new animating energy, a new spirit, the Spirit of Christ and we choose to align and act upon the power of love and truth in trust in our thoughts, our beliefs, our understanding, values, morals, practices and choice and we are transformed and changed.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Isaac and Rebekah and how the descendants of Abraham in Canaan struggled over and over again with bringing in Canaan pagan worship into their lives.

Read the third paragraph,

- Indeed, the story of so much of anxiety Israel, and even of the Christian church through the centuries, has been one in which God’s people—who should have been witnessing to the world—get caught up instead in the world and in its false teachings and religious beliefs. Perhaps the greatest example of this sad reality has been the introduction of Sunday, the pagan day of the sun, in place of the biblical seventh-day Sabbath, a reality that will play a prominent role in the last days. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 26.

Bible scholars from every denomination, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant all agree that the Sabbath of the Bible is Saturday, Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, just as the Jews today continue to observe. Which day is the Bible Sabbath is not in question.

It is also not a question of dispute as to whether Sunday was a pagan day of worship. That is historical fact.

It is also not a question of dispute for serious Bible scholars that Sunday didn't become a day Christians observed until decades after the death of Christ, and that not because of God's direction, but as a way of separating themselves from the Jews who were persistently rebelling against Rome in Palestine. And it wasn't until centuries later that Constantine as a political move officially became a Christian and passed a law honoring Sunday.

These are all historical facts, but none of these facts reveal the true value of the Sabbath and the true devastation of the change of the day of worship.

Many SDAs think, as the lesson suggests, that the greatest example of introducing pagan concepts into Christianity is the changing of the day of worship, but in fact, the change in day is the fruit of the greatest pagan infection into Christianity, the evidence of the change, the corruption, the real problem that all others stem from, and that is changing the idea that God's laws are design laws to the lie that God's laws function like Rome's, imposed laws require inflicted punishment and are subject to change. The change of the Sabbath to Sunday is evidence that Christians don't view God's laws as design laws.

After all, why didn't the papacy pass a law that all those stone workers who took the Eucharist each morning would have gravity reduced for them by 50% for the rest of the day? How much easier would it have been to build all those cathedrals if they would have done this? Why didn't they pass such a law? Or why didn't churches in California when the fires raged recently pass laws that their members are not required to breath when the smoke gets too thick?

Because everyone knows that humans cannot change such laws, and these are God's laws. Then, what does it mean if a group of humans believe that they can change the Sabbath to Sunday? It means that they do not see God's law as design law, but as imposed rules.

And while the SDA church has correctly realized and taught that the Bible Sabbath is the seventh day of the week and God did not change it to Sunday, they have failed to recognize that the change in the day is not the real change to God's law that infects Christianity, it is the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that if you break require God as the enforcer to use power to inflict punishment. And thus, many SDAs teach that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death that He inflicts for law-breaking if we don't get a legal payment to Him to pay our sin debt.

This type of theology is pagan.

The message that is to lighten the world and which calls people out of Babylon is the message to reject the lie that God is like Caesar, to worship Him as Creator and that requires we reject the imposed law lie and realize His laws are design laws.

So what makes Sabbath holy?

Last year I spoke with a pastor who took the position that the Sabbath is holy because God declared it to be holy. It was made holy by God's executive action as Sovereign of the Universe at the end of creation week to set it apart by His declared word.

If this is so, then what type of law is God's law? The same as human. What makes anything in a human system restricted, separate, set apart? A human edict enforced through threat of punishment.

But if God were to govern like this, why do we have a sin problem? If God were to merely declare it to be so, obey or you get punished, then why didn't He just punish Lucifer for crossing the line and be done with it? Because it isn't about power, imposed law, and law enforcement. It is about love and trust. And love and trust cannot be achieved through imposed law and law enforcement.

In fact, Satan began his war by making such assertions about God, that God makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers, which when this lie is believed it undermines trust and incites fear, selfishness, and rebellion.

So the Sabbath is a great test case—are all of God's laws truly design laws, protocols built into reality, or are some of His laws arbitrary, simply made-up rules imposed by God by His declaring it to be so?

The pastor who took the position that God's declaration makes it holy referenced creation week and God's setting apart the seventh day:

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2, 3 NIV84.

The pastor's interpretation of this passage is that God's actions are the actions of a ruler imposing a difference by His word or authority.

But consider the following evidence in the very narrative of creation, when God made another declaration:

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18 NIV84.

Was it good for man to be alone *until* the Lord said this? Was it only when the Lord said it was not good that it became not good? Or did the Lord say it because there was something missing and He had not quite completed His creative work yet—and it was, in reality, not good to leave it uncompleted?

Did God's declaration make it so, or was it already so, and thus God, who always speaks truth, declared it to be so?

The issue I am disentangling is this: Which comes first—reality, the way things are, or God's verbal description, or declaration, of the way things are? In regard to the Sabbath, was it holy the moment God created it? Was there something about its creation, something built into it or associated with it by creation, that objectively set it apart from all other days—and God's verbal statement about it announced the reality of what was already true, or was it that God's verbal description made it so?

Those who operate upon the human-law model automatically think that God's verbal statements are the legal edicts that make it so. Whereas those who see God's law as design law understand His statements are announcements of truth, of the way things actually are.

At the Second Coming, when Jesus separates the “sheep” from the “goats,” does His action, His judgment, His proclamation, make some into sheep and some into goats, or is He separating them based on reality, on who they have chosen to become? (Matthew 25:31–33).

So is the Sabbath holy because God said so, declared it holy, or did God declare it holy because it was holy?

The Bible says God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day—what does that mean? Does it mean that God blessed it by legal declaration, making an imposed law that requires external enforcement through inflicted punishments? If that is what God did, then that would not have been a blessing but a curse, for that is the way Satan's kingdom works; that would have sustained Satan's charges against the government of God rather than refute them. No, God did not make a legal rule, an imposed law.

God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath by action, conduct, and creation—by reality. The Sabbath was made, created, built into time by the God who controls space and time, whose laws are the basis of the operations of all reality. And the Sabbath was made in the context of a war against God's rulership. The Sabbath was set apart from the other six days *not* when God used power but when He *stopped* using power, when He *rested*, when He *refused* to enforce law by the use of power and, instead, left all His creatures free to think and decide for themselves!

The Sabbath was created at the end of the creation week of this planet and is invested, made, created, and built by God with the revelation of truth, love, and freedom—when God refused to use external power to punish Lucifer, to force Satan to comply, when God refused to operate in the way of a creature. Thus, the Sabbath is holy, made and created as a sign, evidence, revelation, and demonstration of God's character of love and design-law methods. It exists because God exists and because God is love—and love exists only in freedom. Thus, for the same reasons God found it necessary to declare the true position of Jesus, God also declared the reality of the sacredness, holiness, and blessedness of the Sabbath day, for in six days God created but on the seventh day *He rested!* The Sabbath day is special, distinct, set apart *but* not by God's declaration; it is so by God's action in its creation—for it reveals the glory and holiness of God. The Sabbath is not holy because God declares it holy; no, He declares it holy because it is holy!



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 4 The Nations: Part 1

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

- The book of Revelation shows us God's solutions for our fallen world. In the final chapters, access to the tree of life is restored, the curse is lifted, and we are readmitted into the presence of God. Revelation, in some ways, is the book of Genesis in reverse, which is why Genesis remains an important key to understanding how the world's problems developed in the first place. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy*, p. 30.

I had never considered there were multiple solutions. I wonder if this is a typo and they actually meant the singular, solution, but the use of the plural instead of the singular has made me take a moment and rethink things.

I always thought of the "plan" of salvation not the "plans" of salvation, but what do you think, are there different solutions being applied as history unfolds, or one solution applied in different times and places?

Isn't Jesus the solution to the sin problem? And the Father so loved the world that He send Jesus as our Savior; and Jesus is the source of truth and love restored into humanity and truth and love are the attributes and principles of God's character, His method, His design laws built into reality. So perhaps the solutions are truth and love brought back into humanity by Jesus and then applied into individual lives through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

We have the (1) Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are love and truth and who forgive and who act in time to reveal the truth to us. We have (2) truth and love being restored into humanity by Jesus, who eradicated the carnal nature and replaced it with perfect righteousness. We have (3) the Holy Spirit revealing and convicting us of the truth and then reproducing the Spirit of Jesus in all who trust Jesus and open their hearts to Him.

Are these different solutions, or are they all the same solution?

Can you think of different solutions?

Perhaps someone is thinking of God unveiling His glory and the planet being restored to perfection with all defects in nature removed—but isn't that glory the infinite fires of love and truth?

The lesson states the curse is lifted and we are readmitted to the presence of God.

What is the curse and how is it lifted?

Is it the curse of sin? Which is what? Transgression of the law—which is what, rule-breaking or distrust, anti-love, fear, and selfishness, a condition of being which is in heart and mind no longer in union with God, and thus no longer able to live in His live giving glory?

How is the curse lifted? Through the restoration of truth and love into humanity and the removal or eradication of fear and selfishness. Jesus, who became a real human descended from Adam, did this for the species. And all who are won by the truth to trust Jesus and open the heart, receive from the Holy Spirit a new and right spirit of love and trust and we then choose to live motivated by love and trust and no longer live motivated by fear and selfishness.

What kept us out of God's presence and why are we readmitted now?

Our condition is such that without cure we would be overwhelmed with fear, guilt, shame in the presence of infinite truth and love. So God in mercy shields His full live-giving glory from us and works through the Holy Spirit of truth and love to present truth to us in ways we can understand and then leave us free to say yes or not. By choosing the truth we are transformed and when we choose to trust we receive a new animating energy of love that is not naturally in us, it comes from Jesus, it is His live being shared through the Holy Spirit.

What do you think about Revelation being the book of Genesis in reverse? I like this idea and think there are truths there to contemplate.

God makes a sinless world and places Adam and Eve in a garden and then things go bad. What happened? What went wrong?

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness (corrupt spirit, carnal nature)
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Sins damage mind, body, relationships, character a terminal condition

What is the solution?

- Truth destroys lies and restores trust (metaphor flesh/bread)
- In trust open the heart and God pours His love into heart, i.e., receive the spirit of love, the new animating energy, life, of Christ which casts out the spirit of fear and selfishness. We are reborn.
- Love and trust built upon truth causes acts of righteousness, service, ministry, beneficence, witnessing the kingdom of God

- Acts of righteousness result in maturity and development of Christlike character

But it all starts with the truth about God that destroys the lies and wins us to trust.

Do we see this depicted and described in Revelation?

In our magazine the [Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels](#) we describe the eternal gospel that is to lighten the world and how the truth of who God is as Creator, whose laws are design laws, love, truth, freedom, destroys the lies and restores trust allowing people to make a right judgment about God and flee the false system of Babylon that has enslaved the faithful of God into a false legal system of rules and fear of punishment.

Read the last two paragraphs,

- One of the key issues in both Daniel and Revelation is worldly government, a succession of human attempts to control a planet that rightfully belongs to God, who will—once this horrible episode of sin and rebellion is forever ended—ultimately rule in righteousness.

It is a very long process that leads to this moment, covering thousands of years of human experiments in self-government. They have never worked; even those expressing the highest ideals have always fallen short, often terribly short, of those ideals. So much of the sad history of humanity through the millennia is nothing but accounts of the tragedy that these failed systems have brought upon us. And it only will get worse until God's "everlasting kingdom" (Dan. 7:27) finally is established. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 30.

Jesus is coming to establish an eternal kingdom and rule in righteousness, what does it mean to rule in righteousness?

And understanding this is the key to differentiating the true kingdom of God from the counterfeit; it is the key to differentiating the government of God from the government of Satan, from the pure woman and the harlot of Revelation, the saints from the beast. For both groups are pursuing righteousness, both are pursuing justice. The beast of revelation does not rise with the proclamation of seeking to do injustice, but the proclamation of seeking to do justice, it will claim to be doing God's will, but it will be doing injustice, unrighteousness. So, what does it mean that God will rule in righteousness?

What is righteousness?

Consider these texts from Romans, because Paul's dissertation in Romans is all about true righteousness that comes from faith, from trust, and false righteousness that comes from law. Consider these texts and consider what light do they shed on our study of Revelation and the kingdoms of the world and their rule and God's kingdom of righteous rule?

- For **no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law**, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now **apart from the law the righteousness of God** (which is attested by the law and the prophets) **has been disclosed**—namely, the **righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat **accessible through faith**. This was to **demonstrate his righteousness**, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. This was also to **demonstrate his righteousness** in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded! By what principle? Of works? **No, but by the principle of faith!** For we consider that a person is **declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law**. Romans 3:18-28 NET, emphasis mine.
- It was **not through law** that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but **through the righteousness that comes by faith**. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless. Romans 4:13-14 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a **righteousness that is by faith**; but Israel, **who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it**. Romans 9:30-31 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What do these texts tell us about God's rule of righteousness? There is a righteousness that is pursued through law and a righteousness that is pursued through faith—only one path leads to righteousness why is that?

What is righteousness? Being right with God, having a new heart and right spirit, what does that mean? Being reborn, being set right heart and mind, having the law written upon the heart and mind. But what does it mean to have a right spirit?

It is what we already described, righteousness is being animated with the pure, holy spirit of love and trust and no longer being animated by fear and selfishness. Salvation is when our individuality, our identity, which comes into this world animated by a spirit of fear and selfishness that leads only to acts of sin, is won by the truth to trust in God and we surrender ourselves, our old lives of fear and selfishness in trust to God and open our hearts to Him and receive the Holy Spirit who bring us a new life, a new animating energy, a new spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

- Those **who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. Romans 8:14-15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is being set right, put right, justified, made right, reborn, recreated, renewed, and this cannot be accomplished by law and law enforcement. It can only be experienced by the individual surrendering

themselves in trust, which is also known as faith, and opening their inner selves, their hearts to God. Thus being saved, being healed, being righteous is only possible through love and trust built upon truth. It cannot be accomplished by law and law enforcement.

The false systems, the systems of this world, the beastly system is a system of imposed law and law enforcement. All the kingdoms of the world operate upon this method, and imposed law with external enforcement violates liberty, incites fear and leads to more rebellion. Thus, Satan deceives the world by getting them to believe righteousness is through law and law enforcement. And billions will accept this and pursue this method.

But Jesus sets up a kingdom of righteousness that reigns in the heart by truth, love, and freedom, it is built upon trust.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God's dealings with Israel provide rich insights into His dealings with the New Testament church. In fact, in many ways, the nation of Israel served to foreshadow the errors of the church. Far from being able to claim any kind of superiority to ancient Israel, Christians have been, and still are, very much susceptible to the same temptations. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 34.

What lessons do we learn from Israel that are applicable to the church? Basically everything, but what has been significant for you?

- The symbolism of the sanctuary service teaching the plan of salvation: if you would like more on this, check out our [Sanctuary and Feast Days Seminar](#)
- God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, our deliverance from slavery of sin.
- God leading them through the wilderness, God leading us through the wilderness of this world
- God providing them bread from heaven and water from the rock; God providing us Jesus the bread of heaven and the water of life
- Despite God providing the bread of heaven, the people wanted the meat of Egypt; and in the church despite God providing the truth of His design laws, character, methods, principles that brings healing, people prefer the human imposed law legal religious systems that have a form of godliness without power
- The mixed multitude which caused continued problems and rebellion; the church with the wheat and the weeds growing up together causing ongoing problems
- Satan constantly attacked the Israelites both physically but more importantly with false prophets and false worship; Christianity was attacked physically but more importantly spiritually with all kinds of false doctrines and beliefs, the most significant that God's law functions like human law.

- They ended up seduced by the lies and captives in Babylon, the first nation with a legal code; Christianity ends up captive in Babylon, representative of a religion based on imposed law with imposed punishments.
- God called all the Israelites to leave Babylon and receive their inheritance and go to the land and rebuild the temple but only a remnant did; God calls Christians to leave the false penal/legal theologies and lies about Him that constitute spiritual Babylon and return to worshiping Him as Creator whose laws are design laws, but only a remnant does.
- The remnant who went back to Jerusalem before they rebuilt the temple had to repair the walls. They repaired the breach in the protective wall around the temple, and then rebuilt the temple; the remnant of God today are those who repair the breach in the wall, and after that protective breach is repaired then they will experience the rebuilding of their spirit temple into holiness and union with God. And that breach is the lie that God's law functions like human law. And today we are releasing a new pamphlet [Repairers of the Breach](#), which you can download a pdf of on our website, or if you have a US postal address you can order physical copies to be sent to you to share with others.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Outside of the Garden, humans were required to work hard to provide for their own continued existence. Life became harder; we had to live with pain and by the sweat of our brow (Gen. 3:16–19). Our first parents trusted that the rightful King would provide a path back into the Garden, and they brought sacrifices to the gates of Eden in faithful anticipation of the redemption that God, right from the start, offered the fallen world. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 31.

Why did things become harder outside the Garden? Is it because God used His power to make it harder as punishment, or is it that God's life sustaining presence was withdrawn and Satan had access to the entire planet, and nature began to have all kinds of mutations and deviations from God's design as a result of sin, not as a punishment inflicted by God?

Yet God permitted things to occur this way—in other words, God did not use divine power to prevent it, why? Was the increased work a curse or a blessing to them?

They were given work in Eden to do, to tend the Garden, but that work would have had nothing that we would have called toil, labor, no difficulty associated with it, much more like an artist enjoying painting a new painting.

But the work out of the Garden was different, harder, requiring more effort, more labor, because of sin, because nature itself was no longer under Adam's rule.

Just imagine for a minute—in Eden Adam wouldn't have had to water anything, but now he may find the need to carry water somewhere, new work. Before the fall, Adam as Regent of Jesus had full governing authority over the planet and could almost certainly wield powers that we see godly people and Jesus wielding occasionally throughout the Bible:

- Elisha and the floating ax head
- Philip being transported instantaneously
- Jesus walking on water
- The animals that came into the ark without fear and without attacking each other or Noah and his family

In other words, Adam, prior to sin, would have had powers over the operations of nature that were delegated by God to him as Earth's governor, but which were lost when he fell. If this is so, then life would be harder for Adam in multiple ways. Nature would no longer be responsive and under his guidance and control, but in rebellion against him as humankind were now in rebellion against God.

So work got harder outside of the Garden, was this harder work a curse or a blessing now that they were sinful? It was a blessing!

As image bearers of God, we have a desire to create, produce, invest our energies to build, and as we engage ourselves in activities that are productive, whether they result in an income or not, we experience joy, fulfillment, and as finite beings we also experience expansion in our abilities by application and exercise of those abilities—the design law of exertion. We grow healthier and more capable as we apply ourselves and expend our energies to useful outlets.

Regular work has multiple benefits:

- **Improved self-esteem**, from actual accomplishment and achievement
- **Better physical health**, from increased physical activity and the reduced firing stress pathways as we experience satisfaction with completing tasks, or fulfilling our life goals, aspirations, and dreams.
- **Development of our brain circuits** that control physical movement, which in turn improves our thinking and reasoning
- **Blesses and benefits those around us**, resulting in improved relationships
- **Reduces burdens on others.** By staying active, we reduce the likelihood of our own disability and the need for others to care for us.
- **Harmonizes with the law of love**, which is the principle of giving. The more we give, the more we receive...
- **Reduces the opportunity for temptation.** This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of useful work. Any time spent in usefulness not only produces all the blessings above, but is time unavailable for engagement in destructive and harmful activities. You've heard the old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." When we are not engaged in useful activities, we are more vulnerable to temptations that result in harm to ourselves and others.

When we divert our energy, our mind, and abilities away from useful engagement—activities that may or may not generate income, but are beneficial (housework, lawn care, gardening, sewing, painting,

sculpting, building, writing, playing musical instruments, drawing, developing systems or programs of education, parenting, coaching, and so many more)—and instead use the majority of our energies on entertainments, diversions, and indulgences (video games, TV, amusement parks, playing games), we undermine our physical and mental well-being.

We become internally restless, lose our sense of peace, don't have a healthy sense of self, identity, purpose, and meaning in life and become vulnerable to emotional manipulation by others. Because we don't have a purpose for ourselves that is godly, we are vulnerable to being caught up in various factions in society, various crusades or causes to fill the void in our lives because we haven't applied ourselves to the work and calling God has for us.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on God's original plan for them to follow Him as their leader, but their request/demand for kings and despite God's warning against it, because they insisted, God permitted them to have kings with all the subsequent problems that resulted.

Can you think of another example of something God added, like the kings, because of the people's demand, their insistence, their lack of faith, and which, like the kings has caused all kinds of problems for believers, including for many Christians today?

- When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. **They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."** Exodus 20:18-19 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Where did the intermediary ministry of priests come from? Was it God that wanted it this way or the people?

Is there evidence beyond this one text in Exodus 20 that God was desired to talk to the people and would do so directly?

- Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain and **they saw the God** of Israel. Beneath his feet was what looked like a pavement of sapphire, as blue as the sky. **God did not harm these leading men of Israel; they saw God, and then they ate and drank together.** Exodus 24:9-11 GNT, emphasis mine.

And is there evidence in Scripture that the people knew they could talk to God directly and they would be safe, but their own fear led them to reject this truth that they acknowledged and instead request a go-between, request that God not talk to them directly?

- When **you heard the voice** out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. And you said, **"The LORD our God**

has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and **we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer.** For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? **Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.”**
Deuteronomy 5:23-27 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Despite the evidence, the reality, that they had seen and heard God for themselves and were not harmed, despite the fact that God demonstrated His desire to talk to the people directly, as He had been doing with all the faithful since the fall—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (God even talked directly to Cain), the people chose to reject this evidence and request not to talk to God and request an intercessor. So God, not wanting to lose contact with the people, met them where they were and added the intercessory priestly ministry. But God’s design was that all believers, like Abraham, were to be a His priests, His friends, His advocates, envoys, representatives, ambassadors in this world of sin. God wants to talk to each of us directly, individually, for us to be reunited in friendship with Him and go to Him directly and have conversation with Him.

But the people were afraid of God and requested an intercessor that has resulted in the entire fiction **that God needs an intercessor in heaven to plead to Him in our behalf.**

How much of church history has been corrupted by the false belief that God can’t or won’t or isn’t able to talk to us directly?

Do we still suffer from distortions about the idea of intercession today? How?

Are we today to have various intercessors between us and God or are we to be a priesthood of believers who go to and talk with God directly? Didn’t Jesus open a new a living way into the presence of God where we can go boldly in faith and talk to God?

What about Jesus as our heavenly High Priest—if God wants to talk to us directly, how do we understand the role of Jesus as our Mediator and High Priest? What is He mediating?

Is there something wrong with God that Jesus needs to fix? Is there something wrong with humanity that Jesus needs to fix?

Does God need truth presented to Him to free God’s mind from Satan’s lies? Do humans need truth presented to us to free our minds from Satan’s lies?

Does God need a new spirit of love in order for Him to become a trustworthy God?

Do humans need to be reborn with a new spirit of love, the spirit of Christ, in order for us to become trustworthy friends of God?

So, where is Jesus mediating, where is He applying His merits—to God or in our hearts and minds?

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the call of Abraham, and asks, Why did God call Abraham out of his country?

Wasn't it the outworking of the promise given to Adam in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would be born and crush the serpent's head?

Do we see the promise to Abraham as a global promise, a promise to all humanity, or do we see it as a promise only to his genetic descendants? Any biblical evidence for either view?

What about the promises for the land, how do we understand those promises?

God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land was part of the covenant God made with Abraham. But was the covenant that God made with Abraham a new covenant, a new promise, or was God, in making the covenant with Abraham, simply carrying out the covenant that He made with Adam in Eden?

The covenant of grace, the promise that God would save sinners, was given immediately after Adam sinned:

- And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15 NKJV.

This covenant contains God's promise to send Jesus, the Seed of the woman, to overcome and destroy Satan and sin and redeem humanity. The entire Old Testament is the outworking of this promise.

The promise to Abraham is the recommunication of the promise made in Eden, that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

- In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. Genesis 22:18 NKJV.

And this promise was repeated to Isaac:

- Live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Genesis 26:2–4 NKJV.

And God repeated this promise to Jacob:

- And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” Genesis 28:13–15 NKJV.

There is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promising that that region of land would be given to them and their descendants and that through them the promised Messiah would come.

So God called Abraham to leave his homeland and go to a new land for the purpose of bringing through his descendants the Messiah, who would save the world from sin.

What about today, is that small strip of land in the Middle East the complete and total fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or is the purpose for that geographic region in the promises fulfilled and God is today carrying forward His Genesis 3:15 promise in a grander, larger, more global way?

Have you considered the possibility that the promise to Abraham and his descendants is a dual-fulfillment prophecy and we have not fully appreciated its larger application?

The Bible is filled with dual prophecies and promises:

- Joel’s prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:28–32) is also applied by Peter to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–21).
- Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 both start out referring to an earthly king and then transition to the fall of Lucifer.
- Jesus’ prophecy about the second coming is also blended with the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).

In all these dual-fulfillment prophecies, there is a lesser application and a greater application—**the lesser is regional; the greater is global.**

The promise given to Adam and Eve is the promise given to the entire human race, for all humans were in Adam and Eve. The promise given to Abraham was a *regional* promise of that *global* promise. It was the promise that through Abraham’s family the earlier promise would be realized; that through Abraham’s genetic family, the Seed of the woman that will deliver the descendants of Adam from sin and death will come.

And what was the promise given to Adam and repeated to Abraham? That a Descendant of theirs, a real human, would come and destroy sin and Satan and save the human race from eternal death, not merely occupy one region on the planet.

The covenant with Abraham is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come. And with the recommunication of the covenant to Abraham, God gives a dual-fulfillment prophecy concerning the land:

- 1) A smaller, local, regional promise that Abraham's genetic descendants would inherit the land of Canaan in order to fulfill their mission to be the genetic family through whom Jesus would be born; and
- 2) the larger, global, spiritual fulfillment, that the true descendants of Abraham, those who are like Abraham in faith and character would inherit the entire earth!

The covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands. The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan **for the purpose** of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come **so that** Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head **so that** the "meek will **inherit the earth.**" Matthew 5:5—the **true Promised Land**.

- The *genetic* descendants inherited Canaan *in order* to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that ...
- ... the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Here is the biblical evidence for this position:

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." Genesis 12:7 NIV84.

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

- The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look **north and south, east and west**. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is the larger, global, promise—that the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like

Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the earth.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Galatians 3:26–29.

Jesus Himself explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day these very truths, that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise. We find Jesus' explanation to the Jewish authorities in John 8:34-45; my comments are in red:

- Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a **slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.** [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus, then we are not part of the family of God—that is, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what **you have heard from your father.**" [Jesus tells them plainly that even though they are genetic descendants of Abraham, God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, understood this point and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]

"Abraham is our father," they answered. [Jesus' response disallows their genetics as being a valid basis for being considered a descendant of Abraham.]

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did." [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and who act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them that their heritage is not determined genetically but characterologically. They have embraced another father, but again, they protest and claim a higher father than Abraham.]

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [The Jews claimed God as their Father because God created humanity. But Jesus disallows this claim as well, for we are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and Jesus already said that those who remain slaves to sin have no permanent place in the family of God. Only those who, through Jesus, are freed from sin become part of the family of God and are considered children of Abraham. Note Jesus' answer.]

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil,** and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:34–45 NIV84, emphasis mine. [Jesus unequivocally destroys the idea that genetics determines who is an heir of Abraham, and He makes it clear that it is all about faith, character, love, and trust like Abraham.]

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points. The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur. The ending point of the global is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them,

- “Your house is left to you desolate.” Matthew 23:38 NIV84.

Jesus masterfully weaves these two covenant promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept open the avenue, Messiah had come, but they rejected Him and now there is no further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth.

The promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a great nation is fulfilled in the global application whose ruler is from the line of David. As the angel said to the virgin Mary about her Son,

- “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” Luke 1:32, 33 NIV84.

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived “in the promised land” (Hebrews 11:9)—“did not receive the things promised” (Hebrews 11:13), that they were “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). “All of these people” of faith “did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. ... They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that “*all* of these people” did *not* receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn’t he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are

eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess. It is true that the meek will inherit the earth, for what God has promised He will fulfill.

And what does it mean to be a descendant of Abraham and heir of this promise?

- If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29 NIV84
- This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:6 NIV84.

So what does it mean to be an heir of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

- Abraham was a man of faith. To be a child of Abraham means that we have the same faith in God that Abraham had.
- Isaac was the son of the promise. To be a child of Isaac means the focus of our Abraham-like faith is upon accepting Jesus, the Promised One, as our Savior, which results in us, like Isaac, surrendering our old life, as Isaac did in faith at Mt. Moriah, and receiving a new life from our substitutionary Savior Jesus Christ—we are reborn with the life of Christ.
- Jacob was a flawed human, just like us. His name means “deceiver,” and he lived dominated by fear and selfishness. But Jacob trusted God and, in union with God, wrestled against his own selfishness and overcame. Thus, his name was changed to Israel – one who with God overcomes. We become a child of Israel when we have the faith of Abraham to accept and trust Jesus as our Savior and die to our old life and are reborn, and then in unity with Him, we wrestle with self – overcoming the evil habits, unholy desires, fear, insecurity, and selfishness – develop mature Christlike character. Then our names are changed because our characters are changed. We become children of God – Israelites.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The primary purpose for which God established the nation of Israel was not to condemn the rest of the world but to save it. Certainly, most of us feel condemned when we are confronted by righteous behavior in someone else; so the existence of Israel also served to highlight the sin and selfishness of the nations around it. Believers living in harmony with God highlight His righteous character, which naturally leads to conviction. Ideally, the lives of people who “keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 14:12) should showcase His character. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 35.

From what is God seeking to save humanity? Is God seeking to save humanity from His own punishment, anger, and wrath, or from sin?

What is necessary to save sinners from sin?

- A solution or remedy to the sin problem
- Trust in the one who has the solution
- But also, conviction of the sinner that there is something wrong in them that needs fixing,

So the plan of salvation is the plan of truth, love, and freedom taken to the world, the truth about God, His character, methods of love and truth and freedom, His trustworthiness. The truth about what sin is, deviation from God's design for life operating in the heart, which is distrust, rebellion, fear, selfishness, which causes acts of selfish exploitation and destroys. Thus, part of the plan is to reveal the truth about both God and our sin condition to contrast the two so that those in sin-sickness will be convicted and long for healing. But also to communicate God's trustworthiness and Jesus as our Savior, our Healer, our Remedy to sin. That when we are won to trust we open the heart and receive from Jesus, via the Holy Spirit, a new life a new spirit of love and trust which casts out the fear and we live new lives, we are in our hearts and minds being freed, delivered, healed from sin through the work, merits, of Jesus Christ.

From where does the condemnation come when we feel condemned by the righteousness of others?

When Adam and Eve sinned and ran and hid because they were afraid, where did that fear come from? From within themselves, it is the fruit of breaking love and trust and believing lies.



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 5 The Nations: Part 2

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson points out that many through history have argued that wanted the Fall into sin, for a variety of reasons, but the lesson rightly points out this is a “horrible and wretched position to take.”

First, do you think God wanted either Lucifer or Adam and Eve to sin?

What would it say about God if God wanted that to happen? What kind of God would God be?

If such a position undermines trust in God, why would some people argue for it?

I think this stems from multiple misunderstandings—one the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign, no question about it, but what if one believes God’s law functions like human law—He imposes rules and is control of what happens? Then sin must in some way have been God’s will, because God is in control. It is argued that since God is all-powerful, and all-knowing, and sin happened, then it must have been His will for it to happen.

This comes from not understanding design law, the law of liberty and love. That love cannot be compelled, forced, coerced, or achieved by legislation and law enforcement. And that God is in control of what God controls, which is Himself and His design laws, including the law of liberty—so sin couldn’t have happened if God didn’t create freedom, but that doesn’t mean God wanted people or angels to use their freedom to sin.

But some people, not understanding this, believe that only the things that God wants to happen, happen.

This leads to other horrible ideas about God, like God is in control of all things that happen, so if a person is murdered, child molested, or loved-one dies in a car accident, some will say “it was God’s will.”

Evil, suffering, torment, sin, sickness, disease, death—none of it is God’s design, God’s will—**freedom is God’s will** and design for only in freedom is their both love and development of individuals. But it is not God’s will for people to use their freedom to rebel and sin.

The second reason people will sometimes argue that God wanted this to happen is because of misunderstanding about God’s foreknowledge: because God foreknew, they argue, it was His will for

it to happen, because if He foreknew and didn't want it to happen then He would have prevented it. They might argue, that if you foreknew your car was going to breakdown on a trip, you would get it fixed or use a different car to prevent the breakdown from happening. But, such analogies misconstrue reality. Cars do not have freewill. Cars cannot love or develop character.

Further, those who argue such things conflate foreknowledge with causality, arguing that foreknowledge takes away freedom and predestines or causes it to be that way. But this is not so. Knowing doesn't cause the outcome.

In my view, God foreknew what would happen and created free beings anyway, and then enacted His preordained plan to remove sin, rebellion, fear, selfishness, distrust and restore His universe to eternal perfection of love and trust in freedom. And the fact that sin did happen is powerful evidence that God is love and we have real freedom.

One of the founders of the SDA church gave her views on this, and I agree with this position, what about you do you agree or see it differently, and if so how and why?

- It is impossible to so explain the origin of sin as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin, to fully make manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all his dealings with evil. **Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in nowise responsible for the entrance of sin;** that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the Word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is **the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.** E.G. White, *The Great Controversy* 1888, p. 492, emphasis mine.
- **The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam.** It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an **unfolding of the principles** that from eternal ages have been **the foundation of God's throne.** From **the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man** through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence,** and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was **His love** for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 22, emphasis mine.

SUNDAY

The title of the day's lesson is *The Very First Commandment* and points us to Genesis chapter 2, and then the lesson states in the second paragraph,

- The first use of the root verb tswah, “to command,” that God gave to humans was in Genesis 2:16, 17, the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. How can some knowledge be forbidden? Isn’t it always useful to experience and to know more? *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 39.

Any questions or concerns about this description?

When studying always check the Bible references for yourself, like the Bereans

- Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11 NIV84.

They were checking Paul by the Scripture, so we should definitely check other non-inspired sources by the Scripture, including everyone should check what I teach by the Scripture.

And so, let’s go to Genesis 2, is the command of God a rule, a restriction, a legal requirement, or something else? What is actually going on here?

- The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “**You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.**” Genesis 2:15-17 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Does it make any difference to understand the instruction “you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” as a standalone command or in the context of “you are free to eat from any tree in the garden”?

Consider saying to your child, “you are free to skydive with a parachute, but you must not jump out of a plane without a parachute for in the day you jump without a parachute you will surely die.”

What kind of a command is this? Is this a legal restriction, or an instruction on how reality works, a description of life and death, not an imposed law legal requirement, but a design law requirement to stay in harmony with the laws of life?

Notice, when Satan tempted Eve, he left out the freedom to eat from all the trees and just started with,

- “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” Genesis 3:1 NIV84

God gives freedom, but Satan suggest they are not free, they are being restricted, their liberty is constrained, implying some rule is in force why? Because external use of force to violate liberty damages love and incites rebellion.

And external rules enforced through punishments restrict liberty, so Satan's position is an attempt to introduce his lie from the beginning that God's laws are made up rules that restrict freedom.

If you haven't read our magazine [The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ](#) I encourage you to do so. In that magazine I document that Satan's root lie to the entire rebellion, is the lie that God's law is made up rules that restrict freedom, and God's justice is using His power to inflict punishment. This lie, when believed, breaks love and trust and incites fear, selfishness, and rebellion.

Satan introduces this lie in Eden.

So, what was the problem with eating from that tree? Was it God setting up a rule, don't do it or you will get in legal trouble and I will be required by law to punish you with death, OR they would change themselves and take themselves out of harmony with the laws God built into their being and the result is ruin and death?

God was not giving them a legal command He was describing reality, if you break my design law of love and trust you will sever your connection with me, the source of life, and you will decay and die.

Satan, insinuates the problem is not natural, not breaking design law, that there is nothing inherently wrong with breaking trust with God, only that God could kill them. His temptation is, "You will not surely die." He didn't say, "God is unable to kill you, or God doesn't have the power to kill you, or there is nothing God can do to you." He said, "you will not surely die," in other words, there is nothing wrong or harmful in distrusting and disobeying God, sin is not actually harmful, but God certainly can harm you for it. But if you take the fruit then you will become like God and once you become like God then there won't be anything God can do to you.

These are the implications. Remember God is Creator. He spoke reality into existence, and His laws are the laws that govern the existence of space, time, matter, life and they are the fixed laws of heaven and earth—like the law of gravity, physics, health, and the law of love, truth, liberty, exertion, worship and others.

Satan is a created being, like you and me, and we cannot speak anything into existence, we can only make up rules that we enforce through external punishments.

This is Satan's lie about God's law, that He makes up rules and His government functions no differently than that of a creature.

When we understand reality and what God wants—love, trust, loyalty, friendship, and how love, trust, loyalty, friendship, and devotion work we understand why God put this tree in the Garden. It was for their development and benefit, for them to think for themselves and exercise their ability to choose and thereby determine what they would know by experience. Remember this was the tree of knowledge of GOOD and Evil; they had the opportunity to know good, truth, love, loyalty, devotion, and if they would have chosen to reject the lies they would have known health, peace, greater intimacy with God,

ever growing maturity and godliness of character. But they chose to believe lies and thus chose to know evil, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and all the destructive attributes.

God's command was not a rule, it was an instruction of health and a description of reality. He was telling them what would happen if they chose to know evil, they would die. And thus, embedded in the command not to eat of that tree and therefore not to die, was the command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Choose love and choose trust which is to choose life, that was the command.

These verses reveal through historical events, what happened, how God's laws work. Adam and Eve had freedom to choose and their choice changed them. But they could have chosen the good and thus sealed themselves into loyalty like the loyal angels in heaven did.

The lesson goes on to describe how after the fall that humans began to make human governments and how human governments end up exploiting and hurting people.

Why do you think this is a consistent theme and process that has happened in every culture and civilization—the establishment of rulers who use imposed laws with threats of punishments?

The natural drive, motive, spirit, animating energy of humanity after the fall is fear—and when you are afraid, what do you want? To not be afraid, to be secure, to be safe.

What makes people feel more fear? Other than obvious external threats? Fear is increased by unpredictability, helplessness, uncertainty, not knowing what will happen and what others will do.

What makes people feel more safe and secure? The belief that things are predictable or they are in control. And rules, imposed law, a system of a code of conduct, with enforcing power, gives a societal structure that causes people to feel safer.

But the safety people feel with so-called law and order is not in the imposed laws; true safety is only achieved when people have hearts changed to be trustworthy, when people choose to abide by the agreed upon rules for conduct.

A great example is how some people want strict gun control laws so they can feel safe, while other believe that restricting guns makes them less in control and less able to defend themselves and thus makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and less safe. Both sides of that argument are made by people who are in fear and are trying to make a rule that will cause them to feel less fear and more safe. All human laws are like this, none of them provide real safety or security, only people choosing to follow the laws results in safety.

For instance, it is illegal to murder someone—but that law does not stop someone from committing murder, it only creates a structure to punish someone who does commit murder. Thus, the imposed laws do not actually make one safe. But the compliance with the laws creates the illusion that seduces people into thinking they are safe.

In the Apple TV period piece *Franklin*, which stars Michael Douglas as Benjamin Franklin, there is a scene in which John Adams questions Franklin's deception of the French and asks something to the effect, "So we are supposed to deceive them?"

To this, Franklin responds, "No, we are to lawyer them."

What an insightful theatrical depiction of the reality of made-up imposed law! Imposed laws are the types of rules that creatures make up.

Imposed laws do not define reality, determine outcomes, remove sin, purify character, instill love, or make people righteous; they do not make a better and more just society or world; they do not heal hearts and minds. They do not deliver from death, heal sickness, or resurrect loved ones; they do not heal relationships; they do not reveal the truth about God; and they do not represent God's kingdom or government!

Imposed laws do not stop evil—in fact, they perpetuate it, because imposed laws restrain the total chaos and the inevitable self-destruction that would otherwise result if sin were unrestrained. However, imposed laws simultaneously create the framework for evil to operate "legally." In other words, imposed laws are the laws Satan wields to manage his kingdom so as to prevent his wicked followers from completely destroying themselves, while they continue to do evil, exploit, abuse, lie, and cheat—but all through mechanisms that make it "legal" or through tricking the system (such as using lawyers to deceive) to avoid the artificially inflicted consequences the punitive justice system would otherwise enforce.

For instance, slavery is now "illegal" in every country, but there are still various forms of slavery being practiced—sex trafficking, sweatshops, forced child labor, etc. This reveals that imposed laws do not change hearts and minds, do not bring righteousness, do not remove sin but, rather, perpetuate sin because the various imposed laws allow traffickers to continue their evil. They use laws against wiretapping, surveillance, and warrantless searches and exploit rules of due process, evidence, and so much more to continue in their sin. Evil people, those who do not have God's law in their hearts, do not seek to obey the law; instead, they use law to disobey and restrain the righteous from holding them accountable.

In other words, as Franklin is depicted as saying, they "lawyer." They deceive, trick, and manipulate to do real evil while calling it "legal"—or at least use the legal system to claim it isn't legal to hold them accountable because the various rules of evidence or procedure were not followed.

As long as the majority of people in a society have remained sensitive to the movements of the Holy Spirit and retained within themselves some sense of morality, a desire to live godly lives, then they have acted reasonably in their community discourse seeking to be "law-abiding citizens"; thus, the imposed laws have given a semblance of justice. But the good we have seen in society has never been derived from imposed law; it has been only from the goodness of God operating in the people!

On October 11, 1798, John Adams, Founding Father of the United States and its second president, wrote to the Massachusetts Militia that:

Because We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition, Revenge or Gallantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

As God has been removed from our culture, as hearts have hardened against heaven, and as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, the evil passions of the human heart have increased such that no imposed laws will result in a healthier society. For instance,

- Gun laws do not stop murderers.
- Child protection laws do not stop child-molesters.
- Tax laws do not stop cheaters.

There is no “justice” in an imposed-law system. Justice, doing what is actually right, comes only from the hearts and minds of people who have God’s living law of love and truth written upon their hearts.

The great deception coming upon the world is that we can have justice, order, safety, and security with more laws and more law enforcement. But this is a lie! The only way we get true justice is when God heals people and writes His law on their hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). And this happens only when we are won to love and trust in God. And that happens only when we reject the lies about God, including the lie that God’s law functions like human law, and return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires realizing that His laws are design laws, the laws reality is built to operate upon.

The Bible describes two types of governments or kingdoms, Jesus said,

- “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” John 18:36 NIV84.
- “The kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:21 NIV84.
- Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Matthew 4:8-9 NIV84.

Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world. The kingdoms of this world are represented as ravenous beasts, they use external power to destroy those who won’t submit.

Jesus is represented as a lamb.

There are two types of governing, the government of imposed law with external enforcement and the government of truth and love which operates in the heart.

God's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of the world. It does not operate upon imposed law it operates upon design law of truth and love. And this law cannot be externally imposed or enforced, it can only be internally chosen and function.

That is why the true covenant of grace is:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. Hebrews 8:10-11 NIV84.

It is why Zechariah wrote,

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6 NIV84.

It is why Paul wrote,

- Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. Romans 14:5 NIV84.

What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion and this cannot be achieved through law and law enforcement, only through truth, love, and freedom. We must choose what we believe, who we trust, and our choices either open our hearts to God or close our hearts to God. When we choose to follow the truth and open our hearts in trust we receive a new life, a new spirit, a new animating, motivating power, energy, the life of Jesus. It is no longer our old fear-ridden selfish self living, but Christ lives in us. We move away from fear-based law-keeping and law enforcing to a life of loving trust and obedience that springs from love and trust and not fear.

Understand what is coming upon the world, and we are living in it, is the rise of the beastly system of Revelation a worldwide system of human governments seeking to advance what they believe is right, to do justice, but they will use imposed laws and external enforcement. They will not pursue truth in love and leave others free. They may have a good goal, like claiming to save lives or save the planet, but their methods will be contrary to God's kingdom. They will coerce consciences, lie, shut down liberties of association, conscience, travel, commerce, speech, and worship.

God wins not by using external power to force everyone to bow, but by the internal power of truth and love that wins all who respond to eternal devotion and loyalty to Him.

MONDAY and TUESDAY

The lessons focus on the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 which describes the rise and fall of nations symbolically represented either as different metals in the multi-metal image or beasts.

Any questions or thoughts about these images and systems?

In brief:

Daniel 2:

- Head of gold—Babylon
- Breast of Silver—Medio-Persia
- Belly of Brass—Greece
- Legs of Iron—Rome
- Feet of Iron and Clay—Europe fractured never to be under one government again
- Rock cut out of a mountain but without human hands that destroys gold, silver, brass, iron, clay—represents Jesus setting up His eternal kingdom and making the Earth new.

Daniel 7:

- The lion with wings—Babylon
- The bear with one side higher and with ribs in mouth—Medio-Persia
- The leopard with four heads and four wings—Greece
- The grotesque beast with iron teeth and ten horns, and then a little horn that uprooted three with eyes like a man and a mouth that blasphemed—represents Rome in its initial pagan and later papal state.

And what is interesting is that the little horn

- He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the **set times and the laws**. Daniel 7:25 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And how did this religious system do this?

This system Romanized Christianity—and when I say Romanized, I mean taught that God’s law and government functions like Rome, imposed laws with imposed punishments.

Eusebius, the first church historian wrote,

- “With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven.” S.L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954 p. 10).

When Constantine converted the church accepted the lie that God's law and government function like human laws and government—imposed laws with imposed punishments.

And there are multiple fruits to this lie:

- Sin is a legal problem that requires a legal payment of a sinless human sacrifice to propitiate the anger and wrath of the offended god—straight paganism, which still infects much of Christianity.
- God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering for sin and He will use His power to torture the unsaved in hell for eternity, or just as long as the wicked deserve.
- God must be plead with by intercessors, whether Jesus, or also Mary and the saints, God requires some action upon Him to be merciful.
- God's laws, being no different than human laws, are subject to change and therefore the church is free to change them, and the prohibition on making images was set aside and the seventh-day Sabbath was replaced with pagan Sun festival worship with Christian arguments of resurrection of Christ. The ultimate issue here is not what day one attends church services, We can fellowship at church on Wednesday evenings, the issue is how one understands God's law functions. If one understands God's laws are design laws, protocols of reality, then one realizes they cannot be changed. The change of these two commandments is the evidence, proof, or fruit of the real change to Christianity, asserting and teaching that God's law functions like human law. That is what the Daniel prophecy is telling us

And the entire world becomes intoxicated on this lie—and history proves this true, every culture of the world believes that the rule of law is the way to justice and every Christian denomination teaches that God's law functions like human law and sin requires inflicted punishment. All be the remnant, those who Revelation describes have come out of Babylon and have returned to worshipping God as Creator—these individuals realize God's laws are design laws, and God's kingdom of truth, love, and freedom cannot be achieved through law and law enforcement, but only through the operations of love and truth in the heart and mind of people.

We are called today to share a message about our incredible Creator God of love, truth, and freedom, whose laws are design laws and call people to break free of the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law and that sin is a legal problem requiring legal solution.

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY

The lesson shifts to Revelation 12 and 13—any questions about these chapters?

Revelation 12 describes the war—both in heaven and on earth. The woman in white represents God's faithful and through these people Jesus will be born. The dragon represents Satan and his war against both Jesus in heaven and also God's people on earth and Jesus when he became incarnate.

Here are verses 1-5 from The Remedy paraphrase:

- In my vision, I saw an incredible panoramic display across the sky: A woman clothed with the sun — symbolizing the true church clothed in God’s character of love — stood upon the moon, which symbolizes the dim light of the ceremonial teachings of the Old Testament. She had a crown of twelve stars on her head — symbolic of both the twelve patriarchs that gave rise to the twelve tribes, and the twelve Apostles upon which the church was founded. She was pregnant and cried out as she was about to give birth — which symbolized the imminent birth of Jesus, the Savior. Then I saw another panoramic display across the sky: A massive red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads — symbolic of Satan and the conglomerate of earthly political powers and false religions through which he works. His tail dragged one-third of the stars out of heaven and threw them to the earth — symbolizing Satan's lies that deceived one-third of God's angels and dragged them into selfishness and sin. The dragon opposed the pregnant woman who was about to give birth, and stood ready to destroy the child the moment he was born — which symbolizes Satan's attempt to destroy the avenue through which Christ would come, and then destroy Christ when he was born on earth. But the dragon failed, and the woman gave birth to a son—a male child Jesus, who would rule the world with a shepherd's rod of love that cannot be broken — and her child returned to God and stood at the command center of the universe. Revelation 12:1-5 REM.

The chapter describes how Satan turns his attack on Jesus’ followers seeking to destroy them, but how his attacks fail and they overcome:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:11 NIV84.

The blood is symbolic of the life of Christ, the life is in the blood Leviticus 17:11. So these saints overcome by receiving the life of Christ; they are reborn with the life, spirit, animating, motivational energy of love and trust and no longer live driven by fear and selfishness. Thus they don’t shrink back from threats against them even death. They stand for Jesus and His kingdom of truth and will sacrifice their lives just like Jesus did. They do not use coercion, they will not use the power of the state or position to coerce consciences, to compel people to take experimental injections so that they can feel safe, no, they would rather die than force others to comply with their ways of doing things.

Revelation 13 describes Satan’s further war against the saints after Jesus’ return to His Father as described in Revelation 12.

So, let’s go through the symbolism of Revelation 13, as far as we can get today. If you don’t have our magazine, [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17](#) you can download a pdf online, read it online, or order a physical copy in the US, Australia, and South Africa.

The dragon represents Satan and the beast corrupt powers, but the dragon and the beast have ten horns and seven heads, what do these represent?

The 10 horns represent the 10 powers wielded by the dragon and the beast and they are:

1. Lies—Satan is the father of lies and, since all the kingdoms of the earth are his, all the kingdoms of the earth wield lies. They lie to other kingdoms and to their own citizens. They use propaganda and other forms of misinformation to advance their agenda.
2. Imposed laws—These are made-up rules that require external enforcement and always result in unequal, arbitrary treatment and injustice (Isaiah 1:10; Ecclesiastes 5:8). These human-made laws stand in contrast to God’s laws, which are the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate (laws of health, laws of physics, the moral laws) and which treat everyone the same (Luke 6:43–45). Harmony with God’s design laws brings life; breaking them automatically injures the lawbreaker and results in death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15; Galatians 6:8). God’s law is perfect and brings life to the soul (Psalm 19:7). Satan is not the Creator, the governments of earth are not God’s (John 18:36; Matthew 4:8, 9), and the laws of the kingdoms of this earth are also not God’s; they are imposed rules. Wielding this power, human governments make up rules that determine what is “legal” and “illegal.” And these rules change from place to place and time to time. God and His law never change. All earthly governments are based upon the so-called “rule of law,” which are made-up rules requiring external enforcement (Daniel 7:25, Jeremiah 8:8).
3. Police and prosecution—the power to accuse and bring charges (Zechariah 3:1), restrict liberties, enforce fines, and arrest and imprison in order to compel and control a population. God’s kingdom does not use these powers (2 Peter 2:11; Jude 9). Jesus explicitly stated that He would not accuse us before the Father (John 5:45). Satan is the accuser, and his agents used this power when they arrested and accused Jesus (Luke 22:54) and the apostles (Acts 12:3). All human governments use this power.
4. Judicial—the power to determine guilt or innocence, to pardon or convict, and to determine punishment. We see this power wielded by Pontius Pilate in unjustly convicting and sentencing Jesus to death (Matthew 27:19). God’s power is the power of truth. Thus, His judgment is the accurate pronouncement (diagnosis) of what actually is. God’s judgment doesn’t determine the condition of a soul; it confirms the condition of a soul (Matthew 12:33–37; Revelation 22:11). Human governments, however, pass external judgment determining guilt or innocence under their imposed laws—irrespective of actual guilt or innocence. In human systems, the guilty often go free and the innocent are found guilty. God’s judgments are the accurate diagnosis of the condition of each heart and mind.
5. Economic—the power to print money, regulate currency, manipulate its value, and control commerce—all used to exploit populations through taxation, tax incentives and loopholes, currency manipulation, inflation, commerce, and trade. Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24; 22:17–21).
6. War—the use of military force to compel, control, or overcome other states to expand a nation’s wealth and power; the power to raise a military and compel service; all powers bent on attacking and destroying others for the protection of the state (Job 1:14, 15; Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:11).

7. Death—Satan’s kingdoms wield the power of death, the ability to take life in war, by police action, and through execution; the power to deceive souls, cutting people off from God, the source of life, resulting in eternal death. Satan is the “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44); Jesus came to destroy him “who holds the power of death—that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
8. Education—the power to educate the populace, setting a national educational narrative, moral values, and history; the power to deny education/access to truth (e.g., the Bible) to those they want to keep disempowered. Moses was educated in the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). Daniel and his friends were educated in the ways of Babylon (Daniel 1:5). God’s people are to be educated in the ways, methods, truths, and principles of God’s kingdom. Satan uses the kingdoms of this world to educate people in the ways of this world.
9. Ownership (Genesis 47:16)—the power to determine ownership of lands, peoples, goods, resources, activities, and business endeavors—who can own a license to make certain products or open a school, hospital, or refinery, etc. But the truth of God’s kingdom is that all things in heaven and on earth belong to God: “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14 NIV84, see also Psalm 24:1, 50:10, 89:11; 1 Corinthians 10:26). We own nothing. We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him to use His resources for the uplifting of His kingdom (Genesis 1:26–28; Luke 12:42, 43; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:10). It is Satan’s deception to get us to believe that we are the owners, which inflames selfishness, jealousy, conflict, and division.
10. Fear—as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they ran and hid because they were afraid (Genesis 3:10). Every other power (horn) used by Satan’s beastly systems ultimately exploits and works through the power of fear. When lies are believed, they break the bonds of love and trust and result in fear and selfishness, motivating people to protect self at the expense of others. Imposed laws instill the fear of getting into legal trouble with subsequent inflicted punishment, enforced by police and judicial powers; economic policies incite fear of poverty, debt, foreclosure, and loss of whatever one “owns;” war inflames the fear of pain, suffering, loss, and death; and people are educated to be afraid of going against the state. All beastly systems advance their power through fear. In God’s kingdom, “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 NKJV).

The Seven Heads of the Dragon and Beast

While the ten powers (horns) are used by worldly kingdoms to advance their agendas, the seven heads direct the use of those powers. The head is where one thinks, reasons, and worships. These seven heads, each with a blasphemous name, represent the seven false religious philosophies that have manifested throughout human history and which have directed the formation of the various beastly governments and their use of the ten powers.

In Revelation 17, we’re given more details regarding these seven heads:

- The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while (vv. 9, 10 NIV84).

Why are the seven heads also described as seven hills? In Scripture, hills (i.e., high places) represent places of worship. Zion was called God's holy hill (Psalm 2:6). But in this case, it is blasphemous worship being represented; in the Bible, hills can also represent places of pagan (false) worship (Leviticus 26:30; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4). Thus, the seven heads with blasphemous names are seven hills, representing the seven false religious philosophies Satan has used throughout history to capture minds in order to separate people from God.

At the time John was writing Revelation, the first century after Christ's ascension, five of these systems had already been exposed as false by their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. One was in power at the time but had not yet betrayed Christ and fallen into corruption, and one would arise in the future and remain for a short while before Jesus returns.

The seven false religious systems are:

1. Paganism—earth and nature worship, sun and moon worship, idol worship, all forms of beliefs in pagan gods (Baal, Molech, Voodoo, witchcraft, etc.)
2. Godlessness—the belief that there is no God or gods (evolutionism, humanism, scientism, etc.)
3. Eastern mysticism—the mystical religions of spirit worship, ancestor worship, or energy/cosmos worship (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)
4. Islam—while not formalized until much later, this refers to religious beliefs going back to Ishmael and his twelve sons. Islam recognizes Muhammad as the last of the prophets, not the first. Thus, Muhammad did not create Islam; he organized and codified it based upon the religious beliefs of the Arabic people, who have historically believed that the promised Messiah would come through Ishmael.
5. Judaism—it fell when they rejected Jesus as the Son of God, our Messiah, crucified Him, and then persecuted those who accepted Him. Their system was left to them desolate (Matthew 23:37, 38).
6. Roman Catholicism—it fell when it rejected the truth that Jesus taught, a religion based on design law, freedom, and healing, and replaced it with a religion based on Roman law, imperialism, and authoritarianism. It has taken the “rule of law” concept and created a religion modeled after the Roman hierarchy while co-opting Christian language. Thus, the Roman church became beastly and persecuted the saints throughout the Dark Ages.
7. False Protestantism—the Protestant churches that continue to embrace Romanism's lies about God's government and methods and seek to advance their self-styled plan of salvation through the imposed-law lie, teaching that salvation is a legal process rather than a process of restoration and healing.

Again, in the first century after Christ, when John wrote the book of Revelation (circa ad 96), the first five of these religious systems had all rejected Jesus, the Son of God, as our Messiah and proven themselves to be fallen into corruption, blasphemy, and lies.

The new head, the sixth—Christianity—was just arising, soon giving way to the Roman church that became corrupt when it embraced pagan Rome's imperial law as the way God's law also functions; as a result, it built a false legal system of salvation.

This sixth head was followed by the final head to rise (the seventh)—apostate Protestantism, which, while protesting some doctrinal differences with Rome, continues to embrace and promote the imposed-law view of God's kingdom, a legal plan of salvation, while wielding worldly methods to forward its view of justice.

It should be noted that true Christianity is not fallen; it is represented by the virtuous woman that fled into the wilderness (Revelation 12:1-6) so as not to be destroyed by the dragon and his beastly powers.

The Chameleon Beast of Revelation 13:1

This beast, depicted with seven heads and ten horns, is actually a composite representation of all the earthly powers that Satan has used and is using to advance his kingdom on this earth. This beast is a chameleon that manifests itself with different attributes, dominating in different places and times in history, but always using the methods and powers of Satan and always working to oppose God.

Remember, heads do the thinking; the horns are the weapons used by the heads to advance their agendas. Thus, in all societies throughout history, it is the religious beliefs and philosophies (heads) embraced by the leaders that direct the governmental powers (horns) to advance their agendas using the powers of Satan (also horns).

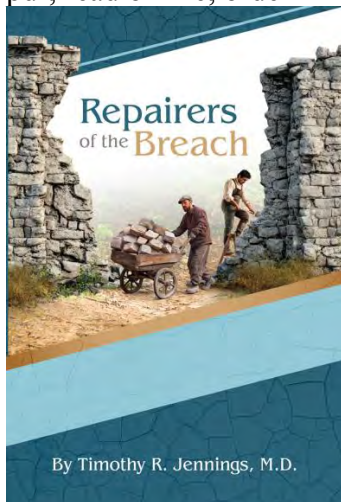
- During the Dark Ages, it was the Roman Catholic head that advanced its agenda and controlled populations through the use of various state powers (horns): lies, imposed laws, police (accusations of people, even kings, as heretics), judicial (Inquisition), economic (taxation, indulgences), death (executions), war (Crusades), education (restricting access to the Bible, teaching catechisms), ownership (church ownership of property and wealth), and fear—the fear of earthly suffering, punishments, and torment *and* of eternal torment and damnation to hell if one rejected the church's dogmas.
- In many Arab countries (Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.), Islamic beliefs (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In much of ancient Rome, Greece, and Africa, it was pagan beliefs (head) that directed the horns (state/tribal powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In communist countries (China, Cuba, etc.), the godless beliefs of evolution and humanism (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In modern Israel, the Jewish beliefs (head), including that the Messiah has not yet come, direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.

This first beast is a chameleon; it changes and adapts as social, political, and religious circumstances change. At one point and place in history, the Roman Catholic head dominated; at another point and place, the godless head dominates; at another point and place, the Islamic, Jewish, or false Protestant heads dominate. But whatever head dominates, it is the same beast using the same beastly powers to

compel, coerce, control, and oppose God and His people—because this beast receives its power from Satan, the dragon.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 6 Understanding Sacrifice

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Verse:

- And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Revelation 5:9 NIV84.

What does this text mean to you?

What is the connection between Jesus being worthy and His being slain?

The answer depends on how you think God’s law functions.

Through the imposed human-type law, the answer is: Jesus is worthy because He paid the legal penalty and therefore earned the right to take the scroll. He purchased the legal right with His blood. His blood, it is taught, represents His death, which this model teaches is the legal penalty that He had to pay to God and the law in order to earn the legal right to purchase men back from their legal condemnation and imprisonment on death row.

Through design law, Jesus is worthy because 1) He proved God is trustworthy; He demonstrated, proved, revealed, that though He has all power He will never use His power to take away individual freedom. He left His sinful creatures free to abuse and kill Him. He is safe with infinite power—we can trust Him. 2) He is worthy because He cured the sin problem, eradicated the cause of death and restored the cause of life into humanity. His blood is understood to represent, as the Bible teaches, His sinless life (not His death), (the life is in the blood Lev. 17:11). And Jesus taught that the saved are only saved by ingesting His flesh and blood (John 6:53). In other words, the blood, represents His life, and it saves us when we internalize His life and are reborn. As Paul wrote, “It is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.” The flesh represents the truth, the Word that became flesh, and when we ingest the truth about God we are won to trust and then open the heart to receive from the Holy Spirit the blood, the life of Christ. Jesus:

1. Revealed the truth that He is love, He is truth, He gives real freedom, and we are safe with God who has all power

2. Destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and purified the human species God created in Eden
3. Purged the cause of death from humanity
4. Perfectly restored the image of God in humanity
5. Became the second Adam, the new head of humanity, with a new cleansed spirit, life, that we can receive by faith
6. Revealed that there was no manufacturer's defect in Adam and Eve, in other words that humanity's fall into sin was not because God had created humanity with some flaw.

Read first paragraph,

- When Jesus came toward him, John the Baptist declared: “ ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ ” (John 1:29, NKJV). This was an unmistakable reference to the idea of animal sacrifice, all of which pointed to Christ's substitutionary death in behalf of all humanity. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 46.

What did John the Baptist say Jesus takes away? The **sin** of the world—what does this mean? Is this the same as saying Jesus takes away the punishment of God for sin?

The lesson points out that Jesus' death is a substitutionary death in behalf of all humanity—how do you explain that?

What law lens? Imposed law results in the man-made theological construct called penal substitution; design law results in comprehending reality that sin damaged humanity and through Jesus God cures the terminal condition.

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

According to this passage, the reason for Christ's substitutionary sacrificial death was not a legal one; it was not for a penal reason. It was not a payment. It was also not to assuage God's wrath or propitiate His anger, for God was never our problem. God has always been for us (Romans 8:31); God was in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19).

God was not changed by Adam's sin, nor did His law change. Rather, it was the condition of Adam that changed from sinless, loyal, faithful, and trustworthy to sinful, disloyal, unfaithful, and untrustworthy; he became a fear-ridden and selfish being. Adam no longer had a pure heart and right spirit!

Thus, Jesus became our human substitute, taking up the humanity that had been damaged by Adam, so that we might *become* the righteousness of God, so that humanity might be cleansed from sin and restored to His perfect ideal.

But why is it that Christ's substitutionary death was required for us to become righteous? Why was Christ's death necessary to save humans from sin? Couldn't God just forgive? Couldn't God just use divine power to heal any and all who trust Him?

Not if one understands reality, the universe and life as God built it to operate. If one thinks through imposed law, then they misconstrue sin to be merely broken rules with artificially inflicted external punishments, and they will ask why then couldn't God just forgive and heal without the death of Christ.

And if the problem were only external, only legal, then God could forgive and give another chance. But if the problem is actual, something in reality that changed in the heart, mind, motives, character of Adam and Eve, then external solutions won't work. Internal solutions are required. And those solutions cannot be placed into a human heart and mind without the human choosing them. To get the solution into humanity, it must be chosen by a human.

This is why all the metaphors of Scripture are about healing the inner person:

- Take out a stony heart and put in a tender heart
- Being reborn
- Recreated in the inner man
- New heart and right spirit
- Circumcision of the heart by the Spirit
- Write God's law on the heart and mind

And why Jesus said that the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21), and why Zechariah says that God does not win by might or power but by the way the Spirit works, which is truth and love (Zechariah 4:6).

God has the power to reach inside any person and make changes against that person's will. But if God were to do that it would erase that person, destroy that person's individuality, turn them into a robot, drone, mindless lemming. The only way to save individuals is through truth presented love while leaving everyone free to choose for themselves. Further, if God were to use power to override an individual's will, to make changes in them they do not choose for themselves, it would sustain Satan's charges and be proof that God is not love, does not give freedom and we cannot trust God.

So while God does forgive freely, healing the sin problem in hearts and minds cannot be done by God's external actions. It requires the internal application of God's healing truth and love restoring trust and purging the infection of fear and selfishness. And no human being since Adam sinned could do this, except Jesus.

Further, God could have taken dirt, formed a brand-new human body and breathed into that body a new breath of life and thereby created a brand-new sinless human being—but that human being would not be related to Adam. That human being would not be part of the species God created in Eden.

The only way to save the species God created in Eden, was for a member of that species to choose perfect love and trust in God and destroy the infection of fear and selfishness. Thus Jesus was born human, partook of that life through Mary, but His Father was the Holy Spirit and thus in the person of Jesus the human species was saved, cleansed, healed.

Jesus came to take away sin, to take away the fear and selfishness infecting the spirits, the hearts of humanity, and thereby to destroy death (2 Timothy 1:10) and the cause of sin and death which are the lies of Satan (Hebrews 2:14), thereby healing this creation. And the fear and selfishness, which is the corrupting elemental aspect of sin infecting, tainting, polluting, and decaying our spirits (hearts) and souls (minds), had to be purged, removed, destroyed, eliminated, in order for humanity to be cleansed from sin.

Jesus had to provide **the truth** to free our minds from the lies of Satan—in order to win us (morally influence) to trust in Him—but He also needed to provide, in order to save *the human species created in Eden*, **a cleansed, purified, renewed, and perfected human spirit** (life, heart, motivational energy) that we receive through our trust in Him.

When Adam sinned, he corrupted himself, infecting his life with sin. His spirit (life, heart, motivational energy) became contaminated with fear and selfishness; his energizing motives to action were no longer love-driven selflessness but were fear-driven selfishness, the survival-of-the-fittest instinct.

And every human being is an offspring, outgrowth, extension *of that same life (spirit)!*

We are all born infected with sinfulness, with fear and selfishness, with unholiness (Psalm 51:5). In order to save us from this terminal sinful condition, Jesus had to not only restore our trust in God by a revelation of truth, but He also had to purge, cleanse, remove, eliminate, eradicate, destroy the sinfulness (fear and selfishness) from humanity.

And in order to do that, Jesus had to partake of the humanity, of the very life (spirit) given to Adam in Eden, that Adam had corrupted and to purify that life.

So, what was needed to save humanity from this terminal sin condition?

A human being who is part of Adam, part of *this* creation, a human being who partakes of that same life, that same spirit or life-energy, that was breathed into Adam in Eden, that life which is now infected with fear and selfishness, and who then overcomes and eradicates the contamination and purifies that life, thereby destroying the terminal condition, purging the fear and selfishness, and restoring God's perfect, pure, undefiled love back into this human creation, by perfecting/cleansing the spirit—the life given to Adam and shared by all of us.

And on the cross, Jesus chose only the pure life, the pure energy of love, that He received from the Holy Spirit and, thereby, destroyed the death-causing infection, the impure corrupting quality, character, inclination, motivation of fear and selfishness contaminating the life-energy breathed into Adam (2 Timothy 1:10).

At the cross, Jesus destroyed the carnal terminal sin nature and arose in a purified humanity and became the new head of humanity (Hebrews 5:9), and He now stands in God's presence, not only in His pre-incarnate position as the Son of God but also as the representative head of humanity—Jesus, a real human being, sinless and perfect. He stands in the heavenly counsel as Adam's substitute, fulfilling the role that God had originally designed for Adam.

Now through faith, each one of us can receive that same pure, divine life-giving energy (spirit—life) via the indwelling Holy Spirit, who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us, invigorating us with a reborn new spirit. Christ is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5), who, being grafted into Christ by faith, receive the new invigorating spirit (life) from Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We die to the old spirit of fear and selfishness and live a new life with a new spirit of love and trust. As Paul wrote,

- For **Christ's love compels us**, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves** [no longer live the life of selfishness] but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

We, with our new life, our new spirit, our new purified spiritual energy are motivated, animated, compelled with new desires, attitudes, and priorities so that we become literal partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). As our spirits, our internal life-energy, our motives, drives, desires now come from Jesus and no longer come from what we inherited from Adam, we grow daily in godliness and, despite ongoing temptations from our old habits and conditioned responses, our renewed reborn spirits are no longer captive to fear and selfishness. As Paul wrote,

- For God has not given us a spirit of fear [that we inherited from Adam], but of power and of love and of a sound mind [that we receive by faith/trust from Jesus]. 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV.

We are literally changing from a *life, spirit*, of fear and selfishness to a *life, spirit*, of love and trust via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And this is possible only because Jesus, as our human substitute, took up humanity infected with fear and selfishness by Adam and purified that life. Jesus revealed the truth to win us to trust, and He provides us with a new spirit, a new life, sinless and pure.

SUNDAY

The lesson points to many OT sacrifices that were futile—such as Cain's offering of plants, or Isaiah 1 and the sacrifices of animals in the prescribed way God had instructed. What makes these sacrifices futile?

What was the purpose of the animal sacrifices? Was there any saving benefit in sacrificing animals?

- The gifts and sacrifices being offered **were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper**. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order... But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. Hebrews 9:9,10, 10:3,4 NIV84, emphasis mine

Is this true? Is it true only after Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection or was it true in OT times as well?

Is there other evidence from the OT that animal sacrifices do not save and were not required for salvation?

- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me. Hosea 6:6 GNT

And are there examples of people in the OT being saved without providing animal sacrifice? Wouldn't that be evidence that animal sacrifices are not required for salvation? Are there any such examples?

- Naaman
- Nebuchadnezzar
- Daniel and the Jews during the 70-year captivity

So if animal sacrifices could not take away sin, only Jesus can take away sin, then what was the purpose of the animal sacrifices?

It was theater, object lesson, teaching tools, ceremony, ritual, designed to reach hearts and minds with what will take away sin—conviction of one's own sin-sickness and revulsion of it, a deep desire to be free of it, and a remedy that will heal, save, cleanse, purify, recreate, renew, provide a new sinless life. It was designed to teach how Jesus provides us a new sinless life (represented by His blood) which, when we receive it, cleanses us from sin.

Consider Psalm 51, David's prayer of repentance after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. See how this was all taught in OT times:

- Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:1, 2 NIV84

What is David asking for? From where does he want sin blotted out? What does he want cleansed? He realizes something is wrong within his heart that needs purifying.

- For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Psalm 51:3,4 NIV84

He acknowledges his condition is terminal and that he cannot run from it; no matter where he goes he carries his sinful self there. He acknowledges that God's diagnosis of his terminal condition is perfectly accurate, and God is perfectly justified to be so accurate and truthful in His diagnosis of David.

- Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5 NIV84

He realizes his sin problem has been within him his entire life. He was born this way, infected with fear and selfishness, and that his recent actions are the fruit, the manifestation of a sin-infected heart with which he was born and if he is going to be saved legal pardon won't due. He needs renewal and cleansing of the inmost motivational energy of his being.

- Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Psalm 51:6 NIV84

He understands that what God wants is to heal what is broken in his heart and mind. As Jesus said the kingdom of God is with you, the removal of sin must be from the inner workings of our being. God's living law of love and trust must be written in our hearts and minds. Sin is not blotted out of record books, it is blotted out of hearts and minds and that is what David is asking for.

- Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Psalm 51:7 NIV84

He again asks for his cleansing, the purification of his heart and mind and he acknowledges that only God has the healing solution. Only the Creator can re-create him back to God's original intent. And this cleansing of David, not records, is documented history. Because David is called a man after God's own heart. The selfishness and lust that led David to commit these acts of sin were removed from David's heart and mind, but the history of his acts have not been erased—we are still reading about them.

- Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Psalm 51:8,9 NIV84

He is asking to be renewed, to have the crushing guilt and shame taken out of his heart, to be glad again, and to have fear and selfishness blotted out of his character so that he can one day see God face to face

- Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 NIV84

He again acknowledges his need and desire for God to heal his heart, change his motives, and renew his mind so that they operate upon other-centered love. This is reality. This is what Jesus does for us. This is not legal adjustment in books, it is actual recreation of the being.

- Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Psalm 51:11 NIV84

He acknowledges God's presence is where he wants to be, and only the Holy Spirit can fix what is broken inside and enable him to stand in God's presence. The internalizing of the life of Jesus which is brought by the Holy Spirit that gives us a new life, the life of Christ, is the only means of salvation, of purification of our sinful, fear-ridden, selfish hearts, in both OT times and now.

- Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Psalm 51:12 NIV84

He asks for the joy of healing and strength to stay compliant with God's treatment plan.

- Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Psalm 51:13 NIV84

He acknowledges the responsibility and privilege to share God's remedy with others dying of the same condition. This is the law of exertion and the law of love. As we exercise we get stronger, if we exercise love we get stronger in love, and the more we give the more we receive. It is design law in operation. But we can only share God's healing truth with others if we ourselves have experienced it, have partaken of it, have come to know God for ourselves. If we instead accept a substitute false system of legal payments to an offended and wrathful deity, then we will tell people a false system and not teach transgressors God's ways. Just like the Jews did in Christ's day and He told them that they search the world to find a convert and make him twice the son of hell as they are.

- Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Psalm 51:14 NIV84.

He specifically requests to have his heart healed from murder, from willingness to kill another child of God, and knows such freedom results in rejoicing and praise.

- Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. Psalm 51:15 NIV84.

He acknowledges that his natural heart cannot even praise God, but all praise is the outflow of God's healing love transforming him.

- You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. Psalm 51:16 NIV84

Here, in OT times, David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, documents that rituals are meaningless, that animal sacrifices do not save, and God doesn't want them.

- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:17 NIV84

David under inspiration of the Holy Spirit documents what God wants: the healing and restoration of his children back into harmony with him—his design of love—his protocols of life.

- In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Psalm 51:18 NIV84

David asks God to make his helpers effective in revealing the truth and distributing the remedy to the world.

- Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar. Psalm 51:19 NIV84

He understands that if Israel rightly represents God, then the rituals will be effective teaching tools to help people open their hearts and minds to experience the genuine remedy—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

All through Scripture the message is the same. Humankind is infected with fear and selfishness (sin), which is deviant from God’s design for life and is a terminal condition (dead in trespasses and sin). God is working through Christ to heal each person, restoring in them God’s heart of love! This is what God is seeking to achieve in each of us—complete transformation of heart.

But Satan has perverted all of this by getting people to believe God’s law is imposed law and then the system of sacrifices, designed to teach God’s love, mercy, and grace being poured out to heal hearts and minds came to teach the opposite, a punitive god who required sacrifice to appease his wrath.

FRIDAY

In the third paragraph the lesson quotes from the book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, let’s read and unpack that quote:

- “The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

What do you hear? What law lens do you hear it through? It is always wise to go back to the source and read the larger context, and also let the author who wrote it explain themselves, and of course, to think through design law.

- The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. [What law lens? If we think imposed then the broken law demands legal enforcement by the ruling authority, but if we think design law—breaking the

law of respiration by jumping in the ocean with weights tied to your feet demands the life of the sinner because one is out of harmony with the law life is built to function upon. The statement doesn't say which way it is, so one has to read into the passage what they think it means. If we use the other evidences from both Scripture and the author who wrote this, then we understand this simply describing how reality works. It is another design law statement.] In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, **satisfy its claims**. [What are the claims or demands of God's law? That life operate in harmony with it. The law of respiration demands or claims one breathe and that if one doesn't then one dies. Only Jesus could meet its claim or demand by restoring God's perfect design back into humanity while simultaneously revealing the truth about God, that God is love] Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could **make atonement for its transgression**. [At-one-ment means to restore the breach and bring unity, because the questions were about God, only God could answer those questions. Again see the last several paragraphs in this chapter where she develops this theme. It is the outworking of the design law of truth and love, not imposed rules. Trust must be won.] None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the **curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven**. [The curse of the law, what is that? A legal condemnation, or if a person ties a plastic bag over their head are they under the penalty or curse of the law of respiration? What is the power that kills them, the power comes from the law as Paul says in 1 Corinthians "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15:56 NIV84). Or as the GNT renders it, "Death gets its power to hurt from sin, and sin gets its power from the Law." (GNT). Breaking the protocols of life, result in ruin and death because the law cannot be changed to meet a person who insists on not breathing or breaking any other design law. Again, nothing penal legal here.] Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63. [He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God 2 Cor 5:21. Jesus partook of the life contaminated by Adam and experienced the emotional anguish, guilt, shame that sin causes through that life. He felt the emotional separation from His Father, the crushing emotional distress in Gethsemane, and felt the public shame of being stripped naked, mocked, beaten, crucified—yet He despised the shame and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness through love. Why must the Father and Son be separated—it is in the context of saving, of healing, of curing the sin condition. It was the only means to purge the infection of fear and selfishness. And Jesus' humanity could not have died if the Father didn't let go of Him and allow Him to die. Do you hear the word "offensive" as causing God to be resentful and emotionally upset, and He just couldn't take it any more? Or as in a football game, the offense has the ball and is being offensive, attacking the defense. In other words, sin attacks, sin is offensive, it cuts, severs, divides, breaks, ruins. Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness. Fear and selfishness cut, sever, divide, break the bonds of love and trust. So sin is offensive, it severs the connection. As James wrote, "sin when full grown brings forth death." Thus, Jesus, in order to destroy the infection of fear and selfishness had to partake of the infection as a human, live a sinless life as a human, developing a sinless human character and then let the offensiveness of sin cut Him off from His Father without using

divine power to stop it. It was selfless love in action. And in that choice to love and allow the offense of sin to cut Their tie, Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light!].

MONDAY and TUESDAY

Read pink section at the bottom of Monday's lesson:

- Think about just how bad sin must be that only the death of Jesus, the incarnate Word (see John 1:1–3, 14), could atone for it. What should this tell us about what our attitude toward sin must be? *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 48.

What does atone mean as the lesson uses it here? How do you hear the word atone in this context?

Read the second and third paragraphs in TUESDAY's lesson:

- Years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, Peter reflected on what had transpired, and he wrote, “Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19, ESV).
Jesus lived the one human life that satisfied the holiness of God; the rest of us have sinned, and the way we live our sinful lives quite literally tells lies about the nature of our Maker. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 49.

What do you make of this text quoted in the lesson,

- “Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19, ESV).

What does the text say we were ransomed from? “The futile ways inherited from your forefathers!”

We are ransomed from fear and selfishness, from sinfulness, from the carnal nature, from the sin that David says we are all conceived and born in. This is the corrupted, unclean spirit of fear and selfishness with which we are all born and without divine intervention leads to all acts of sin.

And the blood of Christ ransoms us from it, because the blood is symbolic of His sinless life that we receive through faith so that we surrender our old life of fear and selfishness, dying to self, and are reborn with a new life, the life of Christ. This ransom price is paid to you and I.

What about the second paragraph that Jesus satisfied the holiness of God? And I want us to link this back to the question from Monday about Jesus atoning for our sin—what does atoning for our sin and

satisfying the holiness of God mean? How do you understand it? Does the law lens one holds make a difference?

Let's examine Atonement through the Seven Levels of Moral Decision Making

LEVEL 1: Reward and Punishment

Right and wrong is determined by whoever holds the power to rule by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy (failure to punish) is seen by others at this level as being weak, rather than being moral.

- **Satisfaction Theory of the atonement:** God said don't do something, but when we disobey and do what God said not to do, this dishonors and offends him. Therefore, in his justice, he responds with angry vengeance to execute the disobedient to satisfy his outrage. But then Jesus stepped in between God and man to become humanity's substitute. Thus, instead of killing man, God killed his Son in our place and is now satisfied that his honor and justice are preserved.

LEVEL 2: Marketplace Exchange

Right and wrong is determined by an equitable agreement between two parties, also known as quid pro quo – "I'll do something for you if you do something for me."

- **Ransom Theory of the atonement:** Because humanity is now the legal property of Satan and under his control, the devil claimed legal rights to this earth and the lives of the descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, God struck a bargain with the devil to exchange the life of Christ for the lives of the rest of humanity.

LEVEL 3: Social Conformity

Right and wrong is determined by community consensus, for example, when a child says, "But everyone else is doing it." Right is deemed right by the approval of peers.

- **Governmental Theory of the atonement:** Jesus died so that God could publicly display His dissatisfaction with sin without punishing sinners and thus convince sinners that His government is fair.

LEVEL 4: Law and Order

Right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges, imposed punishments, and respect for authority.

- **Penal Substitution Theory of the atonement:** Jesus died to pay the legal penalty the law demanded and the heavenly judge imposed. The law must be kept. Man broke the law, thus justice demands and requires the imposition of the proper punishment. Someone had to be executed to pay the legal penalty. Jesus became our substitute and was executed in our place by God the Father (as the righteous judge) to pay that penalty. In doing so, the integrity

of the law is maintained and sinners can be pardoned, but only if they claim the legal payment made by Jesus.

LEVEL 5: Love for Others

Right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are irrespective of the rules.

- **Moral Influence Theory of the atonement:** Sin separated us from God and corrupted our hearts, so that we no longer trusted God, but God loved us too much to let us go, so Christ's death was the means to reach us with his love and restore us to trust in him.

LEVEL 6: Principle-Based Living

Right is understanding the design protocols and principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently choosing to live in harmony with them. Right is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it is understood to actually work this way.

- **Recapitulation and Christus Victor Theories of the atonement :** Christ's life, death, and resurrection is understood to be the only means to fix what sin had done to God's creation. When mankind sinned, the condition of humankind was changed, placing it out of harmony with God and his design for life. Humankind was now held in bondage by their own condition of sinfulness (carnal nature), their terminal state (death), and the lies about God told by Satan. Christ came to break these three powers and fix what sin has done to this creation. Thus "he who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God." 2Cor 5:21.

LEVEL 7: Understanding Friend of God

Those at this level not only have love for God and others (Level 5), not only understand God's design protocols for life (Level 6), but also understand God's purposes and intelligently choose to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

- **Healing Substitution Reality:** The plan of salvation is understood to have a deeper and broader intent than just the redemption of the human species. Both level five and six are true: God's character of love has been misrepresented, His methods of truth, love, and freedom have not been fully understood, so God had a larger purpose than just the salvation of humankind; He was also solidifying the unfallen beings in loyalty to His design methods and character of love.

But the Bible uses language like satisfaction, ransom, etc., so how do we understand these terms if they do not mean the level 1 through 4 meaning?

When we return to level seven design law understanding, then these Bible descriptions take on a deep and beautiful meaning and enhances our faith, our love, and our appreciation for God.

Satisfaction is understood in the light of a creation out of harmony with the protocols of life, dead in trespasses and sin. In such a state, God, like a parent whose child is dying of a terminal illness, would only be satisfied with the healing and restoration of his creation. In this light we understand why God was pleased that Christ was bruised. It was only through his death that the remedy to save his children could be achieved (Isa. 53:10). Anything short of perfect healing of his children would not satisfy, but

- When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. Isaiah 53:11 NIV84.

Ransom is the price necessary to free someone from bondage. Level seven understands that sinners are held in the bondage of lies about God and their own carnal natures. Christ, through his perfect life, selfless death, and resurrection, has revealed the truth about God that destroys the lies of Satan and frees us to trust God (Heb. 2:14). In trust we open our hearts, and the Holy Spirit takes the perfect character developed by Christ and reproduces it in us (John 16:14–15; 1 Cor. 2:16; Heb. 5:9). We become new beings, freed from the slavery of our carnal natures (2 Cor. 5:17). We become partakers of the divine nature! (2 Pet. 1:4).

Governmental theory, understood in its proper sense, is that God is fair in how he governs, which is by design law. To repair the deviation from his design, God himself took the responsibility of providing the remedy to heal and restore. God wins the loyalty, love, devotion, and trust of his intelligent creatures only through his methods of truth, love, and freedom. The universe stands secure for all eternity future not because angels with flaming swords stand on every street corner to police the populace but because it is inhabited by only those who, having been convinced beyond a doubt of God's method of governing, are like Jesus in character.

Penal Substitution is not in the Bible. In terms of law and order, God is Creator and His design protocols are his law. But God in His mercy added a written codification of His law specifically designed to protect, diagnose, and bring sinful humans back to Him for healing. God's law is immutable and unchangeable because it originates in the heart and character of God, who is love.

Moral influence is accepted as a reality that is part of the healing plan. Humans living in the darkness and despair of sin, fearful and survival-driven, need love and truth to penetrate their clouded minds to influence them, draw them, woo them back to God again. But it is also understood that moral influence alone is not enough to fix the damage sin has done, that a true remedy is also needed to restore in the sinner a God-shaped heart!

Christus Victor and recapitulation are understood to be Christ's victory over all opposition to his methods: truth overcoming lies; love overcoming selfishness; Christ, in his humanity and exercising his human will, overcoming fears and selfishness to develop a perfect human character in harmony with God's design for life—God's law of love. Jesus took up humanity, damaged and broken by sin, and perfected it. In Jesus the human race is restored to its right place in God's kingdom of love.

Healing Reality is God's universal plan to restore all things in heaven and earth united under one head, Jesus Christ. This is true at-one-ment. All metaphors, rightly understood, teach the same reality!

WEDNESDAY

Jesus at the Temple—the lesson rightly points out that the second temple, though smaller and at its dedication did not have God’s Shekinah glory fill it, is still described as being more glorious than Solomon’s temple, because Jesus walked there.

But why is Jesus’ walking and teaching at the second temple something that makes it more glorious than God showing up in His fiery glory?

Because God’s glories not in might and power it is in His character of love and Jesus is the ultimate, perfect, pinnacle disbursement, revelation, distribution of God’s character and methods of love.

And if this is so, that God glories in His character of love, which always rejoices with the truth, then does that have any implication for,

- “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Revelation 14:7 NIV84.

What does this mean for us at this time in human history if God glories not in might and power but in love and truth?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on what we can learn from the scenes Bible writers have written about the throne room of God:

Read the second to the last paragraph,

- Satan has hurled many accusations against God, arguing that He is arbitrary, selfish, and severe, but even a brief moment in God’s throne room exposes Satan’s lies. It is in seeing Christ for who He truly is, “ ‘the Lamb who was slain’ ” (Rev. 5:12, NKJV), that enables us to see the Father as He truly is. How comforting to know that by seeing Jesus, we see what the Father is like (John 14:9). And the greatest revelation of what the Father is like is seen in Jesus dying on the cross for us. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 51.

What is the lesson trying to tell us?

Can we trust God? Why?

References to question in Q&A

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/nutrition/articles/10.3389/fnut.2022.972379/full>

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2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

Lesson 7: Foundations for Prophecy

SABBATH

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me' (Isaiah 6:8, NKJV).

God's right to rule the universe is founded upon His position as the Creator of all things (*Rev. 4:11*) and also upon His character. It is in discovering God's righteous character that we begin to understand how and why sinful human beings fall short of the glory of God (*Rom. 3:23*).

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 56)

Is it just me or, does this paragraph make you feel a little uncomfortable?

It's correct that God is the "Creator of all things" and His character is perfect, however, the use of the words "right to rule the universe" sound a bit dictatorial to me. I may be splitting hairs, but after coming to a better understanding of the contrast between a "Design Law" and "Imposed law" viewpoint, these subtle word choice distinctions get my attention more than the used to. As humans, we only know earthly governments - established in violence; built on a set of imposed laws; those laws enforced by threat, coercion, loss of liberty, or more violence; and occupied by men & women who crave the power to lord their agendas and rule over the "profane masses". Language like "right to rule the universe" makes God sound like this in my ears.

In fairness to the author/editor, there are two different "governments" operating in the universe— God's government of Love [John 15:13], and Satan's government of serving self [Rom. 8:2]. God's government consists of Grace and Mercy and Gifts. Satan's government consists of rights and rules and force.

God designed Life to function around a certain set of protocols [aka Laws] that, rightly understood, are revelations of His Character - the infinite perfection of Truth and Love. Satan cannot create life or reality so he has to convince intelligent beings to believe lies, like God's Laws are arbitrary and have no other purpose than consolidating power, and God takes pleasure in punishing those who "break" those laws.

Human rebellion, ultimately and forever, will be ended. And, more than that, God's loving character, His self-denying and self-sacrificing character, will shine even brighter than it did in His original design for humanity. Though God never intended for humanity to fall, through the Cross, God's loving character has been put on display in a remarkable way.

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 56)

This is well said. Intelligent beings will have a much greater appreciation and understanding of God's character in the aftermath of the Great Controversy than they would have if sin had never entered the universe. The cynic might say that God allowed / endorsed the sin problem simply to prove Himself right. Sin could have **only** developed in an environment of perfect Love and Freedom. If God were of the character that Satan alleges, then rebellion would have been met with force [see <https://text.egwwritings.org/read/84.68>. PP Ch 1 for further insights].

In the New Heaven and New Earth, intelligent beings will retain perfect memories of the damage that sin did within themselves and loved ones, and every time we see Jesus, who gave up the Godly nature of omnipresence, with His scarred hands, feet, and torso, we will understand the infinite cost of sin, and this will be the prevention of any future rebellion.

SUNDAY

Here I Am, Send Me.

I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. [The scene is the heavenly temple, where the altar that the angel of Revelation 14 comes from is located.] Round him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. [What kind of fire is this? Is it combustion or something else?] Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other:

"Holy, holy, holy! The LORD Almighty is holy! His glory fills the world."

The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself was filled with smoke.

I said, "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes, I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"

Then one of the creatures flew down to me, **carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar** with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, **"This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven"**

(Isaiah 6:1–7 GNT. emphasis mine)

[for more insights see: <https://comeandreason.com/fire-from-rev14-angel/>]

This is a fascinating passage. Isaiah was touched by “God’s Fire” and lived. How is this different from Nadab and Abihu’s experience in Leviticus 10?

What made Isaiah’s contact with the “Fire of God” a healing experience, whereas Aaron’s sons were put to sleep by it?

Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. **So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them**, and they died before the Lord. Moses then said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:

“ ‘Among those who approach me
I will be proved holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored.’ ”

Aaron remained silent.

Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary.” **So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.** (Lev 10:1-5. emphasis mine)

Was Isaiah unforgiven until he had the coal touch his lips or was God’s posture toward him always one of forgiveness?

What was the purpose of the vision then?

Wasn’t God meeting Isaiah where he was — perhaps unsure of being forgiven and hesitant to be God’s ambassador?

Consider Isaiah’s change of position from one of fear [“Woe is me...”] to one of service [“... here I am, send me”] after being touched by God’s “Fire”.

Isaiah was purged of his sin when a seraph took a coal from the altar and touched his mouth with it. This was likely the altar of incense, where intercession was made by and for God’s people (see Rev. 8:3, 4). His sins were forgiven, and he was now

considered fit to stand in God's presence—but, more than that, he was also commissioned to represent God to the world.

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 57)

Was Isaiah “purged of his sin” when touched by the fiery coal, or did he accept / appreciate God's inherent forgiveness with that object lesson?

MONDAY

The Two Cherubim.

As soon as our first parents were expelled from the Garden, God offered the hope of Messiah (Gen. 3:15). Then He established a powerful symbol at the gates of Eden: two cherubim with a brilliant flashing light between them. It should not be lost on us that this scene so closely resembles the ark of the covenant, a symbol of God's throne (Exod. 25:18).

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 58)

I like the author's connection between the two cherubim at the garden and on the ark of the covenant.

Is the ark a symbol of “God's throne” or something far greater — like the entire plan of salvation in one object lesson?

- The ark was made of porous wood covered in gold symbolizing our defective characters covered within / by Christ's perfect character.
- The contents of the ark were [in order] manna symbolizing taking in Truth / Bread of Heaven / Bread of Life; The unbroken tablets of stone with “God's Law” symbolizing having the Law written on our hearts / minds; Aaron's rod that produced almonds / fruit symbolizing our transformed characters producing the fruits of the Spirit.
- The lid was solid gold symbolizing Christ connecting Heaven / Earth, and restoring humanity back in to harmony with the original design.
- The cherubim on top of the ark symbolize the onlooking heavenly intelligences watching and participating in the plan of salvation / healing. [see <https://comeandreason.com/most-holy-place-metaphor/> and <https://comeandreason.com/category/media/sanctuary-feast-days-seminar/> for further insights].

While the cherubim were certainly given the responsibility to keep sinners from accessing the tree of life (Gen. 3:22), they also were a symbol of hope, of promise, that one day humans would be restored to Paradise. “The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after man had become an outcast from its pleasant paths. The fallen race was long permitted to gaze upon the home of innocence, their entrance barred only by the

watching angels. At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. Hither came Adam and his sons to worship God. Here they renewed their vows of obedience to that law the transgression of which had banished them from Eden. . . . But in the final restitution, when there shall be 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning.
(Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 62)

In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct. It was Satan's plan that Adam and Eve should by disobedience incur God's displeasure; and then, if they failed to obtain forgiveness, he hoped that they would eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate an existence of sin and misery. But after man's fall, holy angels were immediately commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light having the appearance of a glittering sword. None of the family of Adam were permitted to pass the barrier to partake of the life-giving fruit; hence there is not an immortal sinner.
(Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 60)

TUESDAY

Like Burning Coals of Fire.

Cherubim, either as living beings (Ezek. 10:8) or the gold symbols of them (Exod. 25:18), appear all through the Old Testament. They are often depicted as standing immediately next to God's throne, radiating His glory to the universe. Cherubim also are embroidered into the curtain before the Holy of Holies (Exod. 26:1). In the book of Psalms, God's supreme power over creation is poetically pictured as God being borne through the air by cherubim (Ps. 18:10). God commanded that the ark of the covenant be topped by two solid gold cherubim with their wings extended toward one another (Exod. 25:18–20).

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 59)

Angels are God's messengers from His throne to humanity. All intelligent beings are to reveal God's Glory [His Character]. The Angels embroidered on the Sanctuary curtain are symbolic of fallen angels spreading Satan's lies that obstructed our full view of God [see <https://comeandreason.com/what-does-the-veil-represent-satan-or-jesus/>].

The lesson references Ezekiel's vision from Chapter 1. Note the "4 living beings" having 4 faces each [lion, eagle, ox, man] in verse 10 and 4 wings in verse 11 & 23, and the wheels within wheels in verses 15-18. Any thoughts on the symbology of these?

The first idea expressed by the image of the throne represents, by symbolism, royalty. As the King of all creation, God rules and controls all the universe. For us, this idea implies obedience to His laws and trust in His power and His leadership. Furthermore, because royalty is often associated with the function of a judge (Ps. 122:5), all creatures, including humans, should see God as their judge, which means that God is the One who sees, and can evaluate, all our actions, good and bad (Eccles. 12:14). Not only that, we see that God is the One who will save us from evil. In the Bible, the judge is also the “savior” (Judg. 3:9, 15; Judg. 6:36; Judg. 12:3). By locating the throne of God in heaven, the Bible shows that judgment and salvation are not in our hands. Only God judges, and only He will save us.

Does this description of God and His throne give you any comfort?

Or does it cause some fear?

WEDNESDAY

God Among His People

Numbers 2 details the layout of the tribes around the Sanctuary. The Levites were in the middle serving in the Sanctuary. On the East side — Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. On the South side — Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. On the West side — Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. On the North side — Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

What is the symbolism with the layout of the tribes?

Levites — Priesthood of Believers

Surrounding Tribes — The unconverted world.

Notice that each dominant tribe flew its own “standard,” or special flag, to designate who they were. While the Scriptures are not explicit in describing what was on each flag, there is an interesting tradition—loosely based on the tribal characteristics described in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33—that assigns one of the four faces to each of the four compass points.

According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man’s head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards.— *Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), vol. 1, p. 660.* [emphasis mine].

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 60)

This is a great insight connected with Ezekiel's vision of the four living beings having four faces each [lion, eagle, ox, man]. God has been working to draw mankind back to Himself since Adam and Eve's fall.

- God dwelt with Adam and Eve, walking in the garden [Gen. 3:8]
- God walked with Enoch. [Gen. 5: 22]
- God walked and talked with Abraham [Gen. 15: 6-21, Gen. 18.]
- God walked and talked with Moses.
- God appeared to Manoah, Gideon, Samuel, and many others in the OT.
- God appeared to all of humanity in the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
- God appeared to his followers after his resurrection [1 Cor. 15:6]

Of course, we don't live in the camp of Israel. But how can we, in our own lives now, draw close to the presence of God?

(Adult SS Guide Q2 2025, Allusions, Images, Symbols, pg 60)

Any thoughts?

THURSDAY

The Fall of Lucifer

Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says:

'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; **you walked among the fiery stones.** You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, **from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty,** and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. **So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.** All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.' (Ezekiel 28: 12-19, emphasis mine)

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?" (Isa. 14: 12-17)

I have often wondered about the above passages referring Satan to a "man", but compare / contrast with the following:

Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan's captives. In rejecting Christ they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to receive his suggestions and to do his bidding. **Yet, true to his early cunning, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He claims to be the prince who is the rightful owner of the world and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him. He represents himself to his deluded subjects as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves and that he is about to rescue them from the most cruel tyranny.** The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claims. He makes the weak strong and inspires all with his own spirit and energy. He proposes to lead them against the camp of the saints and to take possession of the City of God. With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city and regain his throne and his kingdom. (Great Controversy, pg 663, emphasis mine)

Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. **Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him.** But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. (Desire of Ages, pg 761)



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 8 In the Psalms: Part 2

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall **judge** the people **righteously**, and **govern** the nations on earth. Psalm 67:3-4 NKJV.

Thoughts about this text?

Doesn't this text connote the idea of a judicial process, of judging people, righteously to be sure, but still suggests, as it reads, a executive judgment?

This is a perfect example of how people can translate into the text the imposed law construct. This translation is linguistically totally within appropriate interpretation and translation—BUT IT IS NOT THE ONLY ONE!

Notice some other translations and see if they connote a different meaning from the same Hebrew, (and we will look only at verse 4, as there is no significant difference in verse 3):

- May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you **rule** the peoples **justly** and **guide** the nations of the earth. Psalm 67:4 NIV84.
- Let foreigners rejoice and celebrate! For you **execute justice** among the nations, and **govern** the people living on earth. Psalm 67:4 NET
- May the peoples of the earth be glad and sing for joy, for you **govern** the world with absolute **constancy**, sustaining your design-laws, and you **guide** the peoples all over the world back to life and health. Psalm 67:4 REM

There is no nefariousness in these different translations. All are done with honesty and integrity, seeking to be most accurate, but it reveals that the translators bring over their biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and beliefs when they translate.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, but the words are not inspired—the penmen were inspired with truth from God and they chose the words to convey those truths. Thus, we are able to replace the

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words with other language words **as long as we bring over the truths** those words are intended to convey.

Thus, given the many versions and lexicons available the most important thing in translation is not being an expert in the languages, but understanding the Great Controversy, what the war is actually over, God's character and Design Law methods. If one does not understand these foundational truths then when translating, in all innocence, imposed law constructs that misrepresent God will be brought into the text.

Read the second and third paragraph,

- Prophecy, however, also deals with key issues associated with sin and suffering, judgment, the battle between good and evil, the nature of justice and injustice, persecution, and more.

The Psalms also deal with these issues in great depth, exploring nearly every possible human emotion—from dark despondency to unbridled joy. We see Israel preparing for battle against the forces of darkness. We read about individuals wrestling with the question of **why doesn't God address evil more directly and immediately, a question that no doubt we all have asked**. We are directed to the sanctuary for answers, and there also are repeated appeals to God's status as Creator. Are these not issues and questions that we, in our context today, wrestle with, as well? *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 72, emphasis mine.

Why doesn't God address evil more directly and immediately?

What does God want and how can He get it?

Does God want an end to sin? What is sin? Is sin behavioral rule-breaking or is sin distrust of God with subsequent fear and selfishness resulting in rebelliousness, a willful choice to run from God and break away from His design laws for life—to be lawless?

As the Bible says:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84
- Sin is lawlessness 1John 3:4 NIV84

If sin is distrust resulting in fear and selfishness that causes people to live out of harmony with God's design laws for life, then how does God get rid of it?

What is the opposite of distrust and selfishness? Trust and love—then if God wants to get rid of sin, which is distrust and selfishness, He must restore trust and love. Can God, with the use of His infinite power by more directly dealing with sin restore love and trust?

Can God get love, trust, loyalty, friendship and devotion by using imposed law and law enforcement through inflicted punishment? No! this is violation of the law of liberty and results in the destruction of love and inciting rebellion.

Can God get love and trust by using His power to make changes inside a human heart and mind against that person's will? No, why not? Because to do so would destroy that person's mind, erase their individuality, make them into a mindless drone, robot, simulation of life incapable of love.

The only way God can win the war and get what He wants is through truth and love presented in freedom. Thus, God teaches, it is not by might, nor by power but by the way the Spirit works (Zech 4:6).

And Bible history reveals this to be true, whenever God has used might and power it never results in love and trust, it only results in a brief period of intimidated behavioral conformity and then continuation of rebellion.

- The Flood followed by the tower of Babel
- 10 plagues of Egypt followed by the golden calf
- The thundering of Sinai followed by the princes rebelling
- The fire at Mt Carmel followed by more idolatry
- Jesus many miracles, including healing Malchus's ear followed by rejection, rebellion, crucifixion of Jesus

So the answer to the question, Why doesn't God address evil more directly and immediately? Is because of how reality works—and reality is built upon God's design laws. To use force, more direct means, perpetuates sin and the war.

God cannot get what He wants, an end to sin, by direct physical means—it is only by love, truth, and freedom winning people to choose to trust Him and open their hearts and then in freedom they receive recreation and choose to act upon the new motives of love for God and others.

When we replace the truth of God's design laws with human imposed law then we will innocently bring over the lie that God wins by imposing His will through the use of power to inflict punishment upon rule breakers, but this only undermines trust and perpetuates fear and selfishness. This is why God waits. He waits for a people to truly know Him and thereby trust Him and be healed by His indwelling Spirit of truth and love and **give the true message about Him.**

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Psalm 46 appears to touch on a theme that we find in the book of Hebrews: that of something better. Jesus is better than the earthly high priest, His sacrifice is better than all the animal

sacrifices, and the heavenly sanctuary is better than the types that existed on earth. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 73.

1. A Better Hope

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a **better hope** is introduced, by which we draw near to God. Hebrews 7:18–19 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, friendship, agreement. He wants to eradicate sin from His universe and restore unity, the unity of love and trust. And fear cannot be driven out of hearts by threats of punishment. Love cannot be restored into hearts by ritual, ceremony, or laws written upon stone. Lies cannot be defeated by inflicting punishment upon those who tell lies. Truth is not advanced by taking freedom, censoring speech, and silencing dissent. There is no hope in ceremony, ritual, law, and law-enforcement.

The ceremonial and written law were teaching tools, therapeutic interventions, additions given by God to enlighten our minds and lead us to experience the reality to which they were pointing. And that reality is Jesus!

No one will be recognized as having a healthy relationship with God and being like Christ in character **by adhering to a set of rules**; rather, it is through the Ten Commandments that we **become aware** of our sickly state of mind. But now God has revealed a healthy state of being—a character that is right and perfect in every way—that **did not come from the written code**, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being **comes from Christ and is created within us** by God **when we place our trust in him**. Our **trust in him is established by the evidence** given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. Romans 3:20-22 REM, emphasis mine.

Jesus is our better hope for Jesus is the reality to which all the written laws, rules, regulations, and ceremonies, (including the Ten Commandments) were pointing. And Jesus, our better hope, brings us a better covenant:

2. A Better Covenant

Jesus has become the guarantee of a **better covenant**. Hebrews 7:22 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What made this covenant better than the previous one?

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said:

“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because **they did not remain faithful to my covenant**, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I **will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘**Know the Lord,**’ because **they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Hebrews 8:6-12 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What made the New Covenant better and what was wrong with the first one? The first was focused on behavior, on rules, on externals, on law. The second is the reality of God’s kingdom, truth, love, and trust. It is about restoration of hearts and minds back into God’s ideal, eradicating fear, purging lies, removing rebellion, restoring trust—as Jesus said “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:30 NIV84). And restoring love and trust cannot be accomplished through might and power, but only by the Spirit of truth and love winning heart to freely choose to say yes to God (Zechariah 4:6).

In the first covenant, God offered healing, but the people chose behavior management; God wanted a love relationship, but the people chose a legal relationship; God wanted closeness—intimacy, but the people chose distance—separation; God wanted personal connection, but the people chose a mediator; God wanted restoration of love and trust, but the people chose fear and selfishness. God spoke directly to His people, but the people didn’t want to speak to God:

When **you heard the voice** out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. And you said, “**The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him.** But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and **we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer.** For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? **Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.**” Deuteronomy 5:23-27 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is the first covenant, the Old Covenant, the failed covenant. It is the covenant of the people and by the people, the arrangement they insisted upon because they did not trust God and refused His plan for cleansing their hearts, minds, and characters and bringing them back into unity with Him.

The people didn’t want God to change them, to heal them, to cleanse them. They wanted a god like the pagans, one they could control through their behaviors, their performance, their law-keeping, their ceremonies, rituals, incantations, and sacrifices. They chose a rules-oriented legal covenant in which they could do good and God was then required to bless, or if they did bad then God was required to punish. They chose a covenant of law and law enforcement.

The old covenant focused on fear of punishment or promises of reward. The “new covenant” on reality, on God’s design, on God’s plan, intent, purpose, on Jesus, on our substitutionary Savior restoring God’s living law of love and trust in the human species!

And this new covenant, this new understanding, the new agreement is our agreement to trust God and open our hearts to Him, and He His agreement to heal us, renew us, recreate us, to remove fear and selfishness, guilt, and shame, and write into our hearts and minds His living law of love and trust. When that happens God no longer needs to think about and focus upon our sin, because our sin, the breakdown of love and trust, the rebelliousness, the fear and selfishness which causes all the pain, suffering, and death, has been removed! He doesn’t have to think about it anymore because it is gone. It is like a physician father whose child is dying of cancer saying, once you trust me son, and let me heal you, I will never have to think about your cancer again.

Yes! The new covenant in which Jesus heals us by restoring His design law into our hearts and minds, cleansing us from fear, selfishness, and distrust is so much better than the old covenant of imposed law and law-enforcement.

3. A Better Sacrifice

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with **better sacrifices** than these. Hebrews 9:23 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What made Jesus’ sacrifice better than the animal sacrifices and how is it Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses heavenly things?

Again, all the animal sacrifices were merely symbol, theater, object lesson teaching the reality that Jesus accomplished, but what did His sacrifice accomplish?

The gifts and sacrifices being offered were **not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper**. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order... But those sacrifices are an annual **reminder** of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. Hebrews 9:9,10, 10:3,4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Wax fruit can represent real fruit, but we can never get life, nutrition, health from eating wax fruit. Likewise, the sacrifices of animals can represent the real sacrifice of Christ, but we can never get life, spiritual nurturing, healing of our souls from animal sacrifices—only through Jesus. And why is Jesus’ sacrifice effective? Because Jesus provides the reality-based solution to the sin problem that restores trust and recreates sinners in righteousness.

Jesus’ incarnation into humanity, sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection:

1. Revealed the truth about God that destroys the lies that Satan has told about God thus removing all doubt from the loyal angels and solidifying them in eternal loyalty.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things**, whether things on earth or **things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:19,20 NIV84, emphasis mine.

2. Destroyed the power of Satan and freed us from death.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by **his death he might destroy him** who holds **the power of death—that is, the devil**—and **free those** who all their lives were held in slavery by their **fear of death**. Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus, God in humanity, revealed the truth about God that destroys the lies of Satan and wins us back to trust. Life eternal is that we know God and Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus that God is revealed. Life eternal = knowing God; eternal death then, is not knowing God. Therefore, Satan's power of death is the lies he tells about God that when we believe them, keep us from knowing God. Jesus destroyed this power by His life of selfless love and sinless death. But more than this, Jesus also frees us from the fear of death by providing the remedy that heals us and gives us eternal life. This is symbolized by His sinless blood. His sinless blood represents His sinless life that we receive when we trust Him. As Leviticus states, "the life is in the blood" vs 17:11. And Christ's perfecting, healing, restoring of the species human is described in Hebrews 5:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Hebrews 5:8, 9 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Wasn't Jesus always perfect? Jesus was always sinless, but Bible perfection is about maturity of character. Jesus, as a human, using only human abilities was tempted in all points just like we are (Hebrews 4:15) and chose with His human mind, heart, and will to say no to every temptation and ultimately destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness with which Adam infected humanity. And thus Jesus destroyed the death causing principle He partook through Mary, purging it from the humanity He assumed, and restored the life causing principle He received from the Father of His humanity (the Holy Spirit) and became the source of salvation for all who love and trust Him. Thus Jesus' sacrifice is better than the animal sacrifices because it accomplishes what was necessary to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light (2 Timothy 1:10), to defeat Satan, to restore love and trust in God, and to heal God's creation. For more on how Jesus cleanses us from sin see our blogs [Salvation and the Cleansing of our Spirits Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

4. Better Possessions

You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had **better and lasting possessions**. Hebrews 10:34 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What are the better and lasting possessions? Jesus said,

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Mark 8:36 NKJV.

The world focuses on money, precious metals, jewels, cars, houses, lands, stocks, fame, social-media “clicks” and followers, but what does any of that matter if one dies eternally? What do riches and fame matter if one is tormented in heart, mind and soul, if one doesn’t have peace within oneself? How many rich and famous die by suicide because they don’t have mental, emotional, or spiritual health?

We possess something much more valuable, something that results in eternal life. We have the remedy of Jesus. We have God’s love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and Spirit that heals us and recreates us in righteousness.

Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice. Proverbs 16:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

How much **better to get wisdom** than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver! Proverbs 16:16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud. Proverbs 16:19 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is the better and lasting possession? A clear conscience, a mature Christlike character, wisdom, clarity in thinking, good judgment, self-control, love for God and others, a gentle and kind spirit. And these are only possible through Jesus Christ. And when we possess this, then we become God’s trusting and trustworthy friend (John 15:15), a person like Job, Daniel, the three worthies. Someone whom God can trust to be faithful to Him and say of Him what is right—and what could be more precious than that?

5. A Better Country

Instead, they were longing for a **better country—a heavenly one**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:16 NIV84, emphasis mine

And this better country is not received here. It is not a small strip of land in the Middle East with perpetual violence and wars. It will not come through earthly governments; it will not come through imposed law and law-enforcement. That is what the beastly system is going to sell to the world—the lie that we can have peace and safety with more law and law enforcement. But the righteous long for a better country—a heavenly one.

Where safety and security doesn't come from 100% community surveillance by an omniscient God, or from a perfect “police-state” by an omnipotent God who has angels with flaming swords on every street corner. No, heaven will not be safe because God has perfect law-enforcement. It will be safe because every person there has perfect Christlike character restored within them. God's law of truth, love, and liberty is written upon their hearts and minds and every person there would rather die than harm another, every person there is like Jesus, every person there is perfectly trustworthy just like Jesus is! Yes, we are looking forward to a better country! (If you would like to read more about God's promises for the land in Palestine see our blog [Israel and the Promised Land Today](#)).

6. A Better Resurrection

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a **better resurrection**. Hebrews 11:35 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The better resurrection is the resurrection into eternal life with immortal bodies into a world free of all sin. It is not the resurrection of the Shunnamite's son (2 Kings 4:18-37). It is not the resurrection of the dead man who was thrown into the cave and touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20). It is not the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:14-43). It was not the resurrection of the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17). It was not the resurrection of Jarius' daughter (Mark 5:21-43). All of these were resurrections to this mortal life, to a life of sin, turmoil, disease, decay and death. No, our hope is in Jesus who provides a better resurrection, the resurrection of eternal life.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the **perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality**. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 NIV84, emphasis mine.

7. Something Better

These were all commended for their faith, yet **none of them received what had been promised**. God had planned **something better for us** so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Hebrews 11:39-40 NIV84, emphasis mine.

None of the long list of God's faithful through history, who by faith longed for the better land, the land of promise, have received what had been promised—including Enoch who is included in that list. Even though Enoch was translated to heaven without seeing death, even though Enoch can talk to Jesus face to face, he has not received the things promised because what has been promised is a universe free of sin, and the restoration of our Eden home here on Earth. As Jesus said, one day the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). The promise that has not been received is that humanity, with Jesus at our head, as our second Adam, are restored to an Earth made new, an Earth free of all sin, an Earth that flourishes as God originally planned. And we do not receive that promise until the end of the thousand years when all sin, sinners, sickness, disease, Satan, death, and the grave are eradicated from existence and the Earth is recreated in perfection the home of the righteous.

Read last paragraph,

- One cannot help but be reminded of the scenes that will take place at the Second Coming: “Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place” (Rev. 6:14, NKJV). And this: “Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat” (2 Pet. 3:12, NKJV). Our present world, with all its attendant evils, isn't going to last forever, and **what comes afterward promises us something that our minds now can barely fathom**. For now, though, we just need to hold on, persevering in faith and clinging to the revelation of God that we have, especially in Jesus on the cross. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 73, emphasis mine.

What is it our minds can barely fathom? Isn't it a world without fear?

And after God has used revealed Himself in His unveiled glory, after all sin and sinners are gone, after the elements melt in the heat, after God uses power beyond our imagining to recreate the Earth in perfection, why do we not live in fear? Why with all that might and power not instill fear?

Jesus who did not think His equality with God was something to be held onto but humbled Himself... The revelation of God's character of love, that Jesus demonstrated that despite having all power God does not use His power to force His way, but leaves all His creatures free, truly free, to decide for themselves and God NEVER uses His power to coerce, to force, to inflict legal punishments—but leaves all free to reap what they have sown.

And God established a sign, an evidence, a memorial, a reminder that He will never take our freedom, that He will not use power to coerce, to punish—what is that sign? The Sabbath! In the beginning of the war, when Satan was lying about God's use of power, about God's law, God created this world and at the end of creation of this world, after the display of unmeasurable power, instead of punishing Lucifer, instead of forcing compliance, instead of making him kneel, God stopped using power, God rested. And in that act God created the Sabbath, the day in which God refused to use power to force His way upon His creatures, but instead left all His intelligent creatures free. And the Sabbath stands as an eternal reminder that God, though all powerful, never uses His power to force the conscience.

And this is why we love the Sabbath, because we remember what it reveals, what it stands for, our Creator God of love who gives us real freedom. It is also why Satan hates the Sabbath and why he has worked to either replace it with another day under the banner of Roman imperial law, made up rules with external enforcement, because imposed law incites fear and undermines love and trust. Or Satan tries to get those who still recognize the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week to teach it is an arbitrary made up rule that God enforces through inflicted punishment. And those who value the Sabbath as a legal requirement end up like the Sabbath-keeping Jews who crucified Christ.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Jeremiah 4:23-26:

- I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone. I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying. I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger. Jeremiah 4:23-26 NIV84.

What is being described? The Earth during the 1000 years.

This is what I understand will happen in the near future:

- The three groups of people solidify into two: historically there have always been three groups of people. Those solidified into rebellion against God such that no amount of truth and love will win them to God; those solidified into loyalty to God such that nothing will shake them from it (Job, Daniel, three worthies etc.); and those in the middle, those who have solidified into one or the other camp. As events unfold, the middle group evaporates as people solidify into one or the other camp. We see it happening, the polarization of society. But the trick is that Satan divides his followers into various subgroups that fight against each other and thus it appears that there are more than two groups forming, but this is not so. When you understand the principles, methods, design laws of God, as one solidifies in God's kingdom there is a unity inherit in our faith, we become one with God and with each other in love, trust, and principles of life. But the wicked, those who reject God and His design laws, fragment and fracture into many different sub-groups that appear, on the surface, to be different, but they are all practicing the same methods of fear-based selfishness through imperial rules, laws, law-enforcement, coercion, deceit, control, manipulation. COVID was the perfect example of this, all the various governments coming together to practice the exact same methods of lies, propaganda, censoring, mandates, restrictions of liberty, coercion of consciences on their citizens. And the two big groups of Satan, the King of the South—godlessness in all its manifestations (communism, humanism, greenism, wokeism, paganism, evolutionism, scientism, materialism, secularism etc.) warring against the King of the North—religious imperialism in all its manifestations (Imperial Christianity with its legal enforcing god,

Judaism, Islam—all claiming the God of the Bible but willing to use imposed law and law enforcement to coerce consciences).

- As events unfold people solidify into either being loyal to our Creator by being settled into the truth of His character and methods both intellectually (understanding) and spiritually (motivation to action) that they cannot be moved or into loyalty to Satan by internalizing his methods of lies, fear-driven survival motivation with imposed law, law enforcement, and coercion of conscience.
- As billions harden their hearts against God, the Holy Spirit is slowly withdrawn from the Earth.
- Satan and evil forces gain every increasing control over humanity and humanity becomes more debased, violent, decadent, unreasonable, fear-driven, irrational, and delusional (like believing that gender is fluid—that is a mental sickness, a delusion that occurs when minds no longer are grounded in reality and truth); and nature begins to have more problems as God’s sustaining presence loosens control as He let’s go and sets people free to reap what they have chosen, a world without Him. (God keeps His protective hand and angels around His faithful remnant while all of this is happening).
- Human governments and those who don’t really know God become more frightened, like during COVID, and increase fear inducing messaging.
- Some new existential threat will arise—climate, pestilence, aliens, nano-technology, AI, famine, something to incite fear.
- Into this chaos of fear and desperation supernatural forces will emerge, whether this is through spiritualism or whether it presents through science and the claim of either alien encounters or alternate universes or quantum tunneling, or a combination of both, Satan and his forces will make themselves known.
- But Satan will not present himself as Satan, but as our creator and savior. He will claim to have created life on this planet and will frame his presentation in a way that will garner the support of both the scientific community and the religious community—all but the elect. Ghosts and spiritual influences may be presented as quantum projections from distant galaxies; those who hear the dead or had visions from God as recorded in the Bible, will be described as being neuroatypical, with brains that are capable of receiving input on quantum frequencies the rest can’t hear. Thus the scientific godless community and the spiritual community can be brought together.
- He will describe how our planet is heading for a global disaster, an extinction level event of some kind. He could present the truth that there is an intergalactic war that has been waging for eons, but claim that he is the one who created life here and he is coming now to save us from his enemy who is on the way here to destroy the planet and lay it to waste, which is exactly what the Bible says Jesus is going to do, for 1000 years. But Satan impersonating Christ will have his fallen angels impersonate dead loved ones supposedly in heaven, will have them impersonate Elijah and Moses and appear around the planet speaking for him. They will tell world leaders that according to galactic law he can only intervene and protect us if we as a unified planet choose to accept him as our head, our ruler, our savior. If we refuse, then we will be abandoned to our fate—and he will appear to cry over us. All but the very elect will accept him and the elect will come under incredible pressure from other humans to accept him as well, much more pressure than people felt to take the jab.

- The righteous will have their liberties restricted, some will be imprisoned, and they will be threatened with death. But before they are killed, Jesus appears in the clouds and the wicked are slain by the brightness of His coming, the righteous living are transformed in the twinkling of an eye, and the righteous dead are raised immortal and we all arise in the air to meet Jesus. The wicked dead stay dead and the planet is turned back into a void similar to Genesis 1:1 before God created life here. And for 1000 years the righteous are in heaven with Jesus and Satan and his angels are alone on the void and abysmal planet Earth.
- At the end of the 1000 years Jesus, the NJ, the angels and the saved all come down from heaven and the wicked dead are raised from the dead. There is a period of time that goes by while the wicked, led by Satan, build implements of war to attack the city. This entire time the gates of the NJ are open and none of the wicked enter. Only when they march in mass on the city to attack are the gates closed. What does this reveal? That God keeps no one out, all the lost prefer Satan as their ruler and his methods of fear, selfishness, imposed law, and coercion to truth, love, and freedom. And then, Jesus rises above the city, fire comes down from Him into the city and out the gates demonstrating the fire is not harmful, it is the fire of infinite truth and love that the righteous live in. But for the wicked they can no longer deny the reality of their condition, who they have chosen to become, and they also get awareness of the unrepented sin, suffering, harm their sins have caused others. This is not an infliction, it is reality, it is the truth of what they have chosen and solidified into their being and they are no longer shielded from this. Some are many days struggling against the truth, others surrender in a second, finally only Satan is left and in the end, all of the wicked, including Satan voluntarily surrender their lives back to God. They do not want to live in a universe of truth and love and freedom, and all the saved watch this unfold and realize that God never uses power to cause harm, it is sin that harms, God doesn't use power to cause death, sin causes death, and God doesn't use power to terminate the wicked, He leaves them all free, and when God stops using power to shield His life giving presence and all are bathed in it again, the wicked choose death rather than life for life in God's presence is torture to them. And thus God cleanses His universe from sin and sinners through the only means that brings eternal security, truth, love, and freedom.
- And then God uses power to recreate the Earth in newness and perfection the eternal home of the righteous.

TUESDAY

Asks us to read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17:

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of

God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 NIV84.

What are the significant points of this passage?

That when Jesus comes again He does not set up a kingdom for 1000 years on this Earth, that the righteous living and dead rise to meet Him in the air and for the next 1000 years we live in heaven with Him.

But also that the righteous dead are described as being in a state of sleep, and in that state of sleep they are coming down from heaven with Jesus, but they are also coming up out of the grave—what does this mean?

Consider a computer—three parts, hardware, software, energy; humans have three parts, body, soul (psyche), spirit (pneuma). And it takes all three together to have an operational computer or person.

What happens to a computer that runs out of power—it sleeps. And what happens to a human when the body dies? They sleep. And where to the righteous sleep? They are backed up on a cloud server, the Lamb's book of life, they sleep safe and secure with Jesus in heaven and when Jesus returns He brings with Him those who have fallen asleep in Him and He creates new hardware, new bodies, and downloads their individualities into them with the breath of life and they live again.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- One of the things that God corrects in the judgment is the misappropriation of power that has taken place in our fallen world. Fallen humans no longer live for others or for the glory of God but for self. Today, in many ways, we are living with the consequences of choosing to believe that there is no meaning or objective moral standard in the universe. If there is to be a meaning, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche insisted that we must invent it for ourselves and pretend as if the universe exists for our benefit. Each individual, in effect, behaves as if he or she is a god. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 76.

What do you think about the idea of judgment corrects the misappropriation of power?

The issues to me is that Satan and the wicked do two things God does not and cannot do:

1. They use powers that God does not use
2. They use powers that God does use for purposes that God will not and cannot use those power for

Satan and his followers use the power of lies, deception, flattery, manipulation

- God will never use the power of deception—God is truth and always leads people to truth.

Satan and his followers use other powers for purposes that God does not and will not—they use physical might and power to inflict punishment, God disciplines; they use physical power to coerce conscience, God leaves free. They use imposed laws to establish governments and promote their brand of righteousness; God uses imposed laws only in this world of sin and only to restrain evil to allow space for His design laws of truth, love, and freedom to operate in hearts and minds.

God uses the power of truth, love, freedom gospel power (Romans 1:16) and then when trust is restored He uses the power of Creation to recreate people in righteousness. Satan cannot wield the powers of God—Satan can only corrupt the powers of God. Satan can take a truth and introduce a lie.

My point is that Satan cannot win by using God's powers and God cannot win by using Satan's powers.

So what is the judgment that corrects this? **It is the judgment of people** who realize the difference between truth and lies, love and selfishness, trust and fear, freedom and coercion, evidence and claims, and **they judge** God to be a completely different person that Satan has made Him out to be, ultimately surrendering themselves to God and choosing to apply God's methods, God's powers of truth, love, liberty, trust, to their lives and reject the powers of Satan.

In other words, things get set right in hearts and minds when the truth and love of God wins people to trust Him and they choose to agree with Him and choose to prefer and practice His methods and thus are settled in mind and heart into God's kingdom. It is not a judgment made and enforced by God's external power, that is how Satan governs—it is a judgment of God's people operating upon the internal power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet
Mission, Health and Women Director
West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division
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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy
Campus Ministries Coordinator
Newbold College
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New Pamphlet: Repairers of the Breach is now available on Come and reason Website, download pdf, read online, order FREE copies to any US postal address.



2025 Second Quarter Allusions Images

Lesson 10: Upon Whom the Ends Have Come

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

Do we really feel we are at the end of this dreadful experiment between good and evil?

Did you know the Jews have been counting the years since creation?

The current 2024/2025 Hebrew year is 5,786; 214 years left until the 6,000 year mark. By this calculation, the end of the 6,000th year would occur at nightfall of September 16, 2240 on the Gregorian calendar; the Jewish “mysterious Jubilee.” According to Rabbi Yose ben-Halafta in the 2nd century CE (AD), the starting point of creation was Oct 7, 3,761 BCE.

For those who value the writings of Ellen G. White, the Great Controversy Pg 518 has this to say:

“The great controversy between Christ and Satan, that has been carried forward for nearly six thousand years, is soon to close; and the wicked one redoubles his efforts to defeat the work of Christ in man’s behalf, and to fasten souls in his snares. To hold the people in darkness and impenitence till the Saviour’s mediation is ended, and there is no longer a sacrifice for sin, is the object which he seeks to accomplish.”

None of here is going to live 214 more years, so how does this apply to us? Our end of time could come this very afternoon, this week or this month. At my age, many of my classmates from school are dying or dead. So, the Bible emphasizes, “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” We need to keep God in our hearts and dwell with Him.

Memory text:

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” 1 Corinthians 10:11,12

The Bible is filled with accounts of God’s people that point to future events and that hold keys to helping us understand present truth...Providing us a broader foundation for understanding the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation clearly.

The New Testament refers to Sodom and Gomorrah, the Flood, etc., in relationship to last-day events. This lesson searches stories in order to learn more details about the Second Coming, the investigative judgment, and the final crisis.

SUNDAY

The Wrath of the Lamb

The Wrath of the Lamb is the point of view of the wicked. When people can't acknowledge they are wrong, they blame others, they blame God that they can't stand being in His presence. To them, He is vengeful, wrathful and cruel. Like the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, who told Moses to talk with God for them, then tell them what He said, and couldn't even stand in the presence of Moses without a veil over his face to prevent them from being in spiritual and mental pain. (Exodus 34: 29-35)

Paul in Romans 1:18 – 32 makes it clear what God's wrath actually is. It is God finally giving them over to what they worship and believe and do. There is nothing in them that responds to Him and his love. The following verses describe what happens when God no longer protects them from His presence of pure love and truth:

"I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!** For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?' " Revelation 6:12-17

Isaiah 13:6-9 says,

"Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every heart will melt with fear. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. **They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.** See, the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it."

Zechariah 14 talks about the coming of the Lord, when he will be king over the whole earth. Verse 12 says,

"This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: **Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.** On that day people will be stricken by the Lord with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another."

But people who have God's Spirit dwelling within them have a totally different experience in God's presence:

“The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: ‘Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?’ Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil – they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.”

Prior to the end, the gospel is carried to every nation on earth (Matthew 24:14), and the three angels’ messages are delivered to the entire planet (Revelation 14: 6-12). And yet, there will be people who are caught off guard – not for lack of information, but **according to the lesson, “because of their refusal to believe and to obey. This will be the reason that such people are lost in the last days.”**

But in the Bible, James the brother of Jesus says,

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”
James 2:19

So belief must mean more than understanding the fact that God exists, or that Jesus really came and died to save us. Jesus said,

“Now this is eternal life: that they KNOW you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Believing is a knowing intimacy with God.

1 Corinthians points out that even if we do good things, if we look like we are obeying, but don’t HAVE LOVE, we gain nothing. So even “obeying the rules” without love does not gain salvation for us.

Jesus used Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of what is to come at the end of the age.

“It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot’s wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.”
Luke 17:28-33

What does it mean to “Lose your life” in a way that preserves it?

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They

triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.’ Revelation 12:10, 11

In each of these stories we are examining, are we looking only at the destruction of evil (cancer, shall we say?), or are we looking at the salvation provided to Noah and his family, or to Lot and his daughters? Or to those who are saved at the end of all things?

“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; **your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.**’” Isaiah 35: 3, 4

Though Noah preached for 120 years, warning the people of exactly what was going to happen in the coming flood and how to be saved, it still came as a surprise. People didn’t believe. “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.” (Matthew 24:36-44)

MONDAY

Noah’s Evangelism

Today, can we see how much this generation is like the generations alive when the flood came?

“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, **and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.** The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, **and his heart was filled with pain.**” Genesis 6:5,6

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.’” Genesis 6: 11-13

Even though the world has a collective memory of a great deluge (an astonishing number of global cultures tell the story of a devastating flood, from the ancient Greeks to the Mayans). many will be unprepared for Christ’s return because they “willfully forget”, and ridicule the story as a myth.

“But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed

in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives, as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming [or “as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come”]. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:5-13

Just like Noah warning the people for 120 years before the flood, we are tasked with warning the inhabitation of the earth about the end of everything on the earth by fire, and what needs to be done to prepare. In Noah’s day, 8 people lived....everyone else died. In Lot’s day, all inhabitants of five cities were wiped out, 3 people lived.

This is our message now that the end of all things is at hand:

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11-14,

“If you, then though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

And in Matthew 11: 27-30, Jesus said,

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and **no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him**. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

God is like the old experienced horse, yoked together with the young, inexperienced horse. The old one teaches and shows the young one how to do the job, and the young horse’s job is to watch and learn. The old horse is doing the real work.

“Lord, you establish peace for us; **all that we have accomplished you have done for us.**”
Isaiah 26:12

In Noah’s day, God warned and instructed, Noah believed and obeyed the God he trusted, and God showed him exactly how to be saved from the flood. And he was saved. God is doing the same for us...because God, the consuming fire, is coming soon.

TUESDAY

The Story of Sodom and Gomorrah

Sin is remarkable deceptive in that it blinds us to the state of our own hearts. How do you enlighten yourself and others as to the true state?

Sometimes it takes a story.

“The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, ‘There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.’ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.’ Then Nathan said to David, **‘you are the man!** This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the Lord says, ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. **you are not going to die.** But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, **the son born to you will die.**’

Sometimes it takes a prayer.

God has always answered this prayer when I have courage enough to pray it. “Lord, show me who I really am, and give me the courage to turn to you for healing when you do.” Be willing to endure the pain and the shame that will occur. Better to pull the weeds of worldly character now than feel the full on effects of an unclean heart at end of the age.

“Surely wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns, it sets the forest thickets ablaze, so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke.” Isaiah 9:18

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [Greek Tartarus], putting them into gloomy dungeons [chains of darkness] to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient worlds when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) – if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. [or, unrighteous for punishment until the day of judgment]. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their ideas of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood! ...These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. **Blackest darkness is reserved for them.**” 2 Peter 2: 4-14, 17

“Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.” Jude 5-8

God was talking to His own people when he said,

“Your older sister was Samaria, who lived to the north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you with her daughters, was Sodom. You not only walked in their detestable practices, but in all your ways **you soon became more depraved than they**. As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done. Now **this was the sin of your sister Sodom**: She and her daughters were **arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me.** Therefore, I did away with them as you have seen.” Ezekiel 16:46-50

WEDNESDAY

The Judge of All the Earth

“Then the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.’ Then the Lord said, **‘the outcry against sodom and gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that i will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, i will know.’** The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge [or Ruler] of all the earth do right?’ The Lord said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’ Then Abraham spoke up again, ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of the five people?’ ‘If I find forty-five there,’ he said, ‘I will not destroy it,’ Once again he spoke to him ‘What if only forty are found there?’ He said, ‘For the sake of forty, I will not do it.’ Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?’ He answered, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’ He said, ‘For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it,’ Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?’ He answered, “for the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.’ Genesis 18: 17-32

Notice Abraham is not only examining the case of Sodom, but he is also examining the character of God. Likewise, before the end comes, God opens the books of heaven (Revelation 20:4, 11-15) and allows us and the universe to investigate the evidence before He finally brings fire down on the earth. We will have a thousand years to get all our questions answered...the “why” questions we all struggle with. Why are those we thought would be saved weren’t saved? Why are those we thought would never be saved were saved? Why did good things happen to bad people and why bad things happen to good people? Why is life so unfair? God rules with transparency. We all must understand, so that this cancer of sin can never return!

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:8, 9

I’d like to suggest that for us here on earth, the Seventh-day Sabbath, which God especially blessed (Exodus 2: 2,3) and asks us to remember (Exodus 20:8-11), reflects the same reasoning and activities as the Millennium. For six thousand years, the active war against good and evil, the Creator against the

deceptive accuser Satan, has been waging here on earth. Then He gives us one thousand years to think about and understand the whole process.

In the same way, after God spent six days using mighty power to create everything here, He gave us one day to think about how He uses power, His nature, His creative capabilities, His perfection and love. To look into the mysteries of nature, to understand how each thing relates to the other and the circle of unselfish giving that exists everywhere in nature is to begin to understand and trust Him. To develop our relationship with Him.

Even in the new earth, the Sabbath will be kept as a reminder of this experiment on earth and its outcome. Isaiah 66: 22, 23 says,

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the Lord.”

Ultimately, we will decide (judge) that God is right and perfect in all His ways. “Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

‘**So that you may be proved right** when you speak, **and prevail** when you judge.’” Romans 3:4 (Quoted from Psalm 51:4).

THURSDAY

The Pre-Advent Judgment

The description of judgment found in Daniel 7 gives us a glimpse behind the veil – to an awe-inspiring opportunity to see how God is resolving the problem of sin while still redeeming those who wish to live in a covenant relationship with Him.

“As I looked, ‘thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened....In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;** all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. ‘His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed....[Angel interpretation] But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever – yes, for ever and ever.’...**the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom...** [Angel interpretation] ‘after them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High

and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time (or for a year, two years and half a year). But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High.** His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’ Daniel 7: 9,10, 13, 14, 18, 22, 24-27

Second paragraph in the lesson says,

“There is little question that the human race is judged by God. Ecclesiastes 12:14 assures us that **‘God will bring every work (or, deed) into judgment’**”

What does this mean?

I have been to court regarding medical work and personal situations. In both cases, what is brought into court is records and evidence. It is not the results of judgment, but rather the evidence upon which to base the judgment. Looking at our sin problem and resolution from a medical rather than a judicial perspective, as a medical professional, I was like a recording angel, keeping record of how the patient was responding to treatment, changes of treatment plan to ensure a better outcome, and even documenting when the patient refused the treatment ordered by the physician. These records are taken to help everyone understand what was done or not done, and the outcome.

It is God who is on trial in the minds of the universe. We are merely His witnesses as to what He does to save us, to rescue us.

What did Jesus himself say about judgment?

“Moreover, **the Father judges no one**, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” John 5:22, 23

“If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, **I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.** There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.**” John 12: 47-50

Jesus also warns us about how we judge:

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. “ Matthew 7:1-5

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:37, 38

Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3,

“Or do you not know that the Lord’s people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

What does it mean to be “held accountable?”

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.” Romans 3:19, 20

“When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself. Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself.” Ezekiel 3: 18-21

“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: “When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head. Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone’s life, that person’s life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.”’ Ezekiel 33: 1-6

Will this information be part of what truth is shown to the lost, what we failed to do and the outcomes of that failure? How heart wrenching that will be.

The Bible actually gives the results of the final judgment:

“You are worthy, Our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” Revelation 4:11

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: ‘Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?’ All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. Let the offspring of the wicked never be mentioned again.” Isaiah 14:12-20

FRIDAY

Further Thought

“Satan’s accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins. He exults in their defective character; for he knows that only through their transgression of God’s law can he obtain power over them. His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ. Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan’s hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power....In his own strength, man cannot meet the charges of the enemy. In sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus, our Advocate, presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, vanquishes their accuser. His perfect obedience to God’s law has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims from His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man.” Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp 585-586

Satan is the accuser and it is Satan’s accusations which are defeated. God’s character and methods are upheld in the minds of all created beings.

“At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth, consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his glory.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pg 657

Question from the Lesson:

Prior to devouring the wicked with fire from heaven (as He did with Sodom), God raises them from the dead and allows Satan to work with them for a short while (Revelation 20:7-9). What reasons can you think of that this would be a necessary last step before God sets everything right?

The saved, the universe and the wicked will all understand that if the wicked could have been in the Holy City with God, they had every chance to do so. The gates of the New Jerusalem were open the whole time. They simply cannot and will not.

Ellen G. White wrote in *The Great Controversy*, pg 664,

“At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on, an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision, the serried ranks advance over the earth’s broken and uneven surface to the city of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed,** and the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset.”



2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Lesson 11 Ruth and Esther

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson focuses on Ruth and Esther, and the lesson points out that these were real women who lived real lives, and that the events are historical, but they also serve as object lessons for us teaching us things about the Great Controversy and the plan of salvation

As Paul wrote,

- These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:11 NIV84.

There have been billions of humans who have lived and died, and we have a very small number of them chosen to be included in Scripture. And those lives were chosen by God to not only document historical events, but to simultaneously teach larger realities to serve as object lessons.

We have written many blogs that document the object lessons from the lives of real historical people and events. This week we posted [Hosea and Gomer: And Object Lesson of Christ and the Church](#). We have also posted:

[Joseph a Foreshadow of Christ](#)

[Samson a Foreshadow of Christ](#)

[Elisha and the Shunammite's Son—And Object Lesson About Christ](#)

[Naaman an Object Lesson for Us](#)

[Elijah Object Lessons for God's End-Time People](#)

[Repairers of the Breach Pamphlet](#)

The lesson is right to seek to understand the object lesson significance of these events from these historical events.

The lesson, rightly points out in the last paragraph of Sabbath's lesson,

- In prophecy, of course, a woman is a powerful symbol for God's church, shedding much light on how God regards His people. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 88.

This is true in the blog written this week, Hosea represents Christ and Gomer represents the church.

Why in Bible symbolism do pure women represent a pure and righteous church—the bride of Christ, but harlots represent an unrighteous church?

- Adam was created first and Eve came second an extension of Adam
- Jesus existed first and humans are a creation of Jesus
- Women are weaker than men
- We are weaker than Christ
- Women in history depend on husbands to provide and protect
- We must depend on Christ to provide and protect
- Women are fertile and receive the implanted seed that brings forth new life—the fruit of the womb
- We receive into our hearts either the seeds of truth or lies and bring forth the fruit of what we take into our hearts
- God designed marriage as a union where two become one in love, trust, intimate knowing, understanding, friendship, devotion, loyalty, with never-ending growth as time unfolds.
- God wants this type of union with us, our love, trust, intimate knowing, understanding, friendship, devotions, loyalty and never-ending eternal growth as time unfolds. And this type of union, connection, oneness, cannot be achieved through law or law-enforcement, only through truth, love, trust in freedom.

As Jesus prayed to His Father,

- “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that **all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.** May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.** May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This union, this joining of husband and wife in love, is designed to bring about new life. So too, when people join in intimate love and trust with Jesus, they receive the Holy Spirit who implants in them the

seeds of a new life, that are to nurture to bring about the fruits of that new life in the formation of character like Jesus, so that we bear the image of our Heavenly Father.

- He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work**. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because **God's seed remains in him**; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:8-9 NIV84

We are born into this world in sin, conceived in iniquity, born with the seeds of Satan, of fear and selfishness. Jesus partook of this damaged life we all inherit from Adam and in His substitutionary sacrifice destroyed the infecting elements of fear and selfishness and restored into humanity the pure life of sinless love and trust. When we are converted, we receive that new life, the new animating energy from Jesus, and it is no longer our old self that lives, but Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). And we become part of the family of God:

- Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:14 NIV84

And this is also described in the New Covenant when God writes His law on our hearts and minds and

- No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, '**Know the LORD,**' **because they will all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jeremiah 31:34 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The living law of love written upon their hearts and mind by the animating living Holy Spirit, is God's seed, and brings a new life that begins to grow within the believer.

And this is described in another way,

- Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

God's Spirit is the seed or life of God that is implanted in us and brings us a new life, the life of Christ, and we become children of God who bear His image. But this is also described as being a temple where God lives.

What happens at a wedding—the two become one, and is there a part of the sanctuary service where oneness happens? The day of At-one-ment is the time in history when Jesus is married to His bride, which means it is the time in history when the people of God collectively are matured, are healed, are settled by the Spirit of truth and love into eternal loyalty and trustworthiness to Jesus. They are settled both intellectually and spiritually so that nothing can move them from their loyalty to Jesus. This is the time in which we are living today!

If you would like a comprehensive review of all of this with biblical references, please read our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride](#) which is available online at our website, you can download a pdf, read it online, or request free copies to be shipped to any US postal address, but it is also available in Australia and South Africa.

So if being married to Jesus means accepting into our hearts the truth and love of Jesus through His Spirit such that we are reborn and mature to be a loyal and faithful and pure bride possessing the fruits of a Christlike character, bearing His image, then what then would constitute adultery? And what is prostitution?

Revelation states,

- “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great **prostitute**, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed **adultery** and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” Revelation 17:1-2 NIV84, emphasis mine

Adultery is betrayal, taking into oneself someone other than one’s spouse. And in this case, it is taking into one’s heart the seeds or principles or laws, methods and practices of someone other than Christ, such that these people live lives that don’t give birth to the fruits of the Spirit and Christlikeness of character, but instead give birth to a beastly character that bear the image of Satan.

And what is prostitution? Selling oneself for money. Thus, the adulterous woman described in Revelation is not merely betraying her declared spouse, she is doing it for profit. This is not referring to the godless who deny a belief in God, but those who claim Jesus as their Savior, those who claim Jesus as their husband but who instead implant into their heart the methods, practices, principles, and laws of Satan and do so for profit, whether personal profit or institutional profit, whether the profit of money, or power, or position, or domination and control over others.

And while the righteous woman is also described as a temple, living stones built together in a house for the Lord, the wicked, who internalize Satan’s seed of fear, selfishness, imposed laws and coercion of others become his temple and bear his image,

- I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Revelation 2:9 NIV84

What does it mean to be a synagogue of Satan? To have internalized his seed and bear his image and then you are his child, as Jesus said to the Jews in John 8, that Satan was their father.

So women are a very apt representation of the church, of people, who must receive the seeds of truth and love into our hearts—the living Holy Spirit, not dead rules, in order to bring forth a new life and form a Christlike character.

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read the Ruth 1:1-5:

- In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. Ruth 1:1-5 NIV84.

The lesson then states,

- There is irony to be found in the opening statement of this story: there was a famine that affected Bethlehem, a town whose name means "house of bread." One is reminded of the abundance of Eden, where God told Adam and Eve, " 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat' " (Gen. 2:16, NKJV). The human race began its existence in abundance, under the care of a generous Creator, but then exchanged its role as caretakers of creation for the slavery of sin. " 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground,' " God told Adam (Gen. 3:19, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 89.

Any other Bible stories about famines come to mind?

- Famine during Abraham's time
- Famine during Joseph's time
- Famine during the time of Elijah
- Famine during the time of Elisha

And then there is this prophecy:

- "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it." Amos 8:11–12 NIV84.

Have there been famines of hearing God's Word through history?

What does this mean?

Did it say a famine of God providing His Word? No, a famine of hearing God's word, where is the problem in God or in the people?

God is the infinite source of truth and love which is raining down in showers of blessings, however, have there been times in history where people have refused to drink in the showers of blessings, have refused to hear God's word?

- Ancient Israel had this famine multiple times
- The church during the Dark Ages
- What about the church today?
- The antediluvians—Noah preached God's word for 120 years and they refused to hear it and what happened? A literal rain flooded over them and they drowned in the waters. Had they listened to God's Word they would have been on the ark and not drown in the rains.
- What about the final events as depicted in Revelation? The latter rain is going to pour out and the world will hear, in fact, is hearing the Word of God, but the world overall is rejecting it and will continue to do so all but the elect. And one day they will be consumed in the unveiled glory of infinite truth and rains down over the Earth.

How do we protect ourselves from this famine?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Naomi asked that her name be changed to Mara because of the bitterness that had fallen over her life (see Ruth 1:20). **Our relationship with our Creator has been irreparably damaged by sin, forcing us into spiritual poverty.** Our prospects are dim, and we spend our lives gleaning what we can from the edges of the field, living on the scraps of joy that can still be found in a broken world. **But it all changes the moment we make a remarkable discovery: God has not forgotten us.** *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 90, emphasis mine.

What do you think of the first highlighted sentence? I think they accidentally left out a caveat, something like "Without Jesus, our relationship with our Creator has been irreparably damaged by sin" or "If not for Jesus..."

But as it is written this is not true. Our relationship with our Creator has been damaged by sin, but not irreparably so, that is the entire point of the plan of Salvation—Jesus repairs the damage.

And what about the last highlighted sentence? Is that true? Does the discovery that God has not forgotten us change everything?

- Was Adam hiding in Eden because he thought God had forgotten him or he knew God was coming to look for him?
- Were the Pharisees in Christ's day doing all of their religious activity because they thought God had forgotten them or because they were on a mission for God?
- Were the leaders of the Dark Ages church persecuting people because they thought they were forgotten by God, or they thought they were on a mission from God?

Can people believe they are remembered by God, even on a mission for God, and be God's enemy?

Then what is really what is important? Everything changes the moment we realize, value, and accept **the truth of who God is**, that God is like Jesus revealed, that God is not the kind of person Satan says.

If people believe Satan's lies about God and also believe God remembers them, then what do they experience? Just as the Bible says that the devils believe in God and tremble—do you think the devils believe God remembers them? Does it bring them comfort? Why not?

What about this text:

- Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne..." Revelation 6:15-16 NIV84.

Are these people distressed because they believe God has forgotten them? Or when they realize God has not forgotten them, but is remembering to address them do they experience comfort? Why not?

- What causes these people to be so distressed?
- Do you think the distress is because Jesus has some animus, some hostility, some negative attitude toward them?
- Does Jesus, who sits on the throne, look at them with less love than He looks at the saved? Is Jesus two-faced?
- Then, why are these lost souls not comforted by being remembered by Jesus?
- Is Jesus the source of something harmful and destructive that He inflicts upon them? No! They are distraught because they have rejected truth and having believed Satan's lies they do not see Jesus for who He is in reality; they see Him through the delusions of their the lies they have solidified into their own character; and therefore, they judge Jesus to be as merciless, cruel, hateful, severe, unforgiving, and punishing as they are and they are terrified of him because they believe falsely that He will do to them what they would do to Him if they were on the throne.

What brings us comfort is not merely knowing God has not forgotten us, but the truth about who God is! That God is the Creator whose laws are design laws, the protocols for life, and He is not

an imperial dictator; He is not the source of pain, suffering, or death; God is the source of life, health, healing, and happiness. Sin, which is a breakdown of trust, is the source of all pain, suffering, injury, harm, and death.

Yes, it is absolutely wonderful to know that God has not forgotten us, but only because we know the truth about God as revealed by Jesus.

If we believe Satan's version of God, and we think God has not forgotten us, then we are afraid of that god, we want someone to hide us and protect us from that punishing god. In fact, it is taught by some that we need that god to forget, we need him to have something done to him to erase from his memory our sins because if that doesn't happen then he will be required by law and justice to use his power to torture and destroy. So for people who worship that false god, they develop all kinds of theologies designed to hide and protect them from him. For them, it is good news for their god to forget them, or at least all their sins.

Read the second paragraph,

- Naomi could not take possession of her husband Elimelech's land without obtaining assistance from her husband's family. She hopes that Ruth can marry a close relative of her deceased husband and bear a child in Elimelech's name. God had made provision in Israel for individuals to reclaim their inheritance in the Promised Land: a close relative was needed to redeem Elimelech's inheritance. Boaz was not just a kind farmer; he was a kinsman of Elimelech who could redeem the land. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 90.

What is the object lesson application from this story to the plan of salvation?

- Boaz is a type of Christ
- Boaz is the kinsman redeemer of his family
- Jesus became human in order to become part of the family of Adam, part of this human family, in order to be our kinsman redeemer and redeem Adam's fall, to redeem all that God had placed in Adam's hands but which Adam lost through his fall.
- Ruth is a type of the church or the saved by union with Christ
- Ruth's first husband Mahlon who died, is a type of Adam who fell into sin and died and Ruth can be redeemed only by marrying Boaz
- The land redeemed by Boaz represents the Earth redeemed from sin
- We can only inherit the Earth if we are wed to Jesus
- Boaz and Ruth's union brings forth new life, which results down the generations in Jesus being born

- Our union with Jesus brings forth the new life in us, Christ lives in us, we develop new Christlike character and eventually live with Jesus eternally
- And being wed, or united, to Jesus is when the two become one, at a wedding two become one—and this is metaphorically taught in the sanctuary day of at-one-ment when the high priest cleanses the sanctuary, which is the same event as Jesus cleansing His church/bride.

But what do you think of the first paragraph in **TUESDAY's** lesson,

- Boaz falls deeply in love with Ruth and wishes to marry her, but there is a significant barrier: there is a closer relative who also has a claim on the woman and the land. If we consider Boaz to be a type of Christ, this situation may reveal an issue at stake in the great controversy. **Christ loves us, but there is a “closer relative” who also has a claim: Satan.** *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 91, emphasis mine.

Is Satan a closer relative than Jesus? Does Satan have a better claim to Earth and us than Jesus does? And did Jesus need Satan's cooperation and agreement in order to redeem us?

No doubt Satan claims the Earth as his rightful possession, but is it?

What does the Bible say?

- Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, **Possessor of heaven and earth**” Genesis 14:18-19 NKJV, emphasis mine

God is the rightful owner, Creator, Possessor of Earth—Adam was given dominion under God, under Jesus, Adam did not rule independent of the Creator and thus when Adam sinned, Christ remained the true rightful ruler.

Consider this Bible commentary from the book, *The Desire of Ages*:

- When Satan declared to Christ, The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his own purpose of deception. Satan's dominion was that wrested from Adam, but **Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule.** The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. **Adam was to reign subject to Christ.** When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, **Christ still remained the rightful King.** Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “**The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.**” Daniel 4:17. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits. *The Desire of Ages* p. 129, emphasis mine.

So, does Satan have a higher claim to Earth and humanity than Jesus? Absolutely not! Then what do we make of the object lesson of Boaz going to the other relative? Well, it is always good to read the Bible directly and see what it says:

- Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, “Come over here, my friend, and sit down.” So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so. Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.” “I will redeem it,” he said. Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.” At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.” Ruth 4:1-6 NIV84.

What is the object lesson? Satan cannot redeem because redeeming requires restoration of that which was lost and the other relative in the story states that he **cannot** do this without losing his own possessions. Satan cannot redeem us because it is the opposite of his character, methods, principles, kingdom. He is a taker, not a giver. Thus the object lesson is accurate, the one who makes a claim to be closer in reality is not capable of redeeming the land or us.

Read the last paragraph,

- The gate of a village is where cases were decided: this is a type of judgment scene. It reflects the judgment scene of Daniel 7:13, 14, 22, 26, 27. We must not miss this critical aspect of judgment: judgment is in “favor of the saints” but only because Christ paid the price for us, just as Boaz did for his bride. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 91.

Two elements of this paragraph are the idea of judgment as referenced from Daniel and Jesus paying the price of our redemption.

And our conclusions on both of these themes are directly determined by what we believe about God’s law. If we believe the lie that God’s law functions like human law, then we conclude that judgment refers to a judicial process of determining guilt, innocence, and appropriate amounts of inflicted punishments which leads us to conclude that the price paid was a legal price of a death penalty to satisfy the law. But these conclusions are false and based on Satan’s lie that God’s law functions like human law and rather than bringing an end to sin and rebellion these teachings perpetuate fear and distrust of God and end up teaching something needs to be done to God to protect us from Him.

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we understand that His laws are the laws He built reality to operate upon, design laws. And as such we recognize sin is lawlessness, deviating from the

very basis of life and the wages of sin is death, sin when full grown brings forth death, that death is not inflicted by God, but death is an enemy destroyed by God through the work of Jesus Christ.

As such we realize that the judgment scene in Daniel is the judgment that gives the saints victory in the war with the little horn power:

- I beheld, and the same horn made **war** with the saints, and **prevailed against them; until** the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints** of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21-22 KJV.

And what kind of war is this?

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

The war began in heaven when Satan began lying about God and spread to Earth in Eden when Satan lied about God. And Satan's lies root in his lies about God's law. Satan's central lie is that God governs no differently than a creature, He makes up rules and enforces those rules through infliction of external punishment. But the truth is that God is the Creator and all His laws are design laws, expressions of love that life is built to operate upon. Deviations from God's design laws takes one out of harmony with life and results in death. Thus God has been using His power to restrain, hold at bay, the ultimate results of what sin does. God is the source of life not death.

But Satan has infected Christianity with the lie that God's law functions like human law and therefore the idea that the judgment in Daniel is judicial, is God opening books, examining records, determining guilt and innocence is sadly taught.

Those who hold the imposed human law view prefer other translations that read "judgment pronounced in favor of the saints," rather than the KJV which reads "judgment was given to the saints."

What sets our hearts and minds free from the lies, fear, and selfishness is the truth and love of God that gives us the ability to judge or discern the truth from the lie. Thus, we will be losing this war until we are given the ability to make a right judgment about God.

As Paul in Romans taught something else:

- "Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.'" Romans 3:4 NKJV

- “God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, ‘You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.’” Romans 3:4 GNB

We are living in the time when people are to make a right judgment about God and stop worshiping a god who functions like a Roman dictator.

Regarding the price that Jesus paid, yes He paid an infinite price—but to whom? It is the ransom price, the price necessary to free us from sin. And what is it that holds us in sin? The lies we believe about God that prevent us from trusting Him and our own fallen, fear-ridden, selfish, carnal nature. So what is the price necessary to free us? The truth about God that destroys the lies and wins us back to trust, and a new sinless life, a new sinless nature, and Christ provides both the truth about God and a new humanity through His selfless substitutionary reconciling or atoning death. In Jesus humanity is restored to unity with God.

WEDNESDAY

What lessons do we learn from the book of Esther?

At the time of the events recorded in Esther, where were the faithful Jews, those who reverence and obey Yahweh supposed to be? They had all been called to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. But only about 50,000 Jews returned under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and rebuilt the temple.

So the first lesson is, that if the people had followed where God instructed the crisis brought about by Haman would not have occurred.

Consider, would you want your teen daughter to become the second wife in the harem of a pagan potentate?

But, even though these difficult times occurred to these people because they were not where God wanted them to be, did God abandon them? No! This is a powerful and important lesson. God never wants us to rebel, to fail to listen, to go our own way, to refuse to follow Him. God always wants us to trust Him and follow Him, because He knows if we don’t we endanger and injure ourselves, we make it harder on ourselves than it would otherwise be. But, if and when we do choose not to listen, God does not cast us off, He does not abandon us, but when we turn to Him, as Esther did, He is right there to intervene and save us from the problems of our own making.

These are important lessons for us today. God has called His people to come out of Babylon, to leave the systems of imposed law with legal religious teachings of an imperial dictator god who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin and return to worshiping Him as Creator, to repair the breach in the wall.

- Babylon is symbolic of worldly and ungodly systems and sinful methods under which the people of God are held captive and are called to leave before Jesus comes (Revelation 18:2–4).
- Jerusalem is symbolic of the city or people of God, of Zion, in which the righteous live and the temple of God is found.
- The temple is symbolic of God’s plan to heal and save people from sin; it is the place where sinners are restored to at-one-ment with God.

The historical events of Babylon breaking down the walls of Jerusalem, destroying the temple, and taking the people captive symbolize the corrupt systems of this world (Satan’s kingdom with its methods, principles, practices, and laws) warring against the true people of God (the church) in an attempt to break down the protective wall that God has given to safeguard our hearts and minds; Satan’s goal is to take the people captive, in heart and mind, to a false system of worship that is represented by Babylon.

Isaiah adds some details that give important clues to the nature of the wall that has been breached, the wall that protects our hearts and minds:

- If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 58:13,14 NKJV.

Isaiah identifies one of God’s commandments in connection with the repairing of the breach. This suggests that the wall of protection may be connected to God’s law. Jeremiah and the writer of Hebrews go further than Isaiah; they identify the entire law of God as pivotal to our restoration in the new covenant:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10 NIV84.

There were two covenants because there are two kinds of law in play—God’s design laws and the imposed laws that creatures make up.

The old covenant was formed at Sinai when the Israelites chose a covenant of law and performance over a covenant of love and trust.

The old covenant was based on the people’s false belief that God’s law is imposed and that righteousness is to be found in their law-keeping, which earns either rewards or punishments meted out justly by a “just God.” But as can be seen in the Jeremiah and Hebrews texts above, while God’s new covenant is not legal, it also has law involved—but in the new covenant, the people recognize and embrace the truth that God’s laws are design laws, the laws the Creator has built reality upon and not

rules like humans make up. God's laws must become the principles upon which hearts and minds operate, not merely rules to govern external behavior. Jeremiah makes clear how God's laws function:

- This is what the Lord says: "If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the **fixed laws of heaven and earth**, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them." Jeremiah 33:25, 26 NIV84, my emphasis.

God's laws are "the fixed laws" that govern heaven and earth! God's laws are the laws the Creator has built reality to operate upon, such as the laws of physics, health, and the moral laws.

The wall of God's protection is the wall of reality, of design law, of the protocols He built reality to function upon. When we understand and appreciate God's design laws, it always causes us to worship God as Creator and to understand that sin, breaking God's design laws, is the cause of pain, suffering, and death, while God is the source of life, healing, and salvation (Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:8; James 1:15). But when we exchange God's design laws for Satan's imposed-law system, we exchange the truth of God's character for Satan's and teach that God is the source of torture and death, which He inflicts upon the unrepentant as "just" punishment for sin. Thus, the lawless one, the one who denies and replaces the design laws of God with made-up, imposed rules, sets himself up in God's temple (human hearts and minds) proclaiming himself to be God.

Isaiah prophesied that before Christ returns, there will be a people who repair the breach.

Just like the remnant of Israelites who left Babylon under the leadership of Nehemiah, this end-time remnant will leave the systems of imposed-law theology. (It's worthwhile to note here that of all the nations that interacted with Israel in the Bible story arc, Babylon was the first to create an imposed legal code—the code of Hammurabi. Thus, Babylon rightly represents the kingdoms of this world and the theological constructs that teach that God's kingdom functions like human kingdoms, with made-up rules and imposed punishments.)

The end-time remnant will reject this sinful human-law view of God's kingdom and return to worshiping God as Creator, understanding that His laws are the protocols that reality itself functions upon.

But because the prophecy connects repairing the breach, the broken wall, with the Sabbath, some Christians, Seventh-day Adventists in particular, have concluded that this prophecy means returning to worship services on the Bible Sabbath instead of Sunday. But this prophecy is much broader than a weekly day of worship! It encompasses every aspect of living, for it calls us to *delight* in the Sabbath—not merely keep it as a rule we must follow. This means that the prophecy is calling us to return to living in harmony with God's design laws for life, of which the Bible Sabbath is symbolic, or a sign.

Consider the origins of sin. The angels who followed Satan into rebellion, into disobeying God's law, did so *before* there was a weekly Sabbath. The sin problem did not originate over a Sabbath-versus-

Sunday question, and it will not end over such a surface question. The sin problem will end over what these two days *represent*: They are signs—or pennants or marks or emblems—of two types of law and, therefore, two types of government and, ultimately, two different gods.

The Sabbath was *created* as a day set apart by God; Sunday was *not created* by God as a day set apart from the other days, but it became a day set apart from the other days of the week through human *legislation*. Thus, the two days represent two types of law—design law and imposed law.

The deeper issue is not the actual day, but the law and government the days represent. One of the founders of the Adventist Church understood this difference, writing:

- The prophet thus points out the ordinance which has been forsaken: “Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, **The repairer of the breach**, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and **call the Sabbath a delight**, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.” ... This prophecy also applies in our time. The breach was made in the law of God **when the Sabbath was changed by the Roman power**. But the time has come for that divine institution to be restored. The breach is to be repaired and the foundation of many generations to be raised up. *The Great Controversy*, p. 452, emphasis mine.
- In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law **at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired**. God’s remnant people, **standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform** and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 678, emphasis mine.

Notice here that the author did not write, “The breach was made *by* the change in the Sabbath” or that “the change of the Sabbath *is* the breach in the law,” but that the breach occurred “at the time” or “when” the Sabbath was changed by man. The breach in the law was not the changing of the Sabbath; the true breach in the law is the change in how we understand God’s law, from design law to imposed rules—the type of law that can be changed.

The changing of the Sabbath to Sunday is the evidence, the fruit, the result of the beach. It is the proof that the Christian world believes God’s law functions like human law, and, therefore, sin is rule-breaking and God’s justice is the use of His power to inflict punishment upon sinners, in which He becomes the source of pain, suffering, and death from which we need protection. In this way, Satan has successfully set himself up in God’s Spirit temple to be worshiped by billions. It is a sad fact that

today, almost the entire Christian world, regardless of denomination, no longer recognizes that God's laws are design laws.

Thus, the true repairers of the breach described in Isaiah's prophecy will be those who teach the truth that God's laws are design laws and not imposed rules. In so doing, they will call people back to worship the Creator who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water (Revelation 14:7). They will teach people reality and how to cooperate with God to actually become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We must also recognize that even if we do keep and value the Bible Sabbath yet continue to believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, we have not repaired the breach; we have not left the Roman system of worship; we have not left Babylon; and we are still advancing the counterfeit to God's kingdom, just as the Jews did two thousand years ago when they had the Bible Sabbath but the wrong law and the wrong god—which directly led to the religious leaders' conspiracy to murder Jesus (John 8:44).

So, with design law, we understand that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. We understand that it is God's gift, promise, evidence, demonstration, revelation of His character and how His design-law government functions—how He governs.

We also understand that God does not use power to force His way; this is the truth of the Sabbath's gift to us! For love exists only in an atmosphere of freedom, of which the Sabbath is a sign. God is the Creator—He has all power, and **the danger with all power is that it can intimidate, it can cause fear, it can damage individuality, it can undermine love, it can shut down thinking, it can lead to mindless pawns and drones doing what the powerful sovereign says or else—so God created the Sabbath, a revelation, demonstration, evidence that He does NOT govern by imposed law and enforced rules.** For after six days of using His immense power to create, the Sabbath was set apart by God when He **STOPPED** using power, when He rested, when He created a time for His creatures to think and consider and come to their own conclusions, all without the threat of punishment being inflicted by Him.

Thus, the Sabbath is a memorial to God as Creator and His design laws that all reality is built upon—for what God wants from His intelligent creatures is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, and friendship, and that can *never* be achieved through human law, through the use of might and power; it cannot be achieved through intimidation, threats, and inflicted punishments.

In fact, when people present God as the cosmic enforcer and punisher, they advance Satan's rebellion and undermine trust in God, negating the very purpose and function of the Sabbath—a sign that God is holy and restores us to holiness when we trust Him! (See Exodus 31:13 and Ezekiel 20:12.)

So we invite you to join us in repairing the breach in the wall by rejecting the lie that God's laws function like human law (made-up, imposed rules) and embracing the truth that God is Creator and His laws are design laws upon which all reality is built to function; and to reject the lie that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death inflicted upon sinners, realizing instead that it is sin (the breaking of God's design laws for life) which brings forth death and that God is the source of life—the One whom, through Jesus, restores His living law into our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10).

THURSDAY

Read the fourth paragraph,

- God raised up His remnant church for a specific moment in history. As the 1,260 days of the Dark Ages drew to a close, God brought His bride out of hiding (compare with Rev. 12:14) to carry His final message of mercy—the three angels’ messages—to the world. We are here “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 93.

How would you describe the mission of the remnant end-time church?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Ministries Will Be Attending the General Conference July 3-13. We will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall giving our materials away! Please pray God will bless this endeavor. Due to this we will have a modified class schedule as follows:

- **June 28:** 10-11 a.m. SS Class Lesson 2 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** 11:05-12:05 SS Class Lesson 3 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** No Q&A
- **July 5:** No SS Class and the building will not be open
- **July 12:** SS class will meet at normal time in the building but **NO POTLUCK**

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet
Mission, Health and Women Director
West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division
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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy
Campus Ministries Coordinator
Newbold College
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2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols: Lesson 12

Precursors

by Tim Jennings (announcement last page)

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

- For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV.

Where did the spirit of fear come from if not from God? It is the infection to our spirit that sin brings. When Adam and Eve believed the lies about God and broke trust with God they ran and hid because they were afraid.

Lies believed break the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness.

Thus, the sin problem at its root is an infection of our spirits with fear and selfishness.

The spirit is the animating energy, the breath of life, it is what motivates us to action.

The following is an excerpt from my book *The God Shaped Brain*, that describes some of the impact of fear:

- *Fear impairs our judgment, paralyzes our reason, and leads us down the path of selfishness. Fear comes in many sizes and shapes. At one end of the fear spectrum is the megalomaniac – the type of fear demonstrated by Hitler, Stalin, Castro, and other despots. Their rise to power was fueled by fear; fear of the Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, Capitalists, Christians and freedom itself. Such thugs of history were consumed with fear, but rather than eradicate it, they embraced it, joined their hearts to it, and became one with it. Fear became their weapon against society, splitting, dividing, conquering, and destroying. These ambassadors of evil, their hearts and minds so shaped by anti-love, created mangled societies battered by fear. And history is clear. Where fear abounds, death quickly follows.*

On the other end of the spectrum are the human “mice.” Afraid of rejection, fearful of embarrassment, terrified of criticism they abase themselves into non-thinking doormats walked on by the entire world. They never say no, never stand up, and never set boundaries because they are controlled by fear of what others might say and how others might respond or think.

In between these two extremes exists all manner of fear-ridden apparitions morphing insecurity into their own unique survival mechanism – the playground bully, the proud, arrogant, racist, bigot, and sexist. Here you’ll also find the alcoholic, drug addict, sex-addict,

and shopaholic; the religionist, cultist, and separatist; the philanderer, the liar, the cheater and fraud – all riddled with fear, each seeking some way to protect self, promote self, or advance self. But rather than surviving, rather than healing, rather than growing, all are slowly dying and destroying others in the process. Life, health and happiness are only found where love flows free. And love only flows free where the truth about God is known! The God Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life p. 50.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and sound mind! The only power to free us from fear is truth and love, the truth about God that wins us to trust and the love we freely receive from Him when we receive the new life, the new Spirit, the new animating energy, motivating compelling power of love that comes only from receiving Jesus Christ, not receiving His legal payment, but receiving His life such that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me. It is the new life, the new spirit of love that enables us and empower us to overcome fear and live victoriously in trust.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on Daniel 2, which is the vision/prophecy of the multi-metal man. This is well known and the Bible explains it clearly and thus we won't spend a lot of time on it.

- Head of gold = Babylon
- Chest of Silver = Medio-Persia
- Belly of Brass = Greece
- Legs of Iron = Rome
- Feet of iron and clay = the nations after the fall of Rome never uniting fully again
- Rock cut out without human hands that destroys the statue and rises to a new kingdom is Jesus and His eternal kingdom

This gives a general and large overview of the nations from Daniel's day until the second coming and history has demonstrated that this vision was accurate. This prophecy and others gives us great confidence in the Bible and God and His foreknowledge. Because only one who knows the future could so accurately predict these events thousands of years before they occurred.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Nebuchadnezzar's production of a statue of solid gold and the demand that all worship it and those who do not do so will be thrown into the fiery furnace; and Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego's faithfulness to God.

The lesson points out that the king produced the golden idol in defiance of God because he was motivated by selfishness rather than love and trust. And selfishness is the drive of survival of the fittest actions, self-preservation, self-advancement. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar rather than trusting God and

accepting the vision, defies God and pursues a course designed to advance himself, his kingdom, his legacy.

But what makes this truly evil is not merely that the king didn't want to follow God personally (yes that was sinful), but the greater evil is his use of power, position, authority to coerce the consciences of others. He used propaganda to promote a lie and used the might of the state to threaten not just freedom but life itself. All designed to coerce people into accepting his narrative, his view, his false perspective, his fantasy, his denial of reality.

Do we see anything like this being repeated throughout human history where others have taken similar actions?

The Dark Ages church used its power and position to promote propaganda, false narratives, restrict liberties, silence dissenters, fine, imprison, and execute—coerce consciences—it was the methods of lies, fear, selfishness, opposing truth, love, and liberty.

Every Communist and Nazi regimes throughout history have done and continue to do the exact same thing.

And of course, in our own life experience during COVID we experienced this, fear-induced propaganda, false narrative, silencing truth-speakers, deplatforming, fines, loss of jobs, restrictions of liberty, coercion of conscience.

We see it with the transgender lie, the propaganda and false narrative. Not merely the lies that there is no male and female or that men can become women and vice versa, but the lies that those suffering with gender confusion experience worsening mental health and higher suicide risk if gender reassignment is not done, when the exact opposite is true. The hormones given and bodily mutilations to reassign gender increase mental health problems and suicide rates.

I am not focusing on individuals who choose for themselves to deny reality and attempt to live in fantasy, the problem I am focusing upon is the one revealed by Nebuchadnezzar—not his personal rejection of the truth, but the use of power, position, and the methods of Satan to seek to force their false narrative upon others thus coercing consciences and ruining as many minds as they can.

Evil doers in our society today use the methods of the evil one, they present a false narrative that denies reality, use propaganda and coercive pressures on those who will not comply with their demands. Corporations present brainwashing propaganda as in-service and sensitivity training. If employees don't want to take it, they get fired.

If people don't use the preferred pronouns, they get fired, intimidated, attacked; if people don't want their little girls sharing bathrooms with boys, they get called names and threatened, and sometimes arrested.

And when godly people who love other people ask questions seeking godly solutions to bring healing to hearts and minds of everyone, especially these hurting, vulnerable, and confused individuals, what happens? They are silenced, publications are rejected, platforms removed, fired from jobs, and the radical godless show up with violent protests and threaten to kill those who stand for truth, just like what happened to Shadrack, Meshak, and Abednego.

I personally know professionals who have given expert medical and psychological testimony in official forums about the harm that the transgender lies and policies cause who have been attacked, their licenses threatened, they have been followed and threatened by mobs, and have had their lives threatened.

- We saw the exact same methodology with BLM; defund the police; climate change green movement.

Do we recognize the idols that the pagans, the godless, are setting up before us in society today and demanding that we bow down to lest we be cast into the fiery furnace of their making? Do we recognize the very same methods of fear-based survival of Satan's kingdom are at work in these movements? Are we like the three worthies on the plain of Dura so settled into the truth about God and His design law methods that we recognize these lies and satanic methods and choose to stand firm for truth and say no to the lies, we won't bow to this intimidation of our hearts, minds, and consciences? Do we, like the three worthies, trust God enough to be thrown into the furnace of criticism and attack?

And please don't send me emails about how I am being political and choosing one political party over another—if you think that you have missed my point. It is not about political party, but about the methods being employed. If someone uses these evil methods to promote conversion to Jesus, like the Dark Ages church claimed it was doing, I would condemn them for it. Because it is the methods that are destructive, the fear-based, denial of objective reality, plied with coercion of consciences designed to infect minds, undermine individuality, brainwash, and ultimately destroy the image of God in people that we must recognize and not surrender to.

How did the three worthies overcome the pressure to bow to the idol? Through faith or trust in God.

The Bible says:

- “The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17 NKJV

The just are those, who having been reborn with a spirit of love and trust in God, choose to do what is right or just in governance of self and then they live by faith, by trusting God with how things turn out.

This is exactly what the three worthies did—they had hearts already renewed in love and trust to God, and therefore when the crisis came they knew what the right or just action in governance of self was. And they chose in governance of themselves to take the right or just action, which was not to bow.

But they had no control over how it would turn out thus they lived by faith, they lived by trusting God with how it would turn out. Notice what they say to the king when he gives them a second chance to bow:

- If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. **But even if he does not**, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:17, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They knew what God could do, but they did not know what God would do. They did not do the right thing in governance of self because they had been told by God that He would protect them from the fire; they did the right thing because it was the right thing and they trusted God with their lives, with how it turned out.

Stephen did the same thing. He spoke the truth in front of the Jewish leadership. He did the right thing in governance of himself as he was moved by the Holy Spirit and he trusted God with his life—and in that case God did not intervene to protect and Stephen was stoned. And as a result of that death, when heaven is opened to Stephen and he sees Jesus’ face and asks God to forgive his murderers, Saul is convicted and ultimately converted and writes much of the New Testament. And the witness of Stephen and Paul impact the lives of billions.

What do you think Stephen would say, if when we get to heaven we were to ask him, “Are you disappointed that God didn’t intervene to save you like He did the three worthies?”

I think he will smile and happily say, “Of course not. I trusted Jesus with my life. Jesus surrendered and sacrificed everything to save me. I am so happy that I could speak the truth and stand for God because I loved those people and want them to know the joy and love and happiness that comes only from reconciliation with God. And God knew that my death at that moment would have the greatest impact for good, for reaching more people for His kingdom than if I would have given a thousand more sermons. So, no I am not disappointed, because I trust Jesus fully.”

What prepared the three worthies to stand faithful under the threat of death?

Wasn’t it their earlier trials when they stood faithful over their dietary choices, for the same reason—because they did not want to give any honor or credit to the false gods of Babylon, because they wanted to bring glory to God? And having chosen then to do what was right in governance of self and trust God with the outcome, and seeing the blessings, the positive outcome of not only being healthier and wiser than all the others and experience greater peace with God, but also experiencing the outcome, the elevation to positions of authority, how God worked in that case, their faith grew stronger.

Thus Jesus said,

- “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.” Luke 16:10 NIV84

This is about character, and character is formed by the choices we make, the methods we prefer and practice, and our characters become solidified under pressure. Do we lie, cheat, connive, manipulate, stay quiet, go along to get along, compromise, to ensure we don’t come under scrutiny, to avoid rejection, conflict, or loss? Do we solidify into our characters the principles of fear and me-first survival motivations or the principles of truth, love, and trust, willing to sacrifice self to stand for what is right?

This is exactly why I point out the corrupt methods used in society today—because those methods are constantly putting people in positions designed to get them to compromise their principles on small things, to get them to be comfortable with dishonesty, with surrendering their individuality and autonomy to others, to go along to get along, so that when the larger things come, billions will not only go along with the beast, the liar, the fraud, the evil methods of coercion, they will think what they are doing right—after all they will argue, we are only trying to save lives.

This world is rapidly heading for the final events that lead to Jesus’ return, and the methods of imperialism, governmental control and coercion of conscience are going to come around again and the deception, the premise, the propaganda, the narrative, the reason to bow, to go along, to compromise principle will be so compelling that the entire world other than the very elect will go along.

TUESDAY

And TUESDAY’s lesson transitions from the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar to the image of the beast set up in Revelation 13.

If you haven’t read our magazine [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 & 17](#) I encourage you to do so as I go into great detail with decoding of the Bible symbols unpacking and unmasking the beasts so you can see how things are unfolding and will continue to unfold.

But in overview how the events in Daniel are related to Revelation.

Babylon was a real nation that took the people of God physically captive and then used various pressures, inducements and promises of success initially, but later coercion in an attempt to replace Yahweh worship with the worship of false gods. Babylon destroyed the wall around the temple, raided the temple in Jerusalem and took the people captive. Eventually, the captivity came to an end and God called the people to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall and the temple returning to worshipping the true creator God.

In Revelation, Babylon is symbolic of the power that takes the people of God captive. This power uses inducements, various promises, but eventually coercive pressure to force false worship. This system defiles the spirit temple and takes the people captive in heart, mind, method, and motive; and at this

time in history the people of God, who have been captive in Babylon are called to leave Babylon and restore the protective wall thereby returning to the worship of our Creator God of love. Let's make this very plain and clear:

Babylon, in the Bible story arc, of all the nations that interacted with Israel, is the first nation to make a legal code, an imposed law system, the Code of Hammurabi. Babylon took the people captive physically and then used imposed laws, like bow down to the golden idol or be thrown in the fiery furnace, to promote their beliefs. Even after the deliverance of the three worthies from the fiery furnace and Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Yahweh as the true God of heaven, what method does he use?

- “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore **I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble**, for no other god can save in this way.” Daniel 3:28-29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Babylon, therefore, rightly represents the ungodly powers that invade, break down the protect wall, desecrate the temple of God, and take the people captive. But this is a spiritual, not physical, war, so we need to translate these object lessons into the reality transpiring today.

- The temple in Jerusalem represents the spirit temple, the temple where God writes His law, our hearts and minds, where Jesus said His sacrificial blood was to be applied, “unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part with me.” We are a temple for the indwelling Holy Spirit. And our hearts and minds have been damaged by sin, but more than this, our beliefs about God have been invaded, infected, distorted, by the imposed law lies of Babylon, which became Rome, imperial law with external law enforcement.
- The wall of protection that protects the temple, our hearts and minds, is the law of God. And God's law is a living law, it is the design law of God upon which life is built to operate—the laws of truth, love, liberty, worship, and many more.
- This wall was broken down when the beastly power replaced the truth that God's laws are design laws with the lie that God's laws function no differently than human laws, imposed rules, Roman imperial law and the church Romanized, teaching that God's laws are like Rome's and require the law-giver to use power to inflict punishment upon rule breakers.
- That lie, when believed, changes our understanding of who God is, what the sin problem is, what the solution is, and actively undermines our ability to love and trust God, for in that model is He the source of inflicted torture and death as punishment for sin. Then through the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, our hearts and minds are corrupted with more fear and selfishness, leading to the penal legal and coercive methods of the Dark Ages church, all of which contaminates, defiles, corrupts the Spirit temple—the abomination that brings desolation!
- This power, also described as the little horn power, wars against the saints and is defeating them until judgment is given to the saints, until the saints are enabled to judge truly, accurately,

that God is not like this. That God's laws are not like human laws, and God does not function like a Roman Caesar. When the truth about God, which is all predicated upon the truth that His laws are design laws, is restored into our hearts and minds, then we are empowered to flee Babylon, flee the false systems of imperialism, coercions of conscience, and return to worshiping God as Creator.

- Then, when we are restored to trust and open the heart the Holy Spirit brings the blood (life) of Christ and cleanses us from all sin, renewing us with a new animating energy, a new motive to action, a new governing power—in other words a new law. The law of sin and death, the law of fear and selfishness, is replaced with the living law of truth, love, trust and freedom—which is the pure Spirit of God. The Spirit temple is being cleansed and we repair the breach in the wall, we embrace and teach the truth about God's design laws and reject the Roman infection of imposed law and our hearts and minds are again protected from the invasion of this worldly philosophy and evil system.
- And then as events unfold before, and threats to our mortal lives are made, and the powers of this world use all types of evil methods—propaganda, restrictions of liberties, economic pressure, coercion of conscience—all focused on a righteous and good goal of saving lives or saving the planet or feeding the hungry or promoting equality of all people, we will recognize the false system. We will not bow, will not give our hearts, minds, votes, money, resources, support to advancing these methods. We will, like the three worthies, stand for truth, stand for what is right, and trust God with how things turn out. As Revelation says about those who are ready to be translated without seeing death:
- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:11 NIV84.

The blood of the Lamb is symbolic of the life of Jesus, the animating spirit, life, energy of Christ, which is love and trust based on truth, which is the word of their testimony. These are they who give the testimony of Jesus—the same testimony Jesus gave about His Father—that Jesus and the Father are one. These people know the Father is not like Satan alleges, that the Father is exactly like Jesus and doesn't need something done to Him to get Him to forgive and be gracious. These people have been reborn with a spirit of love and trust and thus they are no longer controlled by fear and selfishness, thus they do not shrink back and compromise with their employer, their family, their state, to protect themselves. They do not shrink even from death threats, they trust God with everything—their fame, their name, reputation, professional license, property, fortune, family, and lives.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the Mark of the Beast

- The book of Revelation is clear: we either worship the Creator or the beast and its image. And because the seventh-day Sabbath is the foundational sign—going back to Eden itself (see Gen. 2:1–3)—of God as Creator, it should not be surprising that, in an issue about worshiping the

Creator, the Sabbath would be central. Also, it is no coincidence that the beast power is the same power that claims to have changed the Sabbath commandment from the biblical day to Sunday, which has no sanction in the Bible. With this background in mind, the idea of Sabbath and Sunday being involved in the issue of worship—again, either the Creator (see Rev. 14:6, 7) or the beast—makes good sense. And we have in the New Testament a precursor to the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath versus human law. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 101.

Let's read the last two paragraphs,

- In Matthew 12, after Jesus healed on the Sabbath the man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:9–13), how did the religious leaders respond? “But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus” (Matt. 12:14, NIV). Death because of the seventh-day Sabbath? In John 5:1–16, after another miraculous healing on the seventh day, the leaders “persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath” (John 5:16, NKJV).

Death because of human tradition (nothing in the Bible forbade healing on Sabbath, just as nothing in the Bible has put Sunday in place of Sabbath) versus the seventh-day Sabbath? Though the specific issue here with Jesus isn't the same as in final events, it's close enough: human law versus God's, and, in both, the contested law centers on the biblical Sabbath. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 101.

The lesson really does a good job here of describing the issue about the Sabbath and the mark of the beast at the end of time, what do you hear being described here and how is the Sabbath involved?

What was Jesus being called out for? Was it because of the wrong day of the week He was worshiping upon? No, it was for breaking their made up human rules.

What was Jesus doing on Sabbath? Healing, which is an outworking of what type of law? Design law, restoring people to harmony with the laws of health, the laws upon which the Creator built life to operate. But the legalistic leaders did not worship a god whose laws were design laws, they worshiped an imperial dictator who made up rules and inflicted punishment for rule-breaking. Thus, they became like that false god they worshiped, and made up more rules and when Jesus was seen to be breaking their rules, justice, in their beastly way of seeing things, required infliction of punishment, thus they wanted to kill Jesus.

The lesson rightly points out in the last paragraph,

- Though the specific issue here with Jesus isn't the same as in final events, it's close enough: **human law versus God's**, and, in both, the contested law centers on the biblical Sabbath.

This is exactly correct, human law versus God's. The Jews who crucified Christ had the right day of the week, but they still had the wrong law, because they promoted the Sabbath as an imposed law, an

imperial law, a made up rule that required external rule enforcement, rather than the truth that it is an expression and evidence of design law.

Later, Christianity Romanized and accepted the lie that God's law functions no differently than Roman law, imposed rules, believed then, that just like human laws can be changed so too can God's laws be changed. Believing that the church on Earth operated with the authority of Jesus and believing the lie that God's law functions like human law, they changed the Sabbath to Sunday and began calling Sunday the Lord's day instead of the Bible day of the Lord, which is the seventh day Sabbath.

The Reformation came along and began correcting the distortions of imperialism and paganism that entered the church through Rome and eventually Reformers recovered the truth that the Sabbath of the Bible is Friday sunset to Saturday sunset and not Sunday. However, many have continued to fall into the same trap of the Jews who crucified Christ, having the right Sabbath day, but continuing to present it through the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that require imposed punishments. Thus, the Sabbath, when presented this way continues to promote the legal Roman view of a pagan god who requires something done to him to pay for our sin and that justice is the use of external power to inflict punishment upon rule breakers.

The final message of mercy to the world is call to return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires rejecting the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law, and realize that all of God's laws are design laws.

But this is very hard for many, who have been so indoctrinated into the imposed law system of seeing things, to understand. When I was in Australia last fall, I spoke with an Adventist pastor about the Sabbath issue. We both agreed that the Bible Sabbath is Saturday, no question about this. The question we discussed was what makes it holy? Why is the Sabbath holy?

What our different views boiled down to was that the pastor took the position that the Sabbath is holy because God declared it to be holy. It was made holy by God's executive action as Sovereign of the Universe at the end of creation week to set it apart by His declared word.

What do you think of this position? What kind of law would this be? Imposed, the same type of law that Caesar uses.

In this view, the Sabbath is holy not because of some inherent aspect of its creation, not something built into the Sabbath by God's actions that objectively sets it apart, but because God used His Sovereign right as Creator and Ruler to make an edict, a ruling, a proclamation, a declared statement.

This method is the type of authority, methods, mode, and law used by created beings, the use of position, of office, of power, to set something apart arbitrarily because the ruler said so, not because it is so.

And this type of law requires external infliction of punishment to enforce it. If there is nothing inherent built into it, then breaking the rule has no consequence therefore justice requires the

authorities to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. So, this way of presenting the Sabbath actually perpetuates Satan's view of God and God's government.

My view of the Great Controversy, the war between God and Satan, is not over who has power but over whether we can trust God with His power. Satan first undermined trust in God by alleging God governs through the use of made-up rules and externally inflicted punishments for rule-breaking. In other words, Satan alleged that God's laws function no differently than a creature's law, and, therefore, God ultimately functions like a creature, imposing rules and using power to punish rule breakers. This means that we don't have real freedom, we have freedom only as long as we do what God says—love me or I will torture and kill you. This way of presenting God's love is a violation of the design law of liberty and destroys love and incites rebellion.

So the Sabbath is a great test case—are all of God's laws truly design laws, protocols built into reality, or are some of His laws arbitrary, simply made-up rules imposed by God by His declaring it to be so?

The pastor who took the position that God's declaration makes it holy referenced creation week and God's setting apart the seventh day:

- By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2, 3 NIV84.

The pastor's interpretation of this passage is that God's actions are the actions of a ruler imposing a difference by His word or authority.

But consider the following text in the very narrative of creation, when God made another declaration:

- The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18 NIV84.

Was it good for man to be alone *until* the Lord said this? Was it only when the Lord said it was not good that it became not good? Or did the Lord say it because there was something missing and He had not quite completed His creative work yet—and it was, in reality, not good to leave it uncompleted? Did God's declaration make it so, or was it already so, and thus God, who always speaks truth, declared it to be so?

The issue I am disentangling is this: Which comes first—reality, the way things are, or God's verbal description, or declaration, of the way things are? In regard to the Sabbath, was it holy the moment God created it? Was there something about its creation, something built into it or associated with it by creation, that objectively set it apart from all other days—and God's verbal statement about it announced the reality of what was already true, or was it that God's verbal description made it so?

Those who operate upon the human-law model automatically think that God's verbal statements are legal edicts that make it so. Whereas those who see God's law as design law understand His

statements are announcements of truth, descriptions of the way things actually are because they are actually that way.

At the Second Coming, when Jesus separates the “sheep” from the “goats,” does His action, His judgment, His proclamation, make some into sheep and some into goats, or is He separating them based on reality, on who they have chosen to become? (Matthew 25:31–33). Jesus’ statement of recognition that one is in the sheep camp and one is in the goat camp doesn’t cause it to be so, He states it because it is so.

And this is true of God’s law. God’s laws are design law, the protocols reality is built upon, emanating from His being, sustaining all things. God’s verbal description of His law does not establish it. He states it because it is the way things are, as He created reality to exist and operate.

So is the Sabbath holy because God said so, declared it holy, or did God declare it holy because it was holy?

The Bible says God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day—what does that mean? Does it mean that God blessed it by legal declaration, making an imposed law that requires external enforcement through inflicted punishments? If that is what God did, then that would not have been a blessing but a curse, for that is the way Satan’s kingdom works; that would have sustained Satan’s charges against the government of God rather than refute them. No, God did not make a legal rule, an imposed law.

God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath by action, conduct, and creation—by reality. The Sabbath was made, created, built into time by the God who controls space and time, whose laws are the basis of the operations of all reality. And the Sabbath was made in the context of a war against God’s rulership. The Sabbath was set apart from the other six days *not* when God used power but when **He stopped using power, when He rested, when He refused to enforce law by the use of power and, instead, left all His creatures free to think and decide for themselves!**

The Sabbath was created at the end of the creation week of this planet and is invested, made, created, and built by God with the revelation of truth, love, and freedom—when God refused to use external power to punish Lucifer, to force Satan to comply, when God refused to operate in the way of a creature. Thus, the Sabbath is holy, made and created as a sign, evidence, revelation, and demonstration of God’s character of love and design-law methods. It exists because God exists and because God is love—and love exists only in freedom.

Thus, because of Satan’s lies and deceptions, God found it necessary to declare the reality of the sacredness, holiness, and blessedness of the Sabbath day, for in six days God created but on the seventh day *He rested!* The Sabbath day is special, distinct, set apart *but* not because of God’s declaration; it is so because of God’s action in its creation—for it reveals the glory and holiness of God. The Sabbath is not holy because God declares it holy; no, He declares it holy because it is holy!

God does not choose might and power as the attributes He glories in. No, God glories in His character of love. The Bible doesn't say "God is power" even though He is all-powerful; the Bible says that "God is love"! (1 John 4:8).

God has demonstrated that the attribute He prefers to be known by is not power, but His kindness, love, mercy, gentleness, and self-sacrificing character. When God showed Moses His glory, He said,

- "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Exodus 34:6, 7 NIV84.

On days one to six of creation, we learn that God is powerful and the Creator, but day seven is set apart by Him as the day He reveals His character of love, the day He says is His day because it is the day He rested.

The Sabbath is set apart by God's investing it with His character when He refused to use power to put down a rebellion. And God created the Sabbath for humans; He foreknew we would be caught up in a war for our hearts and minds, a war in which might and power would be viewed as being right. But God says to His faithful through history, *"Remember the Sabbath—remember that I rested; remember that even though I am the Creator, I don't use my power to force, to coerce, to punish; I give you real freedom, so each week remember the freedom you have when you return to love and trust in me, for it is by trusting me, loving me, and choosing my methods of truth, love, and freedom, all invested in the Sabbath, that remove your fear, cleanse your guilt, give you new hearts and right spirits, and make you a holy people who represent Me. So Remember I am the God that sanctifies you and makes you holy as you return to worship me and trust as your Creator and stop worshipping the false dictator god who makes up rules and is the source of inflicted punishment."*

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the early church's persecution. Any thoughts or questions?

This history uncovers various tactics and methods of Satan, and let's review history and see these methods used in various places.

Satan is the father of lies—so deception will always be employed by Satan and his followers.

Satan used deception, in all of its various forms, on the angels in heaven and on Adam and Eve in Eden. This was the only tool he had in sinless spaces. When I say the only tool, I mean in sinless spaces Satan could not make up his own laws and create his own government. He could not use economic pressure, threats against their possessions, family, friends, or any coercive force, no physical might could be brought to bear. Fear was not known and he could not intimidate them. He could only misrepresent, trick, deceive, mislead, through various tools, flattery, inuendo, and distorted communication, not just words, but his voice, tone, body language, and in Eden a miracle of a talking

snake. But it was only deception, nothing more that I can think of? Can you think of another tool Satan could use in sinless spaces?

Yes, it is true that Satan exploited the sinless angels' love, trust, and affection for him to advance his evil agenda, but there was nothing wrong with love, trust, affection, and friendship, those attributes did not cause the angels to rebel with Lucifer; it was his lies and selfishness that exploited their love and trust.

But in this world of sin, Satan has other tools to promote his false system, his evil empire, his assault on hearts and minds, his campaign to destroy truth, love, and righteousness. And the Bible is a record of this battle between the prince of darkness and originator of evil and the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In Old Testament times, Satan continued to use lies and deception adding in all kinds of false worship, intended to corrupt minds, and harden hearts closing people off from the God and His Holy Spirit. This was for the purpose of severing humanity fully and permanently from God. While humanity fell into sin, we were not fully cut off from God because of Jesus, the Lamb of God slain from the foundations of the world. In other words, because of Jesus' commitment and promise given in Genesis 3:15, that He would come and destroy the serpent and his evil empire and save humanity from sin, this world has remained connected to heaven through Jesus.

Satan sought to cut that tie, because without Jesus and His direct connection to us, His interventions, humanity could not be saved. If Jesus was not born in Bethlehem as a real human being, part of this species, and then if He did not live a sinless life and die a voluntary substitutionary death, no human could be saved. So throughout the Old Testament we find the focus on Satan seeking to destroy the avenue (branch of the human family) through whom Jesus would be born and God working to protect and keep open that avenue.

When Jesus was born, Satan sought to have baby Jesus murdered as a baby before Jesus could, as a human, complete His mission of living sinlessly, developing a sinless human character, eradicating the infection of fear and selfishness from the humanity He assumed thereby destroying the carnal nature and restoring in humanity the sinless spirit of love and trust, God's living law perfectly restored into humanity by Christ's sinless life and sacrificial death. But Satan failed in murdering Jesus as a baby.

Later Jesus is tempted and we see Satan's methods revealed:

- Deception, presenting as an angel from heaven and misquoting Scripture
- When deception didn't work then Satan moves on to inducements, offering an alternate way to achieve the goal that pays well and avoids pain and suffering—just worship me and I will give you all this. But this was also laced with deception because it really wasn't his to give. But now the deception has an offered positive pay off.
- When deception and inducements don't work, then Satan resorts to increasing externally inflicted injuries and harms to cause pain and suffering of various kinds—in other words making life hard for the righteous.

Name Calling and Character Assassination

- But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” Matthew 12:24 NIV84.
- “You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered John 7:20 NIV 84.
- The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” John 8:48 NIV84.
- At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed!” John 8:52 NIV84.

Accusing the Righteous of the Evil That They Are Doing

- Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” Matthew 26:65, 66 NIV84.

Twisting Words and Perjury

- Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days’” Matthew 26:60, 61 NIV84.

Intimidation via Sanctions and Restricting Liberties

- His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue John 9:22 NIV84.

Rejection and Mob Violence

- All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff Luke 4:28–30 NIV84.

Betrayal Under the Guise of Blessing

- Judas went straight to Jesus and said, “Peace be with you, Teacher,” and kissed him Matthew 26:49 GNT.

Shouting Down Voices of Truth to Silence, Intimidate, and Incite Riots

- When they heard this, **they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”** **Soon the whole city was in an uproar.** The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. But when they realized he was a Jew, **they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”** Acts 19:28–34 NIV84.

Mocking and Physical Abuse

- They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him Mark 15:17–20 NIV84).

Refusing to Listen and Murdering Voices of Truth

- At this they **covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices**, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and **began to stone him**. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep Acts 7:57–60 NIV84.

Do you see how these methods are design to hurt, emotions, relationships, finances, livelihood, health, and life? All intended to inflame fear and increase the survival of the fittest drive, urgent need to protect self, leading to compromising truth and giving into the pressure. Did we see essentially all of these methods used during COVID?

The only protection is truth, love, and freedom in a surrendered trust relationship with God, just like the three worthies, doing what is right in governance of self and trusting God with how things turn out.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Ministries Will Be Attending the General Conference July 3-13. We will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall giving our materials away! Please pray God will bless this endeavor. Due to this we will have a modified class schedule as follows:

- **June 28:** 10-11 a.m. SS Class Lesson 2 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** 11:05-12:05 SS Class Lesson 3 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** No Q&A
- **July 5:** No SS Class and the building will not be open
- **July 12:** SS class will meet at normal time in the building but **NO POTLUCK**

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet

Mission, Health and Women Director

West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division

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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

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Newbold College

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2025 Allusions, Images, Symbols - Lesson 13

Images of the End

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SUNDAY

The lesson lists, as object lesson images of the end of time:

Jonah and Nineveh

- Belshazzar's feast
- The drying of the Euphrates river when Cyrus conquered Babylon
- Cyrus the anointed

Considering the object lesson significance of the book of Jonah, let's go beyond the obvious historical record of a people living wickedly and receiving a message of impending doom, an end of their city, and how they repented. That lesson is obvious—God has an end time message to a wicked and rebellious world to repent because the end of our wicked, sinful, earth and its governments is coming.

Jesus applied the object lesson of Jonah being in the belly of the fish for three days to Himself being in the grave for three days and that the Ninevites repented at Jonah's witness, but the Jews did not repent when He, one greater than Jonah, testified to them.

Beyond these two lessons are there other lessons in the book?

Let's read a few verses from the book of Jonah and consider potential object lessons that may be drawn:

- The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. (Jonah 1:1-3 NIV84)

Jonah's name means dove and is considered a term of endearment

- God called Jonah (the dove who is dear to Him) to be His witness to Nineveh
 - God call's His people today, who are dear to Him and are filled with the Holy Spirit, symbolized by a dove, to be His end time witnesses, to take the gospel message to the world calling the world to repent for the end, the destruction of our world, is coming.
- Jonah is reluctant to fulfill this calling and therefore flees
 - Has the church been reluctant to stand up and call out the wickedness and abuses of power by the godless? Did we see reluctance during COVID, with the climate lies?

Throughout history has the church been reluctant to take the true gospel message and fled? Could Jonah's fleeing fit the church? Consider the following:

- Jonah heads toward Tarshish by way of Joppa; Joppa was a city from which the cedars used for Solomon's temple were obtained. The wood that went into the temple was cut from its roots in the earth, shaped for the building, covered in gold, and stood upright in the temple.
 - This symbolizes the people of God, humans who are made out of the dirt of the earth, being cut away from gaining our sustenance from the powers of this world and who instead of bringing forth the natural fruits of sinfulness have their characters shaped by the Holy Spirit who circumcises their hearts and fills them with the Spirit/life of Christ, symbolized by the cutting and shaping the cedar and covering it in gold—the righteousness of Christ, which enables them to stand upright and live upright lives.
- But when Jonah goes to Joppa he doesn't mobilize the people of God to help in giving this message of impending doom, instead he flees toward Tarshish, which was a city in Spain known for its wealth from its strong trade relationship with Tyre, and remember what Tyre represents in the Bible, Ezekiel 28:
- The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the **king of Tyre** and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: '**You were the model of perfection**, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **You were in Eden**, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you... Your settings and mountings were made of **gold**; on the day you were created they were prepared. [Lucifer is symbolized by the king of Tyre; He was sinless, perfect, and he was created with his mind and character founded in gold, built in the righteousness and perfection of Christ's character and methods of truth, love, and liberty.] You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were **blameless** in your ways from the day you were created till **wickedness was found in you**. Through **your widespread trade you were filled with violence**, and you **sinned**. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your **heart became proud on account of your beauty**, and you **corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor**. [Through beauty, wealth, and pride he lied to himself valuing the wealth, the position, the power, the adoration, more than the source, the Creator of all] So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. **By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries**. [The sanctuary of his mind and heart. His mind was corrupted with lies and heart corrupted with pride and selfishness which further corrupted him with resentment, envy, bitterness, hate.] So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.' " (Ezekiel 28:11-19 NIV84, emphasis mine).
 - The king of Tyre is symbolic of Satan, and Jonah instead of initially leading the people of God to support God's message, flees toward an affluent and powerful city that gains its wealth by trading with Tyre. Symbolically, the people entrusted with the message of

God, the gospel, instead of initially taking the true gospel to the world, aligned with and gained power from partnering with Rome the seat of Satan's power and Christianity Romanized and the church entered the Dark Ages, and through that alliance the spirit temple, the sanctuary of God became corrupted. And as Jonah was in darkness for 3 days, the church was in darkness for 1260 years. And the people so deceived become like Satan, proud of themselves and think they are rich, like the people of Tyre and like Lucifer, proud of their wealth power and beauty. But Jesus has a message for this people in Revelation 3 and 17:

- “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘**I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.**’ **But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.** I counsel you to buy from me **gold refined in the fire**, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. **Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.** So be earnest, **and repent.** Here I am! **I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,** I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelations 3:14-20 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great **prostitute**, who sits on many waters. With her the **kings of the earth committed adultery** and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” Revelation 17:1-2 NIV84.
 - The church ran from the mission given by God and committed spiritual adultery with the kings of the earth becoming infected with imperialism and legalism, and has come to believe they are rich and acquired wealth, when in reality it is wretched (broken, exhausted, worn out, and without power), pitiful, poor (of spiritual virtue, truth, love, and Christlikeness), blind (without the Holy Spirit and ability to discern truth from error, reality from fantasy), and naked (exposed as sin-sick, necrotic, and terminal).

Continuing with Jonah:

- Then the **LORD sent a great wind on the sea**, and such a violent **storm** arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they **threw the cargo into the sea** to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and **fell into a deep sleep.** The **captain** went to him and said, “**How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god!** Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish.” Jonah 1:4-6 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The seas represent the populations, the peoples of the earth

- The ship represents the church, boarded in Joppa, the place where the cedars for the temple, which represent the people of God, were obtained.
- The winds represent the influences blowing upon the people, and thus the church, including the Holy Spirit which stirs things up when they are sailing in the direction contrary to the Lord's leading. This is also represented by the fires of tribulation that burn out the dross or impurities in our characters.
 - This is a form of loving discipline to cause dissatisfaction with the way things are, the direction we are going, to motivate the sailors, the people in the church to reevaluate what they are doing and where they are going, to begin prioritizing rightly.
 - The sailors do so and throw their cargo into the sea, which represents people cutting out of their lives the things of this world that we have valued and cherished, the treasures of this world which we have been carrying in our hearts that interfere with God's calling, purposes, mission, and for us individually (i.e., interfere with our own salvation and maturing in Christ), and interfere with the overall gospel commission. The storm caused them to devalue those treasures and throw them overboard, which represents the trials that the Lord either brings or allows causing us to get the worthless treasures of this world out of their lives, the cutting from our hearts affections the things of this world, which is also symbolized by circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit.
- The sailors were terrified, which represents the distress of the church members when trials and tribulations come. They are terrified because they have been filling their lives with the treasures of this world and as tribulations come people have to make choices, jettison the treasures of this world, or cling to them and go down with the ship.
 - Consider Abraham was called to leave his home and go to a strange land—we are called to do the same
 - Consider Lot's wife who couldn't let go of the treasures of this world and therefore died with her treasures
 - Consider the rich young ruler who couldn't let go earthly treasure
- The captain of the ship represents Jesus,
 - "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Hebrews 2:10 NKJV.
 - The captain of the ship goes to Jonah, who represents the people of God, God's end-time servants (spokespersons, the ones with the end-time message for the world, Revelation 7), with a message: the captain said to Jonah, "**How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god!**"

This is Jesus message to the church today, which is taught in another place, Jesus parable of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish, which also representing the church and all ten of them were asleep until the call that the bridegroom is coming woke them up.

Jonah is sleeping in the storm until the call from the captain wakes him up with the instruction to stop sleeping and call on his God.

Some might argue that Jesus wouldn't captain a ship that was leading Jonah away from Nineveh, but if we are intent on running away from Jesus' call, what will Jesus do? Jesus will seek to lead us into the exact experiences we need, the very trials and tribulations that we would not have experienced had we followed His call, but which will be most therapeutic to get us to stop running and surrender self to Him to get us back on track. Just like He did with Jonah.

This also has object lesson significance to every person's personal journey, if when God calls us we run, then these elements can be applied to that experience, how the Holy Spirit will work to bring us to decision points and use our choices to lead to places that cause us distress designed to ultimately lead us to repentance and going to God for deliverance, healing, and getting back on the right path with our lives.

Read fourth paragraph Sunday's lesson,

- There is an important moment in the story that may point forward to the last-day remnant movement. When Jonah is asked who he is, he responds, “ ‘I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land’ ”—a statement much like the first angel's message (Jon. 1:9, NKJV; Rev. 14:7). Indeed, his emphasis on the Lord as the One “ ‘who made the sea and the dry land’ ” is, of course, pointing to Him as the Creator. This fact is foundational to why we should worship Him, and worship is central to last-day events. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 105.

The lesson makes a comparison to Jonah's statement with the message of the 3 angels, but Jonah starts out with “I am a Hebrew” in other words “I am a Jew” a person who worships the Creator God of heaven.

From a biblical perspective, who is considered to be in the role of Jonah now, in other words, who is considered to be a biblical Jew today?

- A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, **a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly**; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Romans 2:28-29 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Galatians 3:26-29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

So to be a Hebrew, an end-time Jew, the true worshiper of the Creator, it requires that a person be reborn with a new heart and right spirit and have their hearts cut away from fear and selfishness and established in love and trust and this is only possible through receiving the life of Jesus by faith just as Abraham did.

But the lesson focuses more on the message, than the people who carry the message, so let's examine that question, what is the message the people of God are to take to the world?

The lesson states, "his emphasis on the Lord as the One " 'who made the sea and the dry land' " is, of course, pointing to Him as the Creator. This fact is foundational to why we should worship Him, and worship is central to last-day events."

What about the Lord being the One who made the sea and dry land is central to our worship? Is it that He is powerful and therefore can punish all who refuse Him? Or is it that, as Creator, His laws are the laws creation is built upon and operates upon and life, including eternal life, is only possible as we live in harmony with those design laws? That the message calling people to worship God as Creator is simultaneously the message to stop worshiping Him as a dictator, to realize that we are sin-sick, out of harmony in mind and heart with God and His design laws for life and only He, our Creator, can fix the damage, can give us a new heart and right spirit, can purge the infection of fear and selfishness and writing His living law upon our hearts and minds.

And that this requires we reject the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law a system of made up and imposed rules that require legal payment or the infliction of external punishment.

What happens if people take a message to the world that calls people to worship the Creator because as Sovereign Creator He has made up rules and law and justice requires Him to punish all rule breakers and if you refuse to give Him His rightful worship to obedience to His laws, then He is required by law to use His infinity power to inflict torture and death upon you as divine justice? Does such a message win hearts and minds to love, trust, loyalty, friendship? No! It inspires distrust, fear, and greater selfishness, in other words such a message spread rebellion and sin.

The picture of a god who makes up laws and enforces them through externally inflicted punishment is Satan's view, that is how a creature functions, which is represented by Babylon, the first nation interacting with Israel that made up an imposed law system. Our message for this time in history is to come out of Babylon and back to Creator worship, and that means we must leave behind loyalty to religious systems of worship that teach God functions like a creature, to stop worshiping a god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death and return to worshiping God as Creator who is the source of life and health.

Read the last paragraph,

- At the same time, we, too, have been charged with preaching a potentially unpopular message in spiritual Babylon. To say "come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4, NKJV) is to tell the

world they must repent—a message that has almost always provoked a negative response from many people, even when delivered in the kindest way possible. Who of us when witnessing has not received negative, or even hostile, responses? It just comes with the job. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 105.

Who gives us, when we take the true gospel, good news about God, to the world the most negative or even hostile responses?

Consider what Jesus said to the Jewish leaders in His day,

- “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.” Matthew 12:39-41 NIV84.

Jesus cites Jonah and compares His message to the Jewish nation with Jonah’s message to Nineveh—now my question in regard to the lesson’s statement that when we call people out of Babylon it almost always meets with negative response—who gave the greater negative response, Nineveh or the Jews in Christ’s day?

Is there a lesson in this for us today? When we present the truth of God as Creator and His laws are design laws and God is a God of love who seeks only to heal and save us from a terminal sin condition and that death comes not from God as inflicted punishment, but from unremedied and unremoved sin in the lives of sinners, who gives the more positive response and who responds with greater negativity?

In my experience the those least indoctrinated into Christian dogmas and systems of theology are more receptive to the call to worship God as Creator, Designer, and Healer from sin and those most indoctrinated into traditional Christian theologies about sin and God using His power to inflict punishment for it are most resistant and want to continue to resist and teach that God’s laws are like human laws and God is required by law and justice to use His power to inflict pain, suffering, and death.

What has been your experience?

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph,

- Can we expect something like this in the last days, with the final message to the fallen world? Yes—and no. That is, there will be, all over the world, many people who heed the call, “

‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues’ ” (Rev. 18:4, NKJV). All over the world, people will take their stand and, in defiance of the beast, will “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). These people, like those in Nineveh, will be spared the judgment that falls upon the lost. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2025*, Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy, p. 106.

What do you hear? The lesson states a message will go to the world calling for repentance, but the world will not listen and will be destroyed like Nineveh in the end. So, the question that is quite pertinent is, how was Nineveh destroyed? What actually happened that brought about their destruction?

They were conquered by other nations—in other words, God abandoned them to reap that which they sowed. They were not destroyed by God using external divine power to inflict punishment upon them.

Is this how the Bible describes the final end that comes upon the Earth? Yes! It is exactly like this because this is how reality works, how design law works, God gives us real freedom to make our choices and reap what we ultimately solidify into our hearts and minds.

Notice what Revelation states,

- After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Revelation 7:1-3 NIV84.

What is described?

The angels of God are holding back the winds of strife to prevent them from blowing. But these angels have the power to harm the earth, how? By letting go that which they are restraining. This is exactly how design law works, if people insist on rebellion, on going their own way, the only act love can take is to, after all attempts to redeem and save are rejected, let them go. And then people reap what they have chosen. As Paul wrote, those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8.

When billions of people harden their hearts to God beyond to the point of destroying the faculties that respond to truth and love, the sear their consciences to the point that no amount of truth or love has any impact, their choice to do this to themselves closes the Holy Spirit out of their hearts, out from His dwelling place, and God respects their choices and the Holy Spirit is slowly withdrawn. This withdrawal of the Holy Spirit is a direct a result of human rejection, not God’s frustration or impatience.

As the Holy Spirit withdraws evil people along with demonic forces gain more control over the planet and evil and destruction of all kinds increase across the planet. The Earth suffers God's judgments, which are what God judges is the only loving, truthful, righteous action He can take, and that is to let them go to reap disconnection from Him and His protection—in other words, the angels let go what they have been restraining. This is what happened to Nineveh, God let them go.

This is not judicial examination of legal books and using external power to inflict punishment upon people, but the implementation of reality, truth, love, freedom based on the freewill choices of the people to choose, insist, on being let go by God.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following commentary about this judgment:

- "I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way; **They place themselves beyond His protection.** He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them.**

"It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." EG White Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3, emphasis mine.

- **Satan has studied the secrets of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. It is God that shields His creatures from the destroyer.** But the Christian world has shown contempt for His law [by replacing design law with imposed human law and teaching God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering. So our Creator God of reality, does what He always does—operates in reality, in truth, and sets people free to reap, experience reality, the truth that they have chosen, and this reality, the consequences of their choice to reject God and His design law exposes demonstrates, reveals that God's laws are in fact design laws and He is not the source of externally inflicted punishments for sin], and **the Lord will do what He declared that He would—remove His protecting care from those who rebel against His law and force others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard.** He will favor and prosper some, in order to further his own designs; and he will bring trouble upon others, and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them. **While appearing as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, Satan will bring disease and disaster until populous cities are reduced to ruin.** In accidents by sea and land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. **He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish.** *From Here to Forever* 360, emphasis mine.

Questions? Do you agree with this design law perspective or do you prefer to teach that God is the one who uses His power to inflict pain and suffering that would not otherwise be experienced if He didn't do it?

The truth is that as people harden their hearts and the Holy Spirit is withdrawn then Satan and his evil forces gain more control and do more evil, and in this increasing chaotic and fear inducing environment the beast of Revelation will rise to do justice, to bring order, to stop anarchy, to put down rebellion, to make a more just and equitable society. We will see more law and law enforcement for the purpose of improving the human condition, of making people safe, of saving lives and the planet.

This is being set up by Satan and his demonic forces right now. Look around the world, the godless, woke, left in the world are being used by Satan to increase chaos, fear, violations of God's designs, principles, and structure for love, health, order, and protection of individuals and society. The attacks on marriage and families, the devaluing of godly loving marriage relationships and the holy and beautiful call of mothers to mother their children. The denial of biological reality of God's design of male and female. The denial of God's existence and the teaching of godless evolution. The attacks on freedom through the attacks on the structures in society that establish order—in other words the attacks on borders, law and order, such things as open borders, defund the police and many other policies that are intended to sow chaos and make it unsafe for people to walk in their own neighborhoods. The purposeful and intentional decades long corrupt public school system in which vast swaths of children do not learn to read, write, or do basic math—this undermines freedom. The promotion of gross and profane sexual perversion in elementary schools. The corruption in our food system which has caused an epidemic of metabolic sickness, obesity, diabetes, and loss of health undermines freedom. The corruption in our health care system which has become a for profit business that promotes chronic illness and chronic symptom treatment through medications rather than promoting God's design laws for healthy living.

All of this corruption and so much more is demonically inspired from the left for the purpose of outraging the godly in society to tempt them into joining Satan and his demonic forces on the political right from which will rise the image to the beast, the second image of the beast of Revelation 13.

Watch what unfolds around us, the political left is becoming ever more desperate to hold on to their power, so they will use more corrupt methods, propaganda, denial of reality, acts that violate not only common sense but the very principles of life and health—like defund the police, open borders, denial of biological differences between men and women, rioting, destruction of property, theft, elevating the protection of criminals over innocent victims—none of this is accidental. It is demonically inspired to offend the people of God, the people with a conscience, the people of good will, the people who would be happy to leave others free to live their private lives as they wish. It is these righteous people who are being targeted by demonic forces through these irrational, evil, and destructive methods of the left for the purpose of getting the godly to seek to do justice, to make things right, through human law and law enforcement. And if you are watching, you will see ever increasing calls to Christianity and Christian worship from people in government, to return to Christian values. And it will have an appeal to you, but be careful because this movement will not seek to bring people to worship our Creator God whose laws are design laws, but an imperial dictator god whose laws are imposed. And Satan will

eventually impersonate Jesus and claim to be here to restore order through righteous law and law enforcement. Only those who know the truth, who know God as Creator whose laws are design laws, who know love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom will discern that this is an imposter.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Belshazzar's feast, his arrogance, pride, mocking of God, using the temple instruments in profane way. The lesson rightly points out Belshazzar's issue was a heart issue, he didn't humble himself like his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar did.

What lesson is in this for our time?

Is salvation found in understanding correct doctrines? This is a tricky question because salvation is certainly NOT found in false doctrines, and I do not want to suggest in any way, shape, or form that false doctrines are acceptable. But what I am asking is if acknowledging and attesting to correct doctrinal truths equals salvation?

Did the Jews who killed Jesus have the wrong Bible, Sabbath day, percentage of tithe, animals on the clean list, list of Ten Commandments, or sanctuary? Did they believe in the Creator God of Abraham? Did they believe in the importance of obedience to the law?

They really didn't dispute any of the doctrinal facts with Jesus, they disputed the spirit or heart of the doctrines with Jesus, which ultimately means they disputed the spirit of the law, which is the truth, the reality of how things work.

Jesus taught the same Bible, Sabbath, tithing, diet, commandments, sanctuary as they did; but Jesus taught it all through design law reality from a spirit of love and trust, whereas the Jews taught the doctrines through imposed law and a spirit of fear and selfishness.

The point is, one is not saved attesting to a list of belief or by belonging to the right organization—one is saved by being reborn to receive a new heart and right spirit, the life of Christ. And as such we are lovers of truth and are eager to grow in truth and eliminate falsehood in all forms from our hearts and minds. It doesn't mean we know all truth or have necessarily identified and eliminated all false understandings from our hearts and minds, but that we have hearts that would if such misunderstanding was brought to our awareness.

Being reborn with a Christlike spirit of love and trust means we move away from a fear-based self-centered motivation preoccupied with what happens to us and the record of our bad deeds, to a life motivated by love and trust in Jesus in which we sacrifice self, we present ourselves as living sacrifices, people who trust our lives into Jesus' hands.

And this is the requirement to receive the seal of God—being sealed of God is being so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that we cannot be moved.

Intellectual means our minds, our reason, our understanding, the beliefs we hold to be true, primarily about God so that no other view will lead us away from the truth about God, His character, methods, and principles of love, truth, and freedom.

Spiritually means our hearts, the animating motivating energy that moves us to action is changed from fear and selfishness to love and trust. We are so settled in our identity, our relationship and experience with God that we cherish, love, value Him over everything else. And no threat to anything else we value will shake us from it.

We come into the world, fearful, insecure, needy, dependent and immediately begin searching for and creating attachments to what provides us security, comfort, sense of safety, identity, meaning, purpose. Our hearts want to be free from fear and doubt, free from guilt and shame. Thus, we attach initially, and appropriately, to parents, and constantly seek as children to get approval from parents, to get validation, love, acceptance, which offsets (but does not remove or replace) the spirit of fear and insecurity with which we were born.

As we grow we seek, find, and form attachments to other things—food, (not simple nutrition but food to provide emotional comfort) substances, money, property, position, status, fame, reputation, skills, and abilities, other people, achievements, sports teams, objects (Linus' blanket), lucky charms, schools—alma mater, churches, nations, organizations like Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, gangs, cults, political parties etc.

All these attachments to our sense of self, our identity, our heart are formed in an attempt to make us feel safe, important, valuable, needed, secure, worthy, to give us a sense of identity, to offset the fear, guilt, and shame we inherited from Adam.

Threatening any of these attachments inflames fear, anxiety, distress which typically results in a hostile response to defend one's interests, whether physical, relational, or legal—we seek to eliminate the threat to our security.

You see this in people with their sports teams—if their identity and sense of self is significantly formed around their team, they get quite distraught and angry when their team loses.

Some people attach their hearts to their nation, or career, or race, or denominations, or family, or wealth.

God's plan for His people, in fact the requirement for salvation because of how reality works, is to cut away from our hearts any source of security, identity, peace, sense of wellbeing other than Him. That we recognize Him as our only source of, not only life, but identity, purpose, meaning, and security. That we recognize our talents, intelligence, skills, abilities, health, wealth, everything we have all originate in Him and we are His stewards, not His slaves, but He wants us to be His understanding friends. He wants to lead us to the point that we sever all ties of loyalty that interfere with His calling and purpose in our lives and give our hearts and minds and ultimately our first priority in all things to

Him. That in all actions we seek to honor Him and bring glory to Him for it is He that we love and trust above all others. This does not free us from our duties in life but strengthens and enables us to fulfill those duties. Parents who prioritize God first will be ever more capable, focused, energized, motivated, and enabled to fulfill their godly calling to parent their children. Spouses who put God first in all things will be the most loving, loyal, attentive, nurturing, and healthy spouses for they will treat their spouses like Christ treats the church and those marriages will be the place where the partners thrive, mature, grow, and experiences the deepest love and peace possible on this Earth.

While we are to be in the world we are not to be of the world and be ready to let go of every other support or attachment in this world rather than betray Jesus.

If called, like Lot, to leave our home, our community, our family, our wealth and flee—can we follow that call, or would that be too threatening, to terrifying and would we choose to die clutching onto earthly possessions?

If called like the rich young ruler to sell all we have and give to the poor, could we do it or would our sense of worth, our security, our meaning and identity be overwhelmed and it would be too terrifying and fearful to do so, so we cling to our money and lose our soul?

If we, like Abraham, or those in Matthew 10, are called to cut ties with family members and send them away, can we do it, or do we find it hurts us too much and we would rather hold on to them than to Jesus?

If we are called like the Apostles to leave our employment to serve the Lord, are we able to do it or do we cling to our earthly income to feel safe and secure here only to lose eternal security?

If we are called like Moses to leave a position of power and authority a place of societal leadership, are we able to do so or does such a demotion, a humiliation, a loss of status terrify and frighten us, causing us so much turmoil that we refuse the calling, cling to position and power and lose salvation?

We are to become like Job who could lose every attachment in this world and yet we will still trust God because our hearts, our identities, our sense of self are founded upon the truth of who He is. These are the sealed, so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that they cannot be moved.

And because God wants this for us, **He allows events to unfold in our lives** that puts us in position where we have to choose what we value most, who we trust most, God or something else.

WEDNESDAY

Drying of the Euphrates, what does this symbolize?

Cyrus diverts the Euphrates so his army can enter Babylon and take it in one night.

In Revelation Babylon symbolizes the Apostate Church, what I believe is also represented by the King of the North, religious imperialism—a Christianity that teaches God’s law functions like human law and becomes like that dictator god and will use the power of the state to enforce its way through law and law enforcement.

The Euphrates represents the people upon which Babylon, the Harlot of Revelation 17, sits. So, what would drying up the Euphrates to make way for the kings of the East mean?

Cyrus represents Christ who comes from the East and overthrows Babylon and sets the captives free.

Drying up the river, would represent what Cyrus did; he didn’t destroy the water, he diverted it away from flowing into Babylon.

Drying up the Euphrates in Revelation to prepare the way for Jesus, the king of the East to return from the East, represents the final message of mercy going to the world, the truth of God’s design law and character of love, that displaces the imposed law lie of Babylon from the hearts and minds of people thus diverting the river of people from supporting Babylon and opening the hearts of the people to receive Jesus settling them into the truth both intellectually and spiritually so that they cannot be moved and then He comes physically to take us home.

The final battle shaping up is a battle for hearts and minds over who we believe God to be and that is determined by what kind of law we believe God’s government is built upon. Are we worshiping the Creator whose laws are design laws or are we mind/heart slaves in Babylon worshiping a dictator god whose laws function like human law?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason Ministries Will Be Attending the General Conference July 3-13. We will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall giving our materials away! Please pray God will bless this endeavor. Due to this we will have a modified class schedule as follows:

- **June 28:** 10-11 a.m. SS Class Lesson 2 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** 11:05-12:05 SS Class Lesson 3 in Exodus Study Guide
- **June 28:** No Q&A
- **July 5:** No SS Class and the building will not be open
- **July 12:** SS class will meet at normal time in the building but **NO POTLUCK**

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On

September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet
Mission, Health and Women Director
West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division
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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy
Campus Ministries Coordinator
Newbold College
Email: dpuskas@newbold.ac.uk



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 1

Oppression: The Background and the Birth of Moses

by Tim Jennings

Introduction to the Study Guide

Read first sentence fourth paragraph,

- And what is He really like? He is a God who was faithful to His people despite their unfaithfulness. He was constantly for them, even when they were against Him. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 2.

I am so happy to see this question focusing on God, what is He like and on His faithfulness regardless of the unfaithfulness of the people. This made me immediately think of Romans 3:3,4:

- What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.” Romans 3:3,4 ESV.

How do we understand this, God being judged? By whom is God being judged? What kind of judgment is this? Why is this judgment necessary?

The Bible tells us there was war in heaven that spread to Earth, but what kind of war is this? A war of ideas, methods, principles, whom do we believe and trust, whose methods to we prefer and value. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

God wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, understanding agreement and friendship, and He can only get this by presenting the truth in love and leaving us free to choose—we will believe and trust Satan or reject Satan and his lies and judge God to be true, trustworthy, worthy of our trust and therefore trust Him in all things?

Do you see a connection between this judgment and

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the **eternal gospel** to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because **the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made** the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! **Fallen is Babylon** the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” Revelation 14:6-8 NIV84.

What is the eternal gospel? The good news that is eternally true, true throughout all eternity, past and future. This good news was good news before humans were created because it is eternal good news. It means it is good news before humans sinned, before Jesus died as our Savior. What is the good news. The good news about God, that God is true, trustworthy, because God is love and God is truth and God is the Creator, the builder of all reality and His laws are the laws reality and life are built upon,

design laws. It is the good news that God is not like a creature, not a being who makes up rules and enforces those rules with external punishments. Imposed law is the foundation of the systems of this world, law and law enforcement systems represented by Babylon. And the good news is God is not like that. The hour in history has come for people to make a right judgment about God and stop worshiping a god who is like Satan, a dictator who makes up rules and uses his power to inflict punishment on rule-breakers.

In that sentence from the lesson it also said,

- And what is He really like? He is a God who was faithful to **His people** despite their unfaithfulness. He was constantly for them, even when they were against Him. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 2.

Who are God's people? What do we mean by such a term? Could it be understood in a way that makes God and His character out to be untrustworthy instead of trustworthy?

- Are God's people only the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
- Does being a genetic descendent of Jacob make a person one of God's people?
- Does the term "God's people" refer to being God's by creation? Is it true that all human beings are His people because God is the Creator?
 - So, the term "God's people" could mean all humans are God's by creation, and therefore, God being faithful to *His people*, could mean He is faithful to all humans by fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15 to send Jesus as our Savior. And this position is validated with such texts like:
 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 NIV84.
- But "God's people" could also mean only those people who have been reborn with new hearts and right spirits:
 - Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12-13 NIV84.
 - This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:10 NIV84.
 - And God's faithfulness to these people is also demonstrating in fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15, sending Jesus to be our Savior—but further, the application of the victory of Jesus in their lives because of their response to trust. God works in their lives to fulfill His purpose of healing, saving, cleansing, and giving them eternal life.
- But this term could also mean those called for a purpose even if not reborn
 - Israel as a nation—God's chosen people—chosen for mission, for a purpose, yet not all of them are saved, only a remnant.
 - Nebuchadnezzar

- Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and **my servant Nebuchadnezzar** king of Babylon. Jeremiah 25:8–9 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Cyrus
 - This is what the LORD says to **his anointed**, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him. Isaiah 45:1 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And was God faithful to both Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus? Yes, God worked for the salvation of both of these individuals through the very same means He uses with us, truth, love, and freedom.

When you hear terms like God’s people, do you differentiate to whom that term is referring and in what context?

SABBATH

Read the first two paragraphs,

- The book of Exodus resonates with accounts of the oppressed, the marginalized, the persecuted, the exploited, and the degraded. Thus, people today who feel abandoned, forgotten, and enslaved can find hope, because the same God who saved the Hebrews can save them as well.

The book of Exodus speaks to the existential battles of life and to the injustices and trials that are part of this life. Everyone can be encouraged by the stories of God’s interventions in favor of His suffering people. God hears the cry of the oppressed, sees their struggles, notes their tears, and, in their agony, comes to help. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 6.

Thoughts about this? Does this sound right to you? Is the book of Exodus a book about the oppressed, marginalized, persecuted, exploited, and degraded people in society being remembered by God and delivered by Him?

Is it reasonable to use these events to teach that those in the world today who find themselves marginalized, mistreated, and persecuted will be remember and delivered by God from their persecution?

Why is this a good idea with good theology or a bad idea with bad theology?

First is it true? Is it true that the oppressed, the marginalized, the persecuted, the exploited, and the degraded throughout the world and history, if they are faithful to God get deliverance from their earthly exploitation?

Is it true that the Jews in Egypt at the time of the Exodus were being faithful to God?

I am not nitpicking on this point, this is a really important point to recognize because to suggest Exodus teaches what the lesson suggests will not increase faith in God, it will undermine it. To draw the conclusion the lesson suggests will not develop the image of God in us, but it will erode it. Why?

Because it is not true—God does not promise to deliver His faithful from human exploitation and abuse, but to have His faithful be witnesses for Him and His kingdom of love in the midst of human exploitation and abuse:

Jesus said,

- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:10-12 NIV84.
- “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. John 15:18-29 NIV84.

Consider these examples:

- Paul’s imprisonment and beheading
- Peter’s crucifixion
- John’s exile
- The martyrs through history
- William Tyndale who translated the Bible and was executed by strangulation and then his body was burned

If we allow the story of Exodus to teach that in this world of sin God will deliver the oppressed and marginalized, then we will set people up for disappointment, disillusionment, and eventual rejection of God and the Bible, which is exactly what happened to millions of Jews after the Holocaust. Or, we teach people to stop thinking, stop reasoning, and believe blindly without comprehension because to think doesn’t make sense, so people have to stop thinking in order to still believe, and that destroys in the image of God in us.

So, I do not believe that Exodus is a book about God delivering the marginalized and oppressed from earthly exploitation, but it about something much more significant, much more valuable, much more important, much more inspiring and hopeful—it is a book about God fulfilling His promise to deliver humanity from sin and ultimately restore this planet to sinlessness and provide an eternal home for the righteous.

The book of Exodus is the outworking of the cosmic conflict, the great controversy, the war between good and evil, God's plan to save humanity, the fulfillment of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and Satan's plan to stop it.

The context:

- Adam sinned—infected himself with fear and selfishness, corrupting his spirit and severing his natural love/trust connection with God.
- He and Eve are only capable of having children that are extension of themselves, in other words, infected with this terminal sin condition born with spirits of fear and selfishness, born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5; 2 Timothy 1:7).
- God, therefore, promised in Genesis 3:15 that Jesus would come and save humanity
- And then we read what unfolds, the world rebels to the point where only one man and his family will work with God, and God therapeutically brings the Flood in order to keep open the avenue for Messiah and save humanity from sin
- Then God discloses that it is through Abraham's children, through Isaac, through Jacob, through Judah that Messiah is coming
- And the Bible narrative focuses on this line and Satan's attempts to destroy Abraham and his descendants through history and God constantly intervening to preserve a remnant until Jesus comes
- A famine occurs, intended to starve out Jacob's family.
- Satan inspires jealousy in the brothers to cause infighting and Joseph is sold into slavery and sent to Egypt
- But God uses this to protect and overrule Satan's attempts to destroy by sending Pharaoh a vision and placing faithful Joseph where he can act to preserve the line of Messiah
- Satan inflames a new Pharaoh's heart with fear and selfishness inspiring the new king to enslave the Jews, with the intent to destroy the avenue for the Messiah either by killing off the line, or hardening hearts into paganism and rebellion like the people before the Flood.
- But God intervenes again and sends Moses to deliver them and sets up a nation

But why did God allow the events to unfold this way, for them to go down to Egypt in the first place and eventually to be made slaves?

What is the context? The Great Controversy—God working to bring Jesus, Satan working to stop God.

How big was Jacob's family when they went to Egypt?

- With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all. Genesis 46:27 NIV84.

How many left Egypt?

- There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Exodus 12:37 NIV84.

Probably close to 2 million people left Egypt.

Do these facts bring to mind a reason God allowed them to go to Egypt?

Do you remember what happened earlier to Lot? He was taken captive by various warring city-states in the region and Abraham helped free him.

Jacob flees where he was settled because of what his sons did at Shechem for fear of the nations attacking them. God promises to provide and protect, and what unfolds? The events that lead to their captivity in Egypt.

Egypt was the most powerful nation in the world with a strong standing army. God allowed events to unfold in which this family of 70 would be taken in and protected in Egypt, protected from the other nations and groups in Canaan until they were large enough to form a viable community that could grow and sustain itself.

Okay, that makes a certain sense, but why would God permit them to be taken slaves? Other than of course, leaving people free to make their own choices, why wouldn't God intervene and have someone like Moses call them to leave Egypt before they were taken slaves?

God permitted the mistreatment in Egypt to help them be dissatisfied with Egypt. Lot's wife, despite the wickedness of Sodom, was not dissatisfied and didn't want to leave Sodom. Consider what would likely have happened had the Jews been living in Egypt in the favor and condition that Joseph enjoyed and then Moses shows up and calls them to leave?

God did not cause the mistreatment, but permitted it, so that the people would not cling to the riches of Egypt, but be willing to leave. But even coming out of slavery how long was it until they were actually crying to go back to Egypt?

And what would have happened if they would have stayed in Egypt in either positive or negative circumstances? They would have become pagans, which many of them became anyway.

So, we see in Exodus the outworking of the plan of salvation, preserving the line of the Messiah, and establishing the written record of truth through Moses and later prophets. God does this in the only way God can, truth, love, and freedom actualized through the events and choices of people, leading people only as they are willing to follow.

Read the third paragraph,

- God takes the initiative to deliver those who trust in Him. We need simply to accept, by faith, what He offers us. This is why the book of Exodus should be studied, for it points to what Jesus has done for us all. It is a book about redemption, deliverance, and final salvation—all of

which are ours, by faith, in Christ Jesus and what He has secured for us. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 6.

What do you think of the first sentence, “God takes the initiative to deliver those who trust in Him”?

Doesn’t God take the initiative to deliver those who do NOT trust in Him? What comes first God’s initiative to save or our trust in Him that He sees and then takes and initiative to respond to our trust by delivering us?

Is this distinction I am drawing just semantics, word-play, all the same just said a different way, just me nit-picking to find something to criticize, or is there a real, meaningful, substantive difference—one that make a real difference in the type of person we believe God to be?

Which comes first our trust or God’s initiative? And what difference does this make? Paul wrote:

- Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that **God’s kindness leads you toward repentance**? Romans 2:4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

If we teach that God *responds* to our trust then we place the burden on us to trust in order to get God’s initiative and remove the truth that it is God’s kindness that gets us to trust.

What does it mean to accept by faith what He offers?

- For it is by **grace** you have been **saved**, through **faith**—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What does this mean?

What is faith? How are we saved through faith? Is saving faith more than belief? Don’t the devils believe and tremble?

Is saving faith the belief in the right doctrines? Is it belief in the right Bible, diet, Sabbath? What about the right God? And what makes faith saving?

Could someone believe in the Creator God of the Bible and not have saving faith?

So what is saving faith?

Does this help?

- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1 NKJV.

How is faith the substance of what we hope for?

The word substance comes from the Greek *hypostasis*:

- Hypo = under or below
- Stasis = standing

Translated into Latin *sub-stance*

- Subway
- Submarine
- Subterranean

English = understanding

Faith is our understanding of things hoped for—in what way?

- Comprehension, mental grasp – which is necessary for the true meaning of genuine biblical faith
- But this word also means an agreement, an accord, a contract, as in a covenant
- Faith is our “understanding” with God, our agreement, our covenant with God

Does that help, or make it more difficult? Well, is there another covenant that the Bible uses to represent the saving covenant with which we are to have with Jesus?

The marriage covenant—and what is the basis of a godly marriage? What are the elements that bind, tie, form, hold, sustain, maintain, and cause to grow a godly marriage?

Is a godly marriage built upon a marriage license properly registered with the county? Is a godly marriage covenant built upon blind faith? What is it built upon?

- Love and trust built upon openness and truth
- Is this what our saving faith in Jesus is? A covenant or an agreement of love and trust with God built upon openness and truth?
- The Greek word for faith is *pistis/pisteo* translated as belief/faith/trust.

So yes, faith is our understanding love and trust agreement with God that is established upon the evidence of God’s supreme trustworthiness and when we exercise our faith or trust in God we are open, we open ourselves up in heart and mind and He comes in with His divine healing recreative power and we experience, through that trust the things hoped for, which are:

- a new heart and right spirit
- a cleansed conscience
- removal of fear, guilt, shame
- our identity, value, and worth in who we are children loved by God

- and we develop the fruits of the spirit—maturity, wisdom, patience, kindness, love, self-control
- we have ourselves restored to God’s intent and ideal

Thus we are saved, or healed and restored, by God’s grace through faith.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The biblical text paints the story of the children of Israel in Egypt in dark colors. The book of Exodus begins with their enslavement by Egyptian taskmasters and the oppressive labor that they imposed upon the Hebrews. The book of Exodus ends, however, with God’s peaceful and comforting presence in the tabernacle, at the center of the Israelite camp (see Exodus 40). In between these two opposite poles, God’s triumph is described. By the Lord’s liberating His people from slavery, by His opening the Red Sea, and by His defeating the strongest army of that time, God’s spectacular victory over the forces of evil is revealed. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 7.

Talking specifically about the Exodus Paul wrote,

- Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 1 Corinthians 10:6 NIV84.

The word *examples* also means types or object lessons.

What are the object lessons from these events? What application do these real historical events have to the larger landscape of the war between Christ and Satan?

- Joseph and his family were honored and living in the land of Goshen, a fertile and garden land, and they grew and prospered.
 - Adam and Eve were living in Eden and were healthy and prospering
- A new Pharaoh arose that did not honor, remember, value Joseph or his family. He was from a different dynasty and was threatened and jealous of the Hebrews and the previous dynasty and he enslaves the Hebrews
 - Satan, who is not human, not part of this creation, is jealous of Jesus and tempts Adam and Eve and enslaves them into sin
- The Egyptian task masters make life hard for the Hebrews
 - Sin and Satan has made life hard for humans
- God sends Moses to confront Pharaoh and destroy his power of lies and false worship and set the people free
 - Jesus came and confronted Satan and destroyed his power of lies and false worship and sets humanity free with His truth and love. When we receive by faith, the indwelling

Holy Spirit, we receive a new life, the life of Christ, a new motivating animating power that frees us from the control of fear and selfishness, frees us from guilt and shame.

- Moses leads the people through the Red Sea on the way to the promised land
 - The opening of the Red Sea, going down into the seabed and coming out the other side is symbolic of Jesus' opening the grave and we go down into the grave through conversion where we are immersed in the waters of the Holy Spirit and die to the old life of fear and selfishness and come out the other side with a new life of love and trust, the life of Christ. This is symbolically represented by the waters of baptism.
 - And this is what liberates us from the slavery of sin—we are enslaved by our own fallen carnal nature, by our fear and selfishness, it is by surrendering self, dying to self, being reborn with a new life of Christ, the animating motivating energy or waters of love and trust that frees us from the slavery of sin.
 - And we come out of the waters of baptism with a new life on our way to our heavenly promised land.
- God sets up His tabernacle or sanctuary in the midst of the camp
 - This symbolizes Jesus becoming human and setting up His tabernacle, temple, in the midst of humanity and
 - The Earth made new when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven and God and Jesus are the sanctuary that is eternally set up in the midst of this human creation.
- Jesus defeats the strongest army of evil that ever existed by drowning them in the waters of the Red Sea, which is symbolic of the waters of truth and love which the saved are immersed and cleansed in, but which also represent the fires of truth and love that consume all lies, fear, guilt, shame, selfishness in the end. The eternal fires of God's life giving glory that the righteous live in, but which consumes all sin and those who refuse to let go their sin. Satan and his army are ultimately consumed by the very fires that cleanse and purify the righteous, just as the symbolic waters of the Red Sea baptized the Hebrews destroyed the Egyptians.

MONDAY

Read last paragraph,

- That is, even though many details about the Hebrews in Egypt at that time remain hidden, at least for now (see 1 Cor. 13:12), the revelation of God's character still shines through the pages of this book, as it does all through Scripture. We can know that no matter how bad things seem, God is always there, and we can trust Him in whatever bad situation we find ourselves. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 8.

What does the book of Exodus reveal to you about God? How do you see God's character in the book of Exodus?

Does the book of Exodus inspire greater trust in God? Why or why not?

What was God doing in the book of Exodus? Why was God intervening in this way?

Were there no other abuses of peoples in the world, no other cultures that were enslaving people or worshiping false gods? Why is God intervening here and not there?

Because it was through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that Jesus is coming—God is working out the plan of salvation—the promised seed of Genesis 3:15 for without Jesus, no human can be saved from sin.

We must always remember to see these events in the larger landscape of the Great Controversy and God’s plan to bring Jesus to destroy Satan, sin, death, and save humanity.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Pharaoh was a god on earth, the son of Ra the sun god. And this so-called god gave the order to kill the new born Hebrews and the lesson then states in the fourth paragraph:

- Yet despite all his power, this “god” was not able to force the midwives to go contrary to their convictions. In fact, in contrast to the nameless pharaoh, the two midwives are named, Shiphrah and Puah (Exod. 1:15); they are highly esteemed because they feared the Lord. Pharaoh’s wicked command had no effect on them because they respected God more than the orders of an earthly ruler (see also Acts 5:29). Thus, God blessed them with their own large families. What a powerful testimony to faithfulness. These women, regardless of how little they knew of theology, knew not only what was right but chose to do what was right. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 9.

Why couldn’t Pharaoh get the midwives to follow his orders? Weren’t his order lawful for the Egyptian government? In other words, when he gave his orders didn’t they become the law? So, shouldn’t the midwives have followed the law? Why or why not?

What is revealed by this? Why couldn’t lawful orders get the midwives to obey? Could threats of punishment get obedience?

How could the midwives know what was right if the Egyptian law said to do it and God’s law had not been given at Sinai yet?

What does this tell us about God’s law? It is not a written law, it is the law of life, it is design law. They knew because they had a conscience, because such an act was to harm another, abuse another, exploit, injure another. It was wrong, it was anti-love, and their consciences informed them of this.

This story reveals again by facts, evidence, how things work, the difference between God’s design laws upon which reality is built and the artificial laws of creatures. External laws and law enforcement cannot change hearts and minds, cannot save from sin!

God cannot get what He wants, love, trust, loyalty, devotion, understanding friendship by passing laws and threatening to punish those who do not comply.

So, what will happen to people if we teach that God functions like Pharaoh, imposing laws and threatening to use His power to kill lawbreakers?

Does this mean there is no punishment for sin? No justice? From where does the punishment for lawbreaking come? Human law, inflicted by the authorities; God's design law from sin, from breaking the laws life is built upon. As Paul wrote, those who sow to the carnal nature, from that nature reap destruction. Or James who wrote, sin when full grown brings forth death.

What do you say to those who argue God is not only loving He is also just and justice requires sin be punished and cite the book of Exodus as proof showing that the book is filled with God imposing various laws and the punishments for law breaking?

Why then the law? This is the question the Jews asked, and Paul raises in Galatians—why then the law? It was added, why? Because of sinfulness, because unruliness, because love was not in hearts and minds, because these were former slaves who would have devolved into tribal infighting and destroyed themselves. So, God met these selfish, unconverted, ungodly, people where they were and put them in the playpen of imposed law and law enforcement to restrain them from destroying themselves until they would grow up and have the law written upon their hearts.

Read last paragraph,

- When Pharaoh saw that his plot had failed, he commanded the Egyptians to kill all the male babies born to the Hebrews. They were to throw them into the Nile River, probably as an offering to Hapi, the god of the Nile, and also a god of fertility. (This is the first recorded time that Jews are to be killed only because they are Jews.) The purpose of the death decree was to subdue the Hebrews, to annihilate all male descendants, and to assimilate the women into the Egyptian nation, thus ending the threat that Pharaoh believed the Hebrews posed to his nation. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 9.

What is going on here? Is it only national security issues or something large? Do you see Satan behind the scenes seeking to destroy the family through whom Jesus will be born?

WEDNESDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- We know only a few things about his early life. After being miraculously saved and adopted by Hatshepsut, Moses lived for his first 12 years with his original family (Exod. 2:7–9; Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 244). Moses then received the best Egyptian education, all in order to prepare him to be the next pharaoh of Egypt (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 245). How

fascinating that, ultimately, so much of this education would be useless for, or even work against, what really mattered: the knowledge of God and of His truth. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 10.

Thoughts about this? The lesson goes on to ask at the bottom of the page?

- How much are you learning that is ultimately useless for what really matters? *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 10.

Do you think Moses' education was useless to him?

The lesson references the commentary *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 245, so let's check with that commentary and see what you think:

- At the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training. The monarch had determined to make his adopted grandson his successor on the throne, and the youth was educated for his high station. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Acts 7:22. His ability as a military leader made him a favorite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character. Satan had been defeated in his purpose. **The very decree condemning the Hebrew children to death had been overruled by God for the training and education of the future leader of His people.** *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 245, emphasis mine.

Hmmm...is this suggesting that the education in Egypt on strategy, organization, planning, logistics, prioritization, in civil and military matters could be beneficial in leading nearly 2 million people and forming a new civilization?

I am not certain that the education he received in Egypt was wasted, what do you think?

THURSDAY

The lesson describes Moses' murder of the overseer, fleeing to Midian and while in Midian marrying having two sons, likely writing the first two books of the Bible, Job and Genesis and then returning to Egypt at God's direction to confront Pharaoh and lead the people out of Egypt.

He was 40 when he fled to Midian and 80 when he returned to Egypt. I like to point out to people who think they have wasted their life and it is too late for them to serve the Lord that Moses was 80 before he was ready to do ministry.

Read bottom question,

- Was it God’s plan that Moses kill the Egyptian? If not, what does this story teach us about how God can overrule in any situation and use it for His own purposes? How does Romans 8:28 help us understand this important truth? *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 11.

If Moses were alive today and it was 10, 20, 30, or 40 years since he murdered someone fled the country where he committed the murder and never was prosecuted for his crime—what position would he be permitted to hold in your church?

Why or why not? What does it tell us about human law versus God’s law?

Did Moses get away with his murder since he was never punished for his crime?

Was justice served? If so how? If not then how can God use Moses if it is unjust?

- The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84.

What does this mean and how does it apply to Moses?

FRIDAY

Read last paragraph,

- The good news in all this is that, despite Satan’s plans, God overruled, and He used faithful people to thwart the enemy. We do live in the territory of our enemy, whom Jesus called “the prince” or “ruler of this world” (Eph. 2:2, NKJV; John 14:30). Satan usurped this position from Adam, but Jesus Christ defeated him in His life and through His death on the cross (Matt. 4:1–11, John 19:30, Heb. 2:14). Although Satan is still alive and active, as revealed in his attempt to kill those children, his own execution is certain (John 12:31; John 16:11; Rev. 20:9, 10, 14). The good news is that life’s difficulties can be overcome by God’s grace (Phil. 4:13). That grace is our only hope. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 12.

What do you think of the idea that Satan’s execution is certain? What does that suggest and is it true? Will Satan die in the end because God uses His power to execute him? Is it true then that sin does not kill, it doesn’t harm, but God harms you for it, that the wages of sin is not death, but God kills you for it?

What kind of law is represented with that statement? It is imposed law, which is the lie the is the basis of Satan’s argument against God and undermines trust in God.



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 2

The Burning Bush

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

- God's call to us will often change the direction of our lives. However, if we follow that call, then we discover that God's path is always the best route for us. However, sometimes—at first—it isn't easy to accept God's call. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 14.

Haven't you found this to be true? In my life I have seen this more than once.

While I always wanted to be a physician, when I started medical school the only specialty that I, with certainty, did not want to go into was psychiatry. But the Lord had another plan, and I felt a real call to specialize in psychiatry. And when I told my medical school advisors and my family of my choice, initially, all of them tried to talk me out of it. But I knew that is what I was called to do.

As many of you know God blessed me with a scholarship to medical school with the US Army and after graduating I did my residency with the Army and then served as the Division Psychiatrist for the 24th and 3rd Infantry Division, and Chief of Psychiatry at Winn Army Hospital and I thought I would complete at least a 20 year career in the Army. But God had another plan, and I was led back to the Chattanooga area and opened a private practice in Dalton Georgia, where I met my wife Christie—and what a blessing—**God really had a better plan that I had!**

And as many of you know, my passion as a psychiatrist has been to integrate God's truth, God's methods and principles with modern science to bring healing to people. Therefore, I not only studied psychiatry, but have deeply studied God's Word and in 2004 asked to start a Sabbath School class at the Collegedale University Church, which was approved—and we started Come and Reason Class. Some of you have been part of this class since that time.

I had no aspirations beyond that class at our local church and thought that was all God called me to do, but God had a different plan. And events unfolded such that in 2010 we resigned our class at the University Church, moved our membership to the Hamilton Community Church and founded Come and Reason Ministries—which will turn 15 years old this year. And since founding Come and Reason Ministries God has blessed us and this ministry has grown and we have reached hundreds of thousands all over the world that we would never have reached teaching a class in our local church.

As you know, Come and Reason Ministries is a not for profit ministry that produces and gives away materials teaching the truth about God's character of love and design law methods that bring healing

to hearts and minds, and we have never done a fund raiser or solicited donations, and God has blessed us to be able to continue to grow, produce more, give away more, reach more people.

And I thought this was God's plan, for me to have my practice in Chattanooga and lead Come and Reason Ministries. Yet, God had another plan—for me to be medical director at Honey Lake Clinic (HLC). And this is very interesting because HLC was founded in 2017 and the founder Karl Benzio MD, began asking me to come and be medical director back then, but I have no memory of those conversations. Christie, however, does remember him asking multiple times over several years when we would see each other at the AACC.

What was happening is that he would mention this to me, but I never even allowed the idea to register because I believed I was where God wanted me to be, here running our Ministry. So, I wasn't even aware this was open for me. So God got my attention, by Dr. Benzio nominated me to be the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Liberty University, which resulted in them offering me that position to start a Christian psychiatry residency program.

As you know I took that position, believing God was calling me there, and in the interim, Come and Reason Ministries had decided the fall before to purchase this property and renovate it to give us a permanent place of our own and not be dependent on others. This property and renovation was completed just at the time I started at Liberty which allowed me to continue to teach remotely—God's timing was perfect.

So I thought I would be at Liberty opening a residency program, but as you know that didn't happen for a variety of regulatory and system obstacles (which God certainly foreknew), and then, the very weekend things ended at Liberty I was again presented with the medical directorship at HLC, (which had been there all along), and have now taken that position. And HLC and Come and Reason Ministries now have a very close collaboration. Not only has God led me to form this ministry and to medical directorship of HLC, but through that relationship God has opened new avenues for our materials and this healing message about God to reach more people.

But now for the rest of the story. When I left the military in 1997 and opened my practice in Dalton, GA. I began talking with various leaders in the SDA church about creating a mental health treatment program that integrates all the healing truths we know from God's Word and our founders, the various natural remedies along with the best in modern neuroscience. I began writing books, my first *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*, which was initially published by the Review under its Autumn House label back in 2007. But in 2010, when we resigned our SS class and opened Come and Reason Ministries, the publisher canceled the contract and returned all rights to me. And since then, we have published and distributed well more than 100,000 copies of this book, have developed a workbook that is approved and used in multiple prisons across the country and the book has been translated into 10 languages and is given away in various countries around the world.

But, I had been advocating for our church to invest in holistic scientifically based Christian mental health treatment programs, but unfortunately they never did—so God led me to HLC which is the only Christian Residential Treatment program with fully integrated Christian principles and modern

science, all the natural remedies and more are included in our program and, as you would expect when God's design law methods are applied, we see remarkable healing.

So, yes, if we trust God, He will often lead us in directions we didn't anticipate but His leading is always best.

Read second paragraph,

Such is the case for Moses and his call by God, which specifically began at the encounter with the Lord at the burning bush. Although Moses may or may not have known about the laws of combustion, he knew that what he was seeing was a miracle, and it certainly caught his attention. No question, the Lord was calling him to a specific task. The issue was: Would he answer the call, regardless of the radical new change in his life that this call would bring? At first, he was not very receptive to it. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 14.

What do you think of the sentence "Although Moses may or may not have known about the laws of combustion, he knew that what he was seeing was a miracle, and it certainly caught his attention"?

I really wished they would have said something like this,

Although Moses may or may not have known about the laws of combustion, he knew that what he was seeing was **not normal fire that something quite different was happening**, and it certainly caught his attention.

Whether innocent or intentional, the lesson's description puts in people's minds that this was normal fire of combustion, where matter undergoes a chemical oxidation reaction typically with oxygen that produces gaseous products (smoke), and that God was somehow performing a miracle to prevent the chemical reaction from destroying the bush—similar to the miracle He performed to protect Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego in the combustion fire in the furnace.

But this is exactly NOT what was happening, the bush was not being oxidized. This was not the fire of combustion and a miracle from God. It was the glory of God which looks like fire but is not combustion.

Let's read the text, for there is some incredible information in this encounter that is vital to recognize and understand and because it hasn't been accurately understood various errors have crept into Christian teachings.

- Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the **angel of the LORD** appeared to him **in flames of fire from within a bush**. Moses saw that though the **bush was on fire it did not burn up**. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—**why the bush does not burn up**." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called to him from within the bush**, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I

am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:1-6 NIV84 emphasis mine.

If we recognize the Bible is an inspired record of real people and real events, then we must read it as such and form evidenced-based understandings. This means thinking what happened, what transpired, what occurred, what was revealed. And what is happening here?

There is a bush that looks like it is on fire, but it does not burn up. That raises the question that Moses had, why?

So what are the option? One is that it is combustion but God is performing a miracle to basically heal or recreate the elements of the bush that are being oxidized in the fire so that it never gets consumed or God puts a shield around the bush so it isn’t getting oxidized, but then what is the source of the oxidizing fire?; OR we realize that this is a different type of fire, something that looks like the fire of combustion, but is not the fire of combustion.

How can we know? We look to the rest of Scripture to see if there is further evidence that there is something that looks like fire but is not combustion, and what are the identifiers of when this fiery looking energy is present and are those identifiers present at the bush:

- When Solomon’s Temple was dedicated, the priests couldn’t enter because the brightness of God’s fiery glory was too great, but the temple did not burn down (2 Chronicles 5:14, 7:1–3).
- Before his fall, Lucifer walked among the “fiery stones” of God’s presence (Ezekiel 28:14, 16).
- God takes His throne and “rivers of fire” come out from Him, yet billions stand in this fire without any harm (Daniel 7:9, 10).
- Prior to his crucifixion, in a body still subject to death, Jesus was bathed in heavenly fire, yet no harm came to Him. His clothes didn’t even get scorched (Matthew 17:2).
- Hebrews plainly tells us that “our God is a consuming fire” (12:29).
- The Song of Solomon states: “Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away” (8:6, 7).
- But when the children of Israel—unrepentant, still filled with sin and selfishness—saw Moses’ face, they shrank back and begged him to wear a veil. They couldn’t stand the heavenly light (Exodus 34:33–35).
- Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu “So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ... Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron’s uncle Uzziel, and said to them, “Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary.” So they came and carried them, **still in their tunics**, outside the camp, as Moses ordered. Leviticus 10:1–5, emphasis mine.

Do we have biblical evidence that there is something that looks like fire, but it is not the fire of combustion? And does the Bible describe, reveal, and document that this non-combustion is what is seen when God is present, in other words, one of the indicators that this is the non-combustion energy that looks like fire rather than combustion is we have evidence of God's presence?

So, in the context of the burning bush, do we have solid biblical evidence that this is not the fire of combustion? And why is this important? What doctrine is impacted by understanding this truth? The final end of sin and sinners, what hell is and how God destroys sin and purifies His universe. The final end comes when, after the 1000 years, God unveils His life-giving glory, which He has been veiling since Adam sinned, and the entire Earth is covered in His glory, as described in Isaiah and Revelation. The righteous will live forever in this life-giving glory and we will radiate it like Elijah and Moses did on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. But the wicked hate the fires of love and truth emanating from God and when bathed in this life-giving glory, which God in mercy has been shielding this world from so all who are willing can be converted and healed, their sin which they can no longer deny brings them terrible torment of soul, heart, and mind and they voluntarily choose to surrender their lives. They prefer not to live than to live in a universe bathed in infinite truth and love. And death and the grave are thrown into this lake of fire, the fires of God's life-giving glory—for life is what kills or destroys death and the grave. And God cleanses His universe in the only way possible that destroys fear and rebellion, through His holy methods of truth, love, and absolute freedom. Every intelligent being in the universe knows God is not the source of pain, suffering, or death, it is sin that causes this.

And this is why it is critical to recognize this fire is not the fire of combustion

If you would like a more thorough written biblical description of [The Truth About Hell](#) click the link to the blog.

The other major truth from this encounter at the burning bush is that it gives insight into Jesus as fully God, as Jesus is the member of the Godhead speaking from the bush and also the physical form Jesus chose to manifest Himself in prior to becoming a real human being; the text states that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the bush.

And if you would like to explore this question, who is this angel of the Lord who is also God, see our blog [Are Jesus and Michael One and the Same?](#) For the Bible references documenting this.

The fact that Jesus sometimes in the past appeared in the form of an angel gives insight into the war in heaven:

- And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Revelation 12:7-8 NIV84.

SUNDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- Yet, this time was not simply for Moses to smell the flowers (or perhaps, in this case, the desert cactus?). These years of walking with the Lord changed him and prepared him for a leadership role. God also used Moses in this quiet wilderness to write, under divine inspiration, two of the oldest biblical books: Job and Genesis (see Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 251; Francis D. Nichol, et al., eds., *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140). Moses also received from God crucial insights about the great controversy, the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the patriarchs, and, most important, the plan of salvation. Thus, Moses was instrumental in passing on to all humanity the true knowledge of the living God, our Creator and Sustainer, and knowledge about what God is doing in view of the sin that has wreaked havoc on this planet. Biblical and salvation history make little sense apart from the crucial foundation that, under inspiration, Moses gave us, especially in the book of Genesis. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 15.

I agree with this completely, these 40 years in Midian were vital to prepare Moses for his role as deliverer and leader of the people.

Our pamphlet, [The Book of Job and the Last Days: Seven Truths to Prepare for Christ's Return](#) examines seven vital truths that were essential for Moses to learn before going back to Egypt and facing Pharaoh and these same seven are vital for us to learn as we face the final events that will lead us out of this world to our heavenly promised land.

And those seven are:

1. The War Is Bigger than Us

The first chapter of Job starts with a revelation of a war that is universal, a conflict that goes far beyond Earth and human beings, a controversy that began in heaven and is centered upon God's character and trustworthiness. The Bible confirms this elsewhere:

Moses needed to understand that what was happening on Earth was part of a larger conflict involving the entire universe, a war over two antagonistic principles and methods. Is God love, the source of truth, a righteous being who gives of Himself for the welfare of His creatures, one who sacrifices self to uplift others (Philippians 2:5–11), a being who gives His intelligent creatures real freedom?

Or is God no different than what Satan alleges, a powerful being who makes up rules and then uses power to enforce His rules with inflicted punishments? Does God run His universe upon truth, love, and liberty, in which all of His laws are design laws, protocols upon which reality is constructed to operate, or does God function no differently than Pharaoh, a power-monger who made up rules, punished rule-breakers, and enslaved people to do his bidding?

Foundational to understanding what is happening in our world is the knowledge that we are caught up in a cosmic war, a war that began in heaven and spread to Earth, a war over God's character, law, methods, and principles, a war in which the sword of God's truth battles against the lies of Satan, in which the power of love fights against fear and selfishness, in which liberty stands firm against coercion and control, in which forgiveness destroys resentment and hate, in which kindness eviscerates cruelty, in which meekness overthrows pride and arrogance, in which grace overcomes guilt and shame, in which trust in God breaks down the gates of hell that entrap souls and restores hearts and minds to friendship with God.

The first truth Moses needed to understand, and the first truth we need to understand, is that the war is bigger than us, that it involves the entire universe. And we need to remember this as the final events are unfolding around us.

2. The Enemy Force Is Led by a Supernatural Deceiver

- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12 NIV84.

The book of Job reveals that there is an enemy behind the scenes, a being of supernatural ability who wars against the kingdom of God. He is the father of lies, the destroyer, the one “who holds the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). He is the source of rebellion, the originator of distrust in God, the fracture point in breaking away from God's perfection, of deviating from His design laws of life and, thus, Satan severed the life-link of love and truth upon which God's kingdom functions. Alienation from God is death, and Satan's lies, when believed, break the bonds of love and trust and result in fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, ruin, and death—unless remedied by our Savior.

Moses needed to understand this truth in order to confront Pharaoh, to comprehend how Adam and Eve fell, how lies had tricked Eve into breaking trust with God and how that broken trust had changed her and her husband, who chose rebellion with her. They were changed from holy, righteous, loyal beings who lived in perfect harmony with God and His law of love into beings who distrusted God, who were filled with guilt and shame and were consumed by fear and selfishness. God's law was displaced, and the law of sin and death infected their souls.

We, like Moses, need to understand that the battle between good and evil is not a physical struggle, not a war of might and power, but a conflict over two antagonistic principles vying for every intelligent heart and mind, a war instigated by a supernatural being seeking to replace God in our hearts and minds. To whom will we be loyal? Whose law and methods will we embrace and practice? Who will we trust?

3. Pain, Suffering, and Death Originate with Satan—But God Gets Blamed

Job reveals the truth that pain, suffering, and death do not come from God—rather, they come from God's enemy; yet, in this fallen world, God gets blamed.

As the various attacks upon Job were unleashed, one of his servants reported to him:

- The fire **of God** fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you! Job 1:16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

God gets blamed, yet the book of Job leaves no doubt that Satan was the one who caused the destruction.

We find the same thing happening throughout human history. A hurricane destroys a city, and God gets blamed. Insurance companies even label tornados and other natural disasters as “acts of God.” Patients blame God for their physical sickness, and parents ask, “Why did God give my child cancer?”

The Bible reveals that God’s power is exercised in order to hold the principalities and powers of darkness at bay (e.g., 2 Kings 6:17; Psalms 34:7, 91:11). He sends His angels to restrain and limit Satan’s power. The book of Job demonstrates that God has placed limits on Satan, but when those limits are loosened, Satan destroys.

Scripture also tells us that God’s angels are currently holding back the four winds of strife as heaven waits for the servants of God to be sealed (Revelation 7:1–3). When these people are sealed, only then will the angels let go what they have been holding back and the forces of Satan are freed to cause all kinds of harm.

As the final events unfold and the four winds of strife are loosed, we need to remember the lesson of Job that God is our protector and Satan is the destroyer. God is the source of life; Satan is the source of death. God is our friend, benefactor, and Savior; Satan is our enemy, exploiter, and destroyer.

4. Family and Friends Can Be Used to Tempt and Discourage

The book of Job reveals that in trying times, the devil can work through our closest family and friends to tempt and discourage us. Job’s wife encouraged him to “curse God and die” (2:9 NIV84), and his friends misrepresented God (42:7) and were “miserable comforters” (16:2 NIV84).

Moses needed to understand this because his brother and sister would turn against him (Numbers 12:1–16), and the people he helped save would constantly complain to him and about him.

Jesus experienced the same struggles. His brothers didn’t believe Him and sought to tempt Him to act contrary to God’s plan (John 7:1–5); Peter was also used by Satan to tempt and discourage Jesus (Matthew 16:22, 23). Jesus said, “Your worst enemies will be the members of your own family” (10:36 GNT).

As we face the final events before Christ’s return, we need to remember this truth. We need to realize that we, like Job, Moses, and Jesus, may have family members and friends who tempt and discourage us. But we, like Job, must not believe discouraging family and friends; we must remain loyal to Jesus.

5. Bible Perfection Is About Unshakable Love, Trust, and Loyalty to God. It Is Not About Task Performance or Rule Compliance

After Satan presents himself before the heavenly counsel, God says to him,

- Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a **perfect** and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:8 KJV, emphasis mine.

Job was not sinless; he was a sinner saved by grace, but God describes Him as “perfect.” Why? Because Job achieved what Jesus has instructed us to achieve:

- Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48 NIV84.

The perfection that Jesus is speaking about here is the perfection of love, trust, and loyalty. God is perfect in love, perfect in trust, and perfect in loyalty. And we are to so mature in our love for God and others that no matter what trials come, we would rather die than break our trust with God.

There have been many sinners throughout history who became friends of God who achieved this maturity, this steadfast devotion to Him. This faithfulness, this loyal love, is biblical perfection:

- Daniel would rather be thrown into the lion’s den than to betray God.
- Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego would rather be thrown into a fiery furnace than to betray God.
- And while Job had questions, while he didn’t understand what was happening to him, he would not break trust with God.

This is what God wants for His people on Earth when the four winds are loosed in the last days. He wants us so settled into our love for and our trust in Him that nothing can shake us from Him.

We must become like Job, sealed and perfected in our love for and loyalty to God; only then will we be among the victorious who “overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

The book of Job makes clear that Bible perfection is not about deeds and tasks but about loyal love to our Creator.

6. Health and Wellness Are Not Evidence of Righteousness

The book of Job reveals that the righteous may suffer tragedy, loss, sickness, and poverty. It also reveals that being right with God does not equate with success in this world.

- His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.” John 9:2, 3.

Like Jesus’ own disciples, many people have failed to realize this truth and have falsely concluded that if someone is poor or suffering with disease, it is because they have been abandoned by God, cursed by God, or are being punished by God, while being healthy and wealthy is evidence of being in good standing with God.

They don’t recognize that Jesus’ own life was one marked by poverty, abuse, mistreatment, rejection, torture, and death. Certainly, His suffering and lack of material blessings were not evidence of being under God’s curse or punishment.

Moses needed to understand this to fulfill his mission, in order to return to the rich land of Egypt and not be tempted. He needed to know that his wanderer’s clothing and shepherd’s rod were not evidence of a lack of God’s blessing.

The people of God who are preparing to face the last days and for His soon return need the same truth—to build up our security on heavenly treasure and not earthly wealth.

7. The Highest Calling for Each of Us Is to Say of God What Is Right

Ultimately, the book of Job reveals that the central issue in the cosmic war is the truth about God. As Jesus told us,

- “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” John 17:3 NIV84.

If we want life, health, and happiness, we must return to the truth about God as revealed by Jesus. To reject the knowledge of God as revealed by Jesus damages the mind and corrupts the character.

The book of Job makes the truth about God the eternal central truth. The story begins in heaven with Satan alleging that God bribes, that God manipulates, that God is lying when He says that Job is perfect and righteous in all his ways.

God’s character and trustworthiness are called into question. As the book unfolds, we see Satan doing evil but God being blamed for it. We see humans accusing God and misrepresenting Him. But through all of it, Job stays faithful. He refuses to blame God.

Instead, Job continues to take the position that if he could just talk with God, God would explain things in a way that made sense. And in the end, Job is commended with the highest praise that a friend of God can receive; he is commended for having said of God what is right (42:7).

At this time in history, the true friends of God are called to do the same. We are called to say of God what is right. Revelation 14:7 calls for a people to present the everlasting gospel—the eternal good news about God—to the world, to give God glory by revealing Him to the world, because the time has come for everyone to make a right judgment about God.

Satan has lied about God, and God has been blamed for all the evils that Satan has originated. God is still accused of being the source of pain, suffering, and death. God is still being represented as a cosmic dictator who makes up rules and uses His power to torment and execute those who refuse to love Him and obey His rules. Thus, God calls for His friends today, those who are like Job, to say of Him what is right, to tell the world that God is exactly like Jesus revealed Him to be, that He is the source of life, health, healing, and happiness, and that it is Satan and sin that are the source of pain, suffering, and death (Hebrews 2:14; Romans 6:23; James 1:15; Galatians 6:8).

MONDAY

The lesson starts by focusing on the Angel of the Lord, we have already covered that, but are there any questions?

Read third paragraph,

- The suffering of God’s people in Egypt is colorfully described as a groaning and a deep cry for help. God heard their cry and was concerned (Exod. 2:23–25). He called them “my people” (Exod. 3:7). That is, even before Sinai and the ratifying of the covenant, they were His people, and He would cause them to dwell and prosper (if they would obey) in the land of Canaan, as He had promised their fathers. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 16.

What do you understand the term “my people” to mean?

- Does this mean they have a different way to salvation than the rest of the peoples of the world?
- Does it mean God loves them more than other peoples of the world?
- Does it mean that God is racist and makes racial preferences based on one’s genetic heritage?

What does the term mean?

If you are an employer do you ever say, “my employees”? Do you ever say, “my people”? What do you mean by that?

If you have ever coached a ball team to you ever say, “my players”? Do you ever say, those are “my people”?

Does God mean by saying “my people” that those people are His employees, His team members, being called and engaged for a mission, a purpose, a calling, to represent Him, to advance His

purposes, to not only be the avenue for the Messiah, but the community through whom His truth, methods, principles, and plan of salvation will be made known to humanity?

We must be careful when we read and hear terms like “my people” that we don’t allow a false meaning to enter our minds, like the genetic descendants of Jacob are somehow God’s people by race. No, the only people that are God’s people are the people that are actually on God’s team, advancing God’s cause, promoting God’s truth, methods, principles, regardless of race, tribe, nation, kindred, or people group.

TUESDAY

The lesson title is The Name of the Lord and focuses our attention on Exodus 6:3, which reads:

- And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (El-Shaddai), but by my name JEHOVAH (Yahweh) was I not known to them. Exodus 6:3 KJV

What do you think about this?

Consider these texts:

- He also said to him, “I am the LORD (Yahweh), who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” Genesis 15:7 NIV84
- Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD (Yahweh) it shall be seen. Genesis 22:13-14.

And Jacob’s dream of the ladder, we read:

- There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD (Yahweh), the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.” Genesis 28:13 NIV84.

So, what does Exodus 6:3 mean that God was not known by His name Yahweh or Jehovah to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

- And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (El-Shaddai), but by my name JEHOVAH (Yahweh) was I not known to them. Exodus 6:3 KJV

Consider this text, does it help us with this question?

- I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose **rider is called Faithful and True**. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and

on his head are many crowns. **He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.** He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and **his name is the Word of God.**

Revelation 19:11-13 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean—He has a name that no one knows but himself, but he is called Faithful and True and his name is the Word of God?

In Scripture name means character—then why is the name on Jesus only known by Him, and Scripture more than 200 names for Jesus?

The reason Jesus name is only known by Him is because Jesus is infinite God and only infinite God can know infinity, in other words know the full and complete knowledge of God. Jesus has more than 200 names because He is infinite and as infinite truths and aspects associated with Him. Through all eternity future we shall grow to know more and more about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and yet never become infinite God, thus we will never know His name fully.

This is what is happening in the Exodus text. God is telling Moses (and remember Moses wrote the book of Genesis and already used the words Jehovah and Yahweh when writing those accounts about his forefathers, thus He knows those words were known by them) that though his forefathers knew the word Yahweh they did not know the full name, character, revelation of God. And that in the events occurring now Yahweh would reveal more about Himself and His name would become known in new ways that his forefathers did not know.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Moses reluctance, excuses and God's meeting these excuses with interventions.

Moses asks God, What if they don't believe I spoke with you. And God gave Moses three miracles: Rod turns to a snake; hand becomes leprous and then healthy; water turns to blood.

Moses then objects because he isn't a good speaker, so God tells him his brother Aaron is already on the way and will speak for him.

What do you make of this encounter? What lessons do we learn?

- Does this mean Moses didn't love God?
- Does it mean Moses didn't love his people?
- Does it mean Moses didn't want his people freed from slavery?

What spirit, motivation, drive, energy do you think was motivating Moses to have these concerns?

Wasn't it fear? He was afraid the people wouldn't believe him. He was afraid of how he would be perceived as a public speaker, would he mumble, stutter, misspeak, be laughed at.

Where did this spirit of fear come from in Moses? Adam—when Adam sinned he corrupted his spirit, the animating motivating energy that God breathed into him when he created him. Adam changed his spirit from a spirit of love and trust to fear and selfishness, as did Eve. And we are all born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). In other words, we are all born with a spirit of fear.

That is why we must be reborn with a new spirit of love and trust.

So Moses is being tempted with feelings of fear, leading him to seek ways to protect self. Was Moses in rebellion against God? No!

This is critical to understand. We are all born in sin and conceived in iniquity. We all struggle with the spirit of fear. Before conversion we are truly powerless and form all kinds of beliefs and attachments designed to reduce our fear and make us feel safe.

After conversion we have a new spirit, the spirit of love and trust, the Spirit of Jesus living in us. But we, like Moses, are often still tempted by the spirit of fear.

When this happens, we must do exactly what Moses did, talk to God, listen for His answers, and then choose to go forward making a truth and love decision in governance of self, not a fear-based decision. Even though we might feel the feeling of anxiety and fear, which I believe Moses still had, he went forward acting upon the truth and love and as he did his fear and concern for self reduced, to the point he eventually offered his own life for the people.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the event where an angel of the Lord appeared in a threatening manner to Moses because his youngest son had not been circumcised and how his wife Zipporah quickly circumcised the boy and touched Moses feet with the bloody foreskin and the angel left Moses alone.

Zipporah is very unhappy and calls Moses a bloody husband.

The lesson quotes a paragraph from the commentary *Patriarchs and Prophets* and leaves out a short portion which I find interesting, let's read the paragraph they quote and include the portion they edited out:

- On the way from Midian, Moses received a startling and terrible warning of the Lord's displeasure. An angel appeared to him in a threatening manner, as if he would immediately destroy him. No explanation was given; but Moses remembered that he had disregarded one of God's requirements; **yielding to the persuasion of his wife**, he had neglected to perform the rite of circumcision upon their youngest son. He had failed to comply with the condition by which his child could be entitled to the blessings of God's covenant with Israel; and such a neglect on the part of their chosen leader could not but lessen the force of the divine precepts

upon the people. Zipporah, fearing that her husband would be slain, performed the rite herself, and the angel then permitted Moses to pursue his journey. **In his mission to Pharaoh, Moses was to be placed in a position of great peril; his life could be preserved only through the protection of holy angels. But while living in neglect of a known duty, he would not be secure; for he could not be shielded by the angels of God.** *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 255-256, emphasis mine.

What do you think of this explanation as to why these events occurred?

Certainly if we neglect known duties we take ourselves out of God's plan and should not expect God to work to advance us on the wrong path, but to do exactly what He did here, intervened to alert us we are on the wrong path with opportunity to get back on the right one.

Further, Moses was going to lead the people, how could he as a leader expect them to comply with their duties if he doesn't comply with his? So this was important for him as leader to give an example of fidelity, integrity, exactness, and attention to detail in his duties to the Lord.

But what about why Moses did this? Evidently this was the second son and the first was circumcised, but the wife was not happy and he neglected to do this because of his wife's influence.

Have we seen this as a pattern through the Bible?

- Eve influences Adam to eat the fruit
- Job's wife encourages him to curse God and die
- Sarah influences Abraham to take Hagar
- Rebekah influences her son Jacob to deceive his father
- Zipporah influences Moses to neglect his duty
- Delilah influences Samson to share his secret
- Solomon's wives influence him to worship false gods
- Jezebel leads Ahab into Baal worship

Why do you think the lesson clipped this phrase?



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 3

Rough Start

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read third paragraph,

- Those who trust in God will face numerous trials. When we persevere, however, God brings solutions that come on His terms and in His time. His ways may conflict with our expectations for quick and instantaneous solutions, but we must learn to trust Him regardless. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 22.

How do we understand the fact that those who trust God will face numerous trials, with Jesus statement,

- Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:17 NIV84.

What does Jesus mean? As you think of the problems in the world, the various groups of Satan fighting back and forth in society, the pressures to join one or the other, the attacks on truth, on love, on freedom—are you at peace or does your heart become troubled, and are you tempted to be afraid?

How do we understand this? Where is this peace?

Paul wrote,

- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23 NIV84.

Somehow, we are to have peace, but Jesus also said that the more we follow Him, the more persecution, conflict, and mistreatment we will experience. Jesus Himself was the target of all kinds of injustice and abuse, so how do we understand this peace Jesus promised?

- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ Romans 5:1 NIV84

The peace Jesus promised is not peace with the world, in fact He said,

- “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “ ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.” Matthew 10:34-36 NIV84.

Jesus is not talking about cutting ties with godly, loving, Christlike family, but with family that are hardened against Him and being used to obstruct His healing work in our lives. I think my paraphrase makes what Jesus is describing easier to understand:

- "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family. Matthew 10:34-36 REM.

So where is this peace we are supposed to experience? Peace with God, that we are no longer warring against God and heaven, that we have been reconciled with Him and trust Him, but as we are reconciled to Him, reborn and have a new heart and right spirit, we have war with ourselves, our old nature, our fears, insecurities, and old selfish habits, and with all those in the world who are not reborn with the Spirit of Christ.

But what is the key that unlocks the door of the heart to experience this peace with God? Jesus said,

- “Though **I have been speaking figuratively**, a time is coming when I will **no longer use this kind of language** but will tell you **plainly** about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. **I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you** because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” Then Jesus’ disciples said, “**Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.** Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” “You believe at last!” Jesus answered. “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. “**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.** In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:25–33 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is the key to peace with God? The truth that Jesus does not need to pray the Father for us—why? Because God has never been against us, but always for us as Romans 8:31 says, that God so loved the world He sent His Son to accomplish His purpose of defeating Satan, destroying Satan’s power, freeing humankind from sin and restoring humanity to perfection through His substitutionary sinless life and voluntary sacrifice. In other words, what gives us peace is to recognize and worship God as Creator, whose laws are design laws and understand sin deviates from God’s design and corrupt the sinner and causes death unless removed by God. When we realize this, we are no longer afraid of God who is trying to save us and instead are afraid of sin, afraid of distrusting God, afraid of believing lies

about God that keep us from trusting Him. Thus, the truth about God sets us free from the lies and opens our heart to trust God again and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY

Read memory verse,

- Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.’ ” Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.” Exodus 5:1–2 NIV84.

Read the fourth paragraph,

- Egypt, with the pharaoh as king, is symbolic of a power that denies God’s presence and authority. It is an entity that stands in opposition to God, His Word, and His people. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 23.

The lesson is absolutely right, and this memory text reveals an important fact for understanding Bible prophecy—Egypt is not only a real nation that interacted with Israel during Bible times, but is used symbolically to represent one of Satan’s forces on Earth, and this text provides the qualifier that makes a person or group part of spiritual Egypt—and that is people and groups who deny the existence of or belief in our Creator God.

This would be the pagans through history, but in more modern times the evolutionist, Marxist, communist, humanist, scientist, naturalist, during the French Revolution those who worshiped the goddess of reason, today’s modern green movement, who are modern day Earth-worshipers, and most of the platform and positions of the political left.

Satan has always had people and groups denying God and worshiping something else, but he has had another group that he pits against the godless and they are those who do believe in the God of Abraham but who believe God’s law functions like human law and will use the power of the state, of law and law enforcement to advance their religion and beliefs in God. This group in Bible symbolism is represented by Babylon, in the Bible story arc the first nation to have a legal code, the code of Hammurabi, and when Nebuchadnezzar saw the three worthies protected by Jesus in the fiery furnace he gave a law that anyone who speaks bad about their God would be killed.

Both of these groups are Satan’s and he is after the third group in history, the people faithful to God. You will see in the history of Israel as recorded in Scripture that Satan will seek to seduce the faithful with godless paganism, and often has succeeded. He continues today to seduce people with godlessness in all its various forms, and many people in our society have been seduced into it—evolutionism etc.

Satan, having secured people to his camp by getting them to believe in godlessness, then inspires them with evermore deranged and delusional thinking because having rejected God they have no connection with the source of truth and therefore no reality-based ability for determining truth. They will take facts and twist them through a false narrative that fits their false assumptions and biases. And because their spirits are controlled by fear and selfishness, they will be more sensitive to the influence and interpretations of demonic forces while insensitive to the Holy Spirit that they have rejected, and it is therefore, not possible for such people to have genuine peace or mental health. Therefore, they will constantly be seeking to comfort themselves in maladaptive ways—pleasure seeking, thrill seeking... But one of those maladaptive ways that ungodly people use, and this includes the ungodly who are in the church and claim a belief in God, is when they experience the emotional and mental turmoil that sin causes, fear, guilt, feelings of inadequacy, not at peace with themselves, they rather than going to God to be reborn, instead project out of themselves their own insecurities and dissatisfaction, blame others for their internal convictions and lack of peace, demand that others affirm them, support them, tell them they are okay in their ongoing ungodly and dysfunctional life choices and if they don't receive that external validation then they accuse and attack anyone who refuses to comply with their demands.

Satan uses these deluded and hurting souls to exploit and manipulate others through intimidation, fear, empathy, compassion, threat, all designed to get those not already in his camp to collude, accept, participate in, and practice his reality-denying, anti-truth, anti-love, methods.

But this method of living is a violation of the laws of truth, love, and liberty. Those on the godless left advance fantasies that contradict objective truth, things like:

- there is no God; we evolved from slime
- there is no male and female; gender is just made up mental construct
- the climate change hoax, designed to create fear in order to exploit
- people are good or bad based on the color of their skin hoax
- rioting, burning, destroying property, breaking into retail stores, and looting is peaceful while not using the right pronouns in one's speech is violence
- the COVID hoax—and what I mean by the hoax is not that there was no virus, there was, the hoaxes were—1) that it was a natural virus from a wet market and not a man-made gain of function mutation to enhance human infection; 2) that masks would stop spread 3) that the experimental RNA injections were proven safe, despite never having been used and therefore no safety data 4) that the experimental jabs would provide immunity 5) that three feet of separation would provide protection 6) that healthy children are at significant life-threatening risk from the virus 7) that COVID is more dangerous than seasonal flu 8) that natural immunity does not provide protection, and many more lies.

All of these lies and hoaxes are advanced by the left to incite fear, get people to surrender thinking to various voices of authority and surrender liberties in order for those who control government to determine orthodoxy for society so that these godless deluded souls can feel safe in their godless and destructive life choices.

Satan rejoices when he gets people to believe any of these hoaxes and join with the godless forces in society. But his real agenda is to use this godless forces and their irrational actions to inflame the true people of God with outrage so that they will be willing to betray truth, love, and freedom in the pursuit of truth, love, and freedom. How?

By joining forces with Babylon, which in the Bible is the symbolic representation of Satan's counter to Egypt. While Egypt represents the godless Babylon represents those who believe in the God of the Bible but who also believe the God of the Bible runs His government by imposing laws and enforcing those laws with the infliction of externally imposed just punishments and therefore these people pursue a course of seeking justice through the use of human laws and law enforcement. Let me be clear, I am not speaking of simply using impose law and force to restrain evil, to imprison criminals, but to promote what they believe is right, laws designed to advance their moral code into the private lives and choices of individuals.

What the godless left doesn't comprehend is that the more they respond to their own fear with desperate acting out, violence, riots, crazy and irrational positions designed to get their own way rather than love others, they are fueling, inciting, and empowering the very forces of the imperial god worshiping right that will eventually destroy them.

The true worshipers and friends of God are in neither of these camps, but are those who seek to bring God's design laws of truth, love, freedom to bear upon **hearts and minds** and turn people away from the corrupt systems of this world and back to a love and trust relationship with the God of heaven. Such people, in governance of self, will advance the truth in love, **but leave others free** to decide for themselves, just like Jesus did.

Read the fifth paragraph,

- Pharaoh's next declaration that "I will not let Israel go" reveals even more this rebellion against the living God, further making Egypt a symbol, not only for the denial of God but for a system that fights against Him. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 23.

Do we see this exactly happening from the godless left today? Understand, the problem isn't merely that the godless left, Marxism, communism, evolutionism, wokeism etc., choose for themselves to believe their lies, no, they actively and abusively seek to force their godless and corrupt methods and beliefs upon others and to destroy those who won't go along—just like Pharaoh did.

In every land where Marxism and communism gains power, the truth about God is suppressed and individual liberties are denied. These godless powers always seek to take the hearts and minds of people captive, and when godly people rise up and say, "Let God's people go, let us worship God as He calls us to do," these godless powers always say no. Always say, "Who is God that I should know Him. We will not let you worship God." And these powers always fight against truth, love, and liberty.

MONDAY

The lesson points our attention to the events of Exodus 5,

- Then they [Moses and Aaron] said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.” But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!” Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.” That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.” Exodus 5:3-9 NIV84.

What lessons do we learn from these events?

First, I believe this are historical, they really happened as described, and God had them recorded in Scripture to teach us important lessons. What are we to learn from these events?

What is the dynamic here? In this first confrontation with Pharaoh does Moses present a demand to set the people free? Did Moses and Aaron make threats against Egypt or Pharaoh, let the people go or Egypt will suffer plagues? Or is something else going on? What is it?

They present their duty to God and request religious liberty—to let the people worship God in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and to fulfill their duty to Him.

Did Moses or Aaron call upon Pharaoh to worship Yahweh? Did they make assertions about the falsehood of the gods of Egypt? Did they make a request that was outside the ability or domain of an earthly ruler or inappropriate for earthly governments to grant?

How did Pharaoh respond and what does this reveal?

Pharaoh demonstrates several things:

- He does not value human beings as beings created in the image of God, but sees human beings as a resource, as a commodity to be used to advance the power of the state.
 - This is the exact way Marxism and communism see people. Everything is owned by the state, there is no God, and people have value only as they contribute to the state. If they cannot contribute then they are to be eliminated, which happens in every Marxist and communist country. Why? Because the denial of God removes the influence of the Holy Spirit from hearts and fear and selfishness take greater control and the people

come into ever closer unity with Satan and his evil forces and are more easily influenced to carry out Satan's goals of destroying the image of God in people.

- Pharaoh doesn't believe in the existence of the God of heaven and therefore believes Moses and Aaron are lying. But in truth he is the one who is delusional, believing lies, which again is a perfect type of all the various godless forces through history who accuse the worshipers of God of believing in myths and being uneducated.
- Pharaoh, cut off from God by his belief in lies and worshiping idols, inspired by demons, has no love in his heart. He really doesn't understand or appreciate the laws of truth, love, or freedom, but he does understand the law of sin and death, the law of fear and selfishness, survival of the fittest. Therefore, he sees this request as a threat to him, his power, his nation, and responds with the exercise of new imposed law with law-enforcement through inflicted punishment intended to cause increased stress and fear upon the Jews to intimidate them and get them to turn against Moses and Aaron and ultimately against God by seeking to protect self by actions designed to make their own lives easier, but in reality are an evidence of distrust in God.
 - Do we see this dynamic being playing out in our society today? As voices rise up and call for the restoration of liberties, the freedom of people to speak as they choose, to worship God as they choose, to set healthy boundaries with others, that the godless rise up with actions designed to cause stress and fear, like riots, burning buildings, blocking traffic, making death threats, deplatforming, threatening one's job, all intended to discourage the voices of truth and love and get them to back down?

And how did the Hebrew leaders respond to Pharaoh's edict, what did they say to Moses and Aaron?

- The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." Exodus 5:19-21 NIV84.

Did the Israelite foremen thank Moses and Aaron? Did they exercise faith in God and praise Him knowing God was actively working to confront evil and set them free? Or did they focus on the threats, the evil demands, the power of the godless, and their own selves, and therefore they became more fearful, more distressed, and rather than trusting God they turned on God's agents and accused them of making their lives worse?

Do we see this dynamic being played out in our society today?

I saw this during COVID when the voices of truth, love, and freedom were attacked by their own people and churches and accused of wanting to spread death and make life harder for others.

I see the same thing when I expose the mind manipulation done through modern wokeism on issues of climate and gender, some will email me and assert I am making life harder. No, we are speaking truth in love and leaving others free to decide for themselves. You will not find in my writings or lectures

where I have called for people to restrict the religious and civil liberties of others or to violate God's design laws in the treatment of others, but to always advance the principles of God and expose the corruption that seeks to infect hearts and minds with lies, fear, and selfishness.

TUESDAY

After the people accuse Moses and Aaron of making things worse, Moses goes to God and we read this at the end of Exodus chapter five:

- Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all." Exodus 5:22-23 NIV84.

What do you hear? Is Moses accusing God of bring trouble on the people?

Did you notice this:

- Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, **why have you brought trouble upon this people?** Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, **he has brought trouble upon this people**, and you have not rescued your people at all." Exodus 5:22-23 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Moses is not accusing God of bringing trouble upon the people, Moses clearly understands Pharaoh is bringing the trouble upon the people, then what does Moses mean by the expression "why have you brought trouble upon this people?"

This is important on several levels. First, when reading Scripture, it is important not to lift a verse or phrase here and there and form our beliefs. If people take a sentence here or there they can create all kinds of false ideas. This passage is one that could easily be misconstrued, in fact, this type of thinking and expressing has been misconstrued by many, which leads to the second point: How God is connected to or involved with the outcome of freewill choices, how sometimes the Bible seems to say God causes something, when the cause is the choice of the human being, not God. These events and this text record how reality works, how design laws functions.

In this text Moses recognizes God took an action by sending Moses and Aaron with a message to Pharaoh—if God had not presented this message to Pharaoh, then Pharaoh does not have to consider it and make a decision upon it. Therefore, Moses recognizes God brought these events about by sending Moses to present the issue to Pharaoh.

But Moses also recognizes that Pharaoh's response is Pharaoh's and not God's and that God is not using power to cause Pharaoh to act in this way. Moses understands reality, how love and liberty

work, how people have real freedom. He realizes God made a choice and Pharaoh responded to that choice and now Moses is calling on God to act and overcome the rejection of Pharaoh.

But many, who don't understand design law, don't understand how reality works, who have been indoctrinated into Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law, a system of rules enforced through inflicted punishment, falsely believe that God, as Sovereign, uses His power to make things happen the way He wants them to happen. Thus they read texts like this and falsely conclude God was the one who was troubling Israel.

This same misunderstanding is more potently and destructively advanced on the issue of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Paul in Romans is addressing this very misunderstanding about law to the legalistic Jews who believed God makes things happen the way He wants. Throughout the book of Romans Paul makes the case that God is Creator, His laws are design laws built into nature so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20) and that those who respond to the truth about God as revealed in nature and trust God even if they never have had Scripture presented to them, are saved by having the law of God written upon their hearts (Romans 2:12). He goes on to make the case that this is through faith or trust in Jesus, not through imposed law and law-enforcement or rule-keeping.

But the Jews did not like this, they claimed God is in charge and makes things happen the way He wants. So Paul responds to this view that God is Sovereign and can run His universe any way He wants with the argument that if you really believe God is in charge, who are you to tell Him how He can do things. He can heal and save any He wants, not just genetic descendants of Jacob. Ultimately leading to these verses in Romans 9:

- What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. Romans 9:14-18 NIV84.

And sadly, many have read these verses to mean God used His divine power to take away freedom from Pharaoh and force Pharaoh to have a hard heart for the purpose of demonstrating His mighty power. Such an interpretation is based upon human law thinking, imposed rules enforced to get one's way. And such a view does not increase faith or trust in God, but undermines it, makes us more fearful and discouraged, what if God decides to harden my heart etc.

But when we return to design law, we recognize reality, the truth, and the beauty of God's character. As a first rule, always read the Scriptures and gain as much data on the point in question before forming one's conclusion. So in regard to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and who is responsible, the Scripture says:

- “The Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But **I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go.” Exodus 4:21, emphasis mine.
- “But **I will harden Pharaoh’s heart**, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites.” Exodus 7:3,4, emphasis mine.
- “But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart** and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses.” Exodus 9:12, emphasis mine.

Well there you have it, the Bible said it, I believe it, and that settles it. God used His power to deny Pharaoh the opportunity to respond to truth, God made Pharaoh’s heart hard. If that were true, then Satan’s accusations against God are correct, and we would be wise not to trust God. But fortunately, that is not true, and not what these texts mean, and why we must keep reading from the inspired record:

- “But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.” Exodus 8:15, emphasis mine.
- “But this time also **Pharaoh hardened his heart** and would not let the people go.” Exodus 8:32, emphasis mine.
- “When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: **He and his officials hardened their hearts**. So Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord had said through Moses.” Exodus 9:34, 35, emphasis mine.

And we also read:

- “**Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard** and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.” Exodus 7:13, emphasis mine.
- “Then the Lord said to Moses, “**Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding**; he refuses to let the people go.” Exodus 7:14, emphasis mine.
- “But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and **Pharaoh’s heart became hard**; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.” Exodus 7:22, emphasis mine.
- “The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But **Pharaoh’s heart was hard** and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.” Exodus 8:19, emphasis mine.

So which of these verses are the Holy Spirit inspired truth? All of them—how can all of them be true? How can God be the one to harden Pharaoh’s heart, but at the same time Pharaoh be the one to harden his own heart?

It is the very same dynamic we see in Moses conversation with God:

- Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, **why have you brought trouble upon this people?** Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, **he has brought trouble upon this people**, and you have not rescued your people at all.” Exodus 5:22-23 NIV84.

God takes an action in governance of Himself that elicits or requires a response from Pharaoh. And in this case, God, who is the source of truth, presented truth to Pharaoh repeatedly, that the gods of Egypt are false and that He is the Creator God of heaven and Earth.

What does truth cause every person to do when confronted with it? Make a decision—believe it and apply it or reject it and resist it.

What happens to hearts when they believe, accept, surrender, and apply the truth? Their heart is transformed, renewed, softened.

What happens to hearts when they deny, resist, and reject the truth? Their hearts harden.

This historical event describes reality; it is an accurate record of how God’s kingdom operates, which is upon the design laws of truth, love, and liberty. God who is the source of truth presented the truth to Pharaoh and then left Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. In rejecting the truth Pharaoh’s heart hardened. Thus Pharaoh hardened his own heart by his freewill choice to reject truth.

However, it is also true that had the truth not been presented to Pharaoh as it was, he would not have been required to make those choices and his heart would not have hardened to the degree it did. Thus, it is also true that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart by presenting the truth to him and bringing Pharaoh to these decision points.

God did not force Pharaoh’s will. Pharaoh freely chose to reject the truth and when Pharaoh hardened his heart, God used Pharaoh as a powerful demonstration of the futility of worshipping false gods. The lessons of Egypt were publicized throughout the ancient world and awareness of the true God spread.

One might inquire however, if God has foreknowledge (which He does), and foreknew Pharaoh would harden his heart in response to the truth, then why did God do this? Didn’t God love Pharaoh? Did God want Pharaoh to harden his heart?

Again, think about reality, the situation of Pharaoh’s actual condition. Is Pharaoh a sinless being or a human being born in sin and conceived iniquity like every other human born since Adam’s fall? He is a sinner born with this terminal sin condition.

Is there any hope for Pharaoh or any human being of eternal salvation without the truth, without surrendering to God? So, Pharaoh is in a terminal condition, and if God does nothing then Pharaoh will die eternally. So Pharaoh’s only hope is the truth about God that Moses and Aaron brought him. So, while God in His foreknowledge knows Pharaoh’s choices before he makes them, God would never deny Pharaoh the opportunity to make those choices. Pharaoh’s eternal loss is 100% Pharaoh’s

responsibility and it is revealed by history, fact, evidence, that God did everything possible to reach Pharaoh for salvation, but Pharaoh rejected every entreaty and hardened his own heart.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on how the people were disheartened and discouraged and losing hope because of Pharaoh's response, and then the lesson states,

- And yet, who hasn't been in a similar place? Who hasn't at some point felt depressed, disappointed, dissatisfied—even abandoned by God?

Remember the story of Job? What about Asaph, a psalmist who struggled with his questions regarding the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous? Yet, regardless of his struggles, Asaph has one of the most beautiful confessions of faith: "Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:23–26, NIV). *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 26.

I really appreciate the lesson citing this psalm because the psalmist knows God is with him, but the psalmist also realizes God's deliverance is not temporal, there is nothing on earth that the psalmist desires, and he is aware that though his flesh and heart may fail, God is his strength portion forever.

This is critical for the remnant of God as the final events unfold on this planet. We must have our hearts cut away from everything in this world that we cherish more than God and establish our hearts number one desire, love, affection, and trust in God—the pearl of great price! And we must come to the point that we value Him, His kingdom, His method and principles of truth, love, and freedom more than we love our own lives—that we would rather lose everything, including our own lives than to lose our connection with God—meaning we would rather lose everything than choose to betray God by seeking to protect and advance ourselves by the use of ungodly methods. Nothing wrong with using godly methods to protect self from abuse—i.e., God's people fled Jerusalem in AD 70 in order to avoid the destruction. Nothing, wrong with taking oneself out of the reach of the abusers and exploiters, but that is quite different that seeking to use the methods of the world to form one's own armies to destroy the armies of the enemy.

Revelation describes such a people in these words,

- Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to

the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.” Revelation 12:10-12 NIV84.

What do you hear? What does this mean?

The healing power of God has come to these people, the truth of God as Creator and the power of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ restored into humanity is come to all who trust God. We are recreated in heart and mind by receiving the life of Christ, symbolized by the blood, this life, this new Spirit, gives us the desires, motives, animating energy of Christ, of love and trust, and we are empowered to live in harmony with God and His design law methods.

We overcome by the indwelling Holy Spirit bringing us the life of Christ, the blood, so that it is no longer our old fear-ridden selves living, but Christ living in us. And with our hearts renewed to love God and His truth as revealed by Jesus we overcome by giving the testimony of Jesus, the same testimony that Jesus gave when He was on Earth, that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father—They are one. And knowing God is just like Jesus, having been reborn with hearts that love God and others more than self, we are no longer **controlled** by the spirit of fear, the survival of the fittest instinct we inherited from Adam, and therefore do not love our own lives so much as to shrink from death. We won’t betray Jesus and His kingdom of love even to save our own lives. We won’t, when threatened with a virus become afraid and use the power of the state to coerce the consciences of others, use lies, propaganda, and restrict religious and civil liberties to make ourselves feel safe. No, we would rather die than become like Satan in character.

Satan is no longer able to make accusations against us in heaven, because no beings in heaven believe his lies that God’s law is imposed and sin is a legal problem recorded in books. They all now know that sin is a breakdown of love and trust of God in the hearts of people that manifests with symptoms called sins, but the sins are not the problem, they are the symptoms, fruit, of the infection of fear and selfishness. Thus, they are not concerned with legal accounting, they are concerned that people have new hearts and right spirits to love and trust God and be willing to sacrifice self in love for others.

But the rest of the world, those who have not been reborn to love and trust, beware, because Satan is coming for you with every diabolic trick and assault he has and you will experience more terror, dread, fear and become ever more desperate to save yourselves resulting in becoming beastly and using the power of the state to do what you believe is right, but in reality is only intended to make you feel safe while you abuse others through law and law enforcement.

THURSDAY

Moses complains again that he is not a good speaker, so God responds with:

- Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. Exodus 7:1 NIV84.

The lesson points out in the fifth paragraph,

- This account provides an excellent definition for the role of a prophet. A prophet is a spokesperson for God; he or she is His mouthpiece to transmit and to interpret God's word to the people. As Moses spoke to Aaron, and then Aaron announced it to Pharaoh, so God communicates with a prophet, who then proclaims God's teaching to the people. This can happen verbally, in person; or, as was most commonly done, the prophet received the message from God and then wrote it down. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 27.

This is a great point—most of the time Bible prophets are not giving visions of the future, they are not prognosticating future events—most of the time they are people called by God to deliver a timely message for the people.

Does God tell us anywhere that at this time in history He will have prophets, people who He calls to be His spokespersons to give His final message to the people of our day?

Where do we find evidence for this and who are these people?

We just read about people who overcome at the end of time by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony—in other words they are witnesses, they give testimony to the truth. But there is more evidence.

- After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Revelation 7:1-3.
 - And all throughout Scripture the servants of God are called His prophets.
 - The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: “Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through **my servants the prophets.**” 2 Kings 17:13 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” Joel 2:28 NIV84.
- “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Malachi 4:5-6.
 - And what did Elijah confront? Baal worship—and what was Baal worship? The worship of an imitator of the true God. Baal was the son of El, the god of creation, weather, rain, thunder, lightning, called the almighty. Baal fought against the great serpent leviathan and fought against Mot the god of death. And in his battle with Mot, the god of death Baal dies and rises again to bring life to the land. What made Baal

worship false? Baal as a dictator god who required payment be made to merit blessings and avoid punishments. Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse, and Jesus to Christians who worship a dictator god that require he be paid by the blood of a human sacrifice to merit blessings and not punish.

- Thus, God has a people at the end of time who have a message of the 3 angels with the eternal good news about God, that God is not like Satan alleges, that He is the Creator of heaven and earth and His laws are design laws. A message to stop worshiping a dictator god with laws that function like a creature, to come out of fallen Babylon and return to worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water for the time in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God. The hour of His judgment has come.

Do you want to be one of God's end time spokespersons? We can only be His spokesperson if we are speaking the truth about Him!



2025 Q3 Exodus - Lesson 4

The Plagues

by Russell L. Atkins, PT

SABBATH

So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses. (Exodus 9:35, NKJV).

The task of Moses would have been much less difficult had not many of the Israelites become so corrupted that they were unwilling to leave Egypt. Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 260

From the lesson:

A farmer was trying to get his donkey to move; the beast wouldn't budge. So, the farmer took a thick branch and walloped it. He again spoke to the donkey, who then started moving. When someone asked the farmer why that worked, he replied, "Well, first you have to get its attention."

Putting aside whatever issue one might raise about cruelty to animals, there is a point to be made here, especially in the context of the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Moses has been given his marching orders and goes to Pharaoh with God's famous words, shalach et ami, which is, "Let My people go!"

Pharaoh, however, does not want to let God's people go. The Scriptures never explicitly explain why Pharaoh was so reluctant, despite the military threat that the Egyptians feared the Hebrews could pose (see Exod. 1:10). Most likely, as is often the case with slavery, it was pure economics. They were cheap labor, and so he didn't want to lose whatever economic advantages these slaves gave him. **Thus, he was going to need some persuasion not only to get his attention but also to change his mind.**" [emphasis mine].

Was the point of the plagues to get Pharaoh's attention or change his mind or was it to get his attention and give Pharaoh the **opportunity** to change his mind?

Didn't God know the outcome from the beginning?

The bringing of the plagues on Egypt shows us that even God knows the beginning from the end, he still gives us freewill to reject His methods and Laws and suffer the unavoidable outcomes of that rejection.

To be fair, the lesson self corrects in Sunday's lesson, but I'm not sure what the point of this donkey story is. I think if attention needed to be had and minds needed to be persuaded, it was in the Israelites and the citizens of Egypt, more than Pharaoh. God foreknew that Pharaoh would *temporarily* relent ONLY after the death of his firstborn, and even though God loved Pharaoh, and gave him every opportunity, Pharaoh alone bears the responsibility for his choices.

SUNDAY

God vs. gods.

I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. (Exod. 12:12, NIV)

What kind of "judgement" was God bringing on Egypt's gods?

Were the Israelites and Egyptians brought to a position of "judgement" as well [specifically - were they to make "judgements" regarding the differences between God and gods]?

Are there any other texts that come to mind?

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water. (Revelation 14:6, 7)

Consider the metaphor[s] regarding this Exodus experience. As has been mentioned before in our class, stories in Scripture are actual events happening to actual people at a time / place in history, but have broader meanings with respect to the cosmic controversy between Jesus and Satan.

- Israelites = humanity.
- Slavery in Egypt = Slavery to sin.
- Plagues = Life's experiences / losses that make us yearn for something better. These are either brought by God, allowed by Him, or the consequences of our choices.
- Literal Exodus = The point where we decide to follow God's leadership, and leave our sinful state.

Note: He immediately led the group to the shore of the Red Sea, hemmed in by mountains on either side with an impassable sea in front and the pursuing Egyptian army behind them for the purpose of strengthening their faith. They had no choice but to rely on Him, and he parted the Red Sea symbolizing the baptism [dying to self] and walking through on dry ground. He will lead us into places, events, and relationships to test and strengthen our faith and reliance on Him.

There are many other object lessons from this: The golden calf, pillar of cloud / fire, God's presence on Sinai, The Sanctuary theater, water from the Rock, Wandering in the desert, Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the loss of faith before entering Cannan, etc.

Many well meaning Christians want to draw parallels between the plagues of Egypt and the plagues afflicting earth just before Christ comes. What are some key differences between the two sets of plagues?

1. God exercises power to bring the plagues of Egypt. The plagues before Christ's return occur when God STOPS using power [to restrain Satan and his forces].
2. The plagues of Egypt were for the purpose of transformation of hearts & minds regarding the impotence of Egypt's gods. The end time plagues occur AFTER humans have made a choice to ally themselves with God and His methods, or Satan and his methods.
3. The plagues of Egypt function as a method of making the Israelites and Egyptians dissatisfied with their situation and yearning for something better. The end time plagues are the outworking of people's choices in accordance with the Laws of God [Design Protocols for Life and Reality], AND a revelation of Satan's character in dealing with his children.

From the Lesson:

The upcoming battles were going to be between the living God and the Egyptian “gods.” What made things worse was that Pharaoh considered himself to be one of those gods. The Lord did not fight against the Egyptians, or even Egypt per se, but against their deities (the Egyptians venerated more than 1,500 gods and goddesses). The biblical text is explicit: “On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord” (Exod. 12:12, ESV). Later, it is once again emphasized, this time when Israel’s journey from Egypt was recounted: “The Lord had brought judgment on their gods” (Num. 33:4, NIV).

The "upcoming battles" were going to be between the Living God [Creator] and Satan [created being]. Every false "god" is but a manifestation of Satan and his character or his attempts to misrepresent God's character.

From the bottom section in Sunday's lesson:

How can we allow the Lord to have sovereignty over any of the “gods” seeking supremacy in our lives?

Is sovereignty the source of the problem?

Was the Lord's sovereignty the cause of the original controversy?

Doesn't an understanding of the distinction between Design and imposed law eliminate the need to argue about sovereignty?

MONDAY

Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?

From the Lesson:

Nine times in Exodus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God (Exod. 4:21; Exod. 7:3; Exod. 9:12; Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; Exod. 11:10; Exod. 14:4, 8; see also Rom. 9:17, 18). Another nine times Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; Exod. 8:15, 19, 32; Exod. 9:7, 34, 35). Who hardened the king's heart—God, or Pharaoh himself? It is significant that in the Exodus story of the ten plagues, in each of the first five plagues, Pharaoh alone was the agent of his heart hardening. Thus, he initiated the hardening of his own heart. From the sixth plague on, however, the biblical text states that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 9:12). **What all this means is that God strengthened or deepened Pharaoh's own choice, his willful action, as God had told Moses He would do** (Exod. 4:21)." [emphasis mine].

Did God strengthen / deepen Pharaoh's choices? If so, how?

We went over this last week, but let's revisit it.

- **The law of truth:** You can never avoid the truth; you can only delay the day you deal with it.
 - When truth is embraced and accepted, it displaces lies and frees a person from fear and misunderstanding, elevating and ennobling the individual. Truths build together into beliefs, constructs, and perspectives that form our understanding of reality, leading us back to trust in our Creator God. In trust, we open our hearts and experience the indwelling Spirit of God that transforms and ennoble us to be beings of love rather than beings of selfishness. All truth comes from God and, if followed, will lead back to God.
 - When truth is rejected, our understanding is confused, our mind is damaged, **our heart is hardened**, and we slowly become less capable of understanding reality — the truth of God's kingdom and the world around us. Such individuals will one day face the truth, but it will be painful and destructive to them as they still hate the truth and want to flee from it, even begging for the mountains and rocks to hide them from reality (Luke 23:30). [emphasis mine] <https://comeandreason.com/design-laws-of-god/>.

Through repeated rejection of Truth, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. God created the Laws that govern life and reality, therefore He will take the credit or blame for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, even though Pharaoh was free to embrace Truth and live.

TUESDAY - THURSDAY

The Nine Plagues.

The lesson brings out some interesting points regarding the different "gods" shown to be worthless in the plagues. I don't want to wade through the details of which god was supposed to control what -- I want to take a bigger picture approach. In the teachers quarterly, the author notes some patterns with regard to the plagues.

From Tuesday's Lesson:

Of course, only the living God is the Source of life, the Creator of everything, including water and food (Gen. 1:1, 2, 20–22; Ps. 104:27, 28; Ps. 136:25; John 11:25; John 14:6). Changing water into blood symbolizes transforming life into death. Hapi was not able to provide and protect life. These are possible only through the power of the Lord.

God [Love] takes great risk of being misunderstood. Some of the Egyptians / Israelites could see God as the source of death, instead of the only source of Life. God met them where they were in their moral development, and got their attention.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Prov. 9:10.

From the Teacher's Edition of the Lesson:

1. The first nine plagues may be divided into three clusters, or groups, of three plagues. The tenth plague is unique and separated from the rest. The people will need a special time and provision to face it.
2. The first nine plagues affected all three habitats created by God in Genesis 1: the heavens (plagues seven to nine), the earth (plagues three to six), and the waters (plagues one and two). Collectively, these plagues allude to de-creation. **[ed: I would suggest God's intent was to make the point that believing in ANY false god leads to death -- the opposite of creation.]**
3. The first nine plagues intensify, becoming more and more severe in the process of time, as Pharaoh stubbornly refuses to let God's people go in order that they might freely worship their Creator Lord. The first three plagues were mild, quick, and did not cause death. The next three plagues (plagues four to six) were more serious and harmful, as they destroyed livestock and afflicted humans with skin sores. The following three plagues (plagues seven to nine) were more devastating, involving the death of people and animals but also the destruction of crops.
4. Generally speaking, each plague fell after a clear warning and plea to surrender to the Lord's demand. Surprises occurred, but devastation was announced beforehand and could be avoided. An exceptional warning is given before the first two plagues and the tenth, but see also

transparent warnings in the introductions to plagues four, five, seven, and eight.

5. Before plagues three, six, and nine, there is little to no confrontation with Pharaoh.
6. The first three plagues fell on the Egyptians and the Israelites, but all the remaining plagues came only upon the Egyptians.
7. Prior to the occurrence of the first plague, God performed a miracle before Pharaoh: Aaron's staff became a snake that ate all the magicians' snakes. Yet, "Pharaoh's heart became hard" (Exod. 7:13, NIV).
8. The last plague was the most destructive because each family that was not under the protection of the blood of the lamb was affected by the death of its firstborn son. Before the last plague fell, God, in His mercy, gave the people three days of darkness for reflection, meditation, and repentance, as well as instruction on how to avoid the final devastation.
9. It is after the sixth plague that the record declares that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Exod. 9:12, NIV; see also Exod. 10:1, 20, 27; Exod. 11:10; and also Exod. 14:4, 8, 17). During the first five plagues, it was Pharaoh who hardened his heart (Exod. 7:13, 14, 22; Exod. 8:15, 19, 32; Exod. 9:7; Exod. 9:35). Before the actual story about the ten plagues, there are two predictions by God stating that He, the Lord, will harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 4:21, Exod. 7:3).
10. Magicians could imitate only the first two plagues. When the third plague occurred, they aptly stated: "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19). Later they themselves suffered with boils (Exod. 9:11; see also the urging of Pharaoh's "officials," Exod. 10:7, NIV).
11. The plagues also can be gathered into pairs: plagues one and two are connected with the river Nile; plagues three and four are flying insects (gnats/mosquitoes and flies); plagues five and six resemble each other, with pestilence occurring on animals and boils on humans; plagues seven and eight describe damage to crops; plagues nine and ten are related to darkness—one to physical darkness and the other to the ultimate darkness, namely, death of the firstborn.
12. It is interesting to note that the Lord specifically invited Pharaoh seven times to " 'Let my people go' " (Exod. 5:1; Exod. 7:16; Exod. 8:1, 20; Exod. 9:1, 13; Exod. 10:3) and once used a negative conditional phrase: " 'If you do not let my people go, I will send . . . ' " (Exod. 8:21, NIV). Pharaoh consented after the second, fourth, seventh, and ninth plagues (Exod. 8:8, Exod. 8:25–28, Exod. 9:28, Exod. 10:24), but, in the end, refused to let the people go to worship the Lord (Exod. 8:15, Exod. 8:32, Exod. 9:35, Exod. 10:27). He even asked Moses to pray to end specific plagues and to pray also for him (Exod. 8:8, 28; Exod. 9:28; Exod. 10:16, 17). Only after the tenth plague did he summon Moses and Aaron and commanded them: "And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also" (Exod. 12:31, 32).

2025 Q3 Questions & Answers #2

1. I am struggling answering one question that comes up when I try to explain Design Law concept. People ask “but why did Jesus have to suffer and die?” Can you please give me a concise one sentence answer that Penal Substitutions might understand?

A: <https://comeandreason.com/why-did-jesus-have-to-die/>

You need to exercise your understanding and presentation abilities to strengthen them. No one else can do this for you.

2. Why doesn't the rest of christendom use the catholic 'sign of the cross'?

A: I don't know.

3. Off topic, but what does being “equally yoked” in courtship leading to marriage actually mean through a Design Law lens or from what God originally intended for us. As an SDA, I am confused as to how much agreement in beliefs of ie sleep death, Sabbath...we should let play into our decision. Should we be focused more on fruit/character of the other person through Design Law. Is marrying outside of SDA truly frowned upon for our protection or just a made up imposed rule.

A: <https://comeandreason.com/unity-versus-division/>.

Unfortunately, marrying within the SDA denomination does NOTHING to guarantee success. Our divorce rates, addiction rates, spousal / child abuse rates, pornography use, etc is no different than the rest of mainstream Christianity -- and Christianity is no different than the non-religious.

I would recommend focusing on character issues [ed: I'm still single and nearly 60, so take with a bucket of salt]. How well do they naturally conform to Design Laws - especially the Law of Liberty.

4. Pastors usually teach that God does not hear the prayers of those who are not saved, that only the saved can pray to Jesus and that he relays those prayers to God the father (ROMANS 8:34). Yet Dr Jennings mentioned in a video that faith healers who don't believe in God can pray for other people and even animals and the prayers are working as healing takes place. Where are pastors going wrong in their understanding of prayer and how does this change the way we understand Jesus making intercession?

A: Pastors teach many things about God that are untrue. Do not surrender your independent thought processes to an authority figure -- your pastor, me, Tim, the Pope, Dr Fauci, etc.

I can't speak for every pastor, but many think Jesus is making intercession with his Father in order to get Him to be forgiving, less angry, more merciful, etc instead of what's actually happening. The entire Godhead, and all of the heavenly hosts are interceding with humanity. We need the intercession, not God.

5. What year did Dr Jennings discover the integrated evidence based approach to interpreting the Bible and what year did he start publicly teaching the design law view of the Bible?

A: I believe around 2010-12, but Tim may have a different answer.

6. Why did Jesus tell Mary not to touch him as He had not yet gone through the Father? What needed to happen? Please explain.

A: I suspect that Jesus restricted Mary from touching him so she could remain "ritualistically" clean [Lev. 21:11 and Num. 19:11-13, even though the "ceremonial" law was destroyed at the Cross. As for "I have not yet gone to my Father", I think that's self-evident, He needed/wanted to see His Father.

7. Regarding the issue of buying/selling in end times. Most think of a financial transaction to purchase material items. The more I read It keeps coming to me that buying/selling may involve things not tangible ...like when the Lord says...Come buy from me gold that has been refined in the fire, the parable of the pearl of great price, parables in Matthew 13, the various other stories involving treasure and selling (giving up) what you have to buy that which is precious and eternal. Thoughts?

A: I agree with your insights. I think it may well be human restrictions on purchasing actual commodities via a "social credit" system [already in place in China], Central Bank Digital Currencies [CBDC's] being developed in nearly all first world nations, vaccine passports [already happened 4-5 years ago], hyperinflation [c.f. Weimar Republic 1920's], and restrictions I can't even think of. In addition, as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, those who have delayed their preparation [Parable of the Ten Virgins], may find themselves searching for comfort, grace, love and come up empty.

8. Peace and blessings. When did Moses wrote [sic] the book of Genesis and the book of Job was it before the Exodus are after [sic]? If it was before, why didn't he have the issue at the burning bush?

A: I don't actually know the dates. It's reasonable to conclude that Job & Genesis were written before Exodus as the literal Exodus had not yet occurred. I suspect Moses wrote Exodus as it was happening in real time.

I'm not sure I understand your question with the burning bush, however. What issue are you asking about?

2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 5

Passover

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The Passover was the first of seven annual feasts to be instituted. It was instituted while they were still slaves in Egypt and it was the last of the ten plagues resulting in the Hebrews being set free from captivity.

Before we get into more details about the elements of the Passover, from this alone, what lessons can we glean?

The Passover was both a memorial to the deliverance from slavery in Egypt and a service that pointed forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The Passover lamb was slain and the elements applied, blood to doorpost, flesh eaten etc., while they were still slaves in Egypt, and the events associated with it resulted in their freedom from bondage.

Jesus came to our world where human beings are slaves to sin, and while humanity was still enslaved to sin He was crucified to set us free from sin.

And in Jesus the species human was freed from sin. This is not universalism, it is the reality that God created one human life in Eden, breathed one breath of life into Adam and every other human life is an extension of that same breath of life. Eve was not created from dirt and did not receive her own breath of life, she was created from the living body of Adam. And both were created sinless with a pure sinless holy spirit of love and trust.

When they sinned they corrupted their spirit of love and trust with fear and selfishness. This is the only life, spirit, animating energy, breath of life they possessed so when they reproduced, they reproduced children infected with the spirit of fear and selfishness. As David wrote, we are all born in sin conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5).

This condition is a terminal condition—it cannot live because it is deviant from the very laws God built life to exist and operate upon.

In order to save humanity, this life now corrupt with fear and selfishness must be replaced with another life, another spirit of holiness, a spirit of pure love and trust.

No human being could do this. Thus, God sent His Son who partook of this very same life breathed into Adam and passed down to all generation, this life infected with fear and selfishness through His mother Mary. This is how He was tempted in every way just like we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). He could be tempted by internal human emotions of fear that tempted him to act in selfishness—and this is evidenced in Gethsemane where He experienced overwhelming human emotions and anguish which tempted Him from within to act to save self.

But the Father to Jesus' humanity was the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary and He was born incarnate as a human being but with a pure holy spirit. And as a real human being, descended from Adam through Mary, tempted in all points like us, He was capable of living a pure holy sinless life by choosing with His human mind to do only that which was in harmony with the Spirit of love and trust. And at Gethsemane and the cross Jesus killed, destroyed, eradicated, purged the spirit of fear and selfishness from the humanity He partook and arose in a cleansed, purified, restored, righteous, holy, and perfected humanity—as the second Adam, the new head of our species.

Thus the species was saved, redeemed, purified, sanctified, made holy, set right, made right, justified, in the person of Jesus Christ. And Jesus rose again and returned to His Father and presented Himself to His Father, NOT AS A LEGAL PAYMENT, but as the most precious gift He could bring, because Jesus presented His HUMAN self, pure, sinless, holy, humanity restored, the one lost sheep lost no longer. This is what He presented to His Father!

And through His accomplishments the Father is pleased with the result of Jesus' struggle, suffering, crucifixion, because through the work of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice Jesus saved this creation and simultaneously provided the remedy for every other human to be saved if they choose to trust. Every single human can choose to trust Him, open their heart to Him and receive from Him His pure life, His pure Spirit and be reborn with a new heart and right spirit. Then, we can all say as Paul did, "it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20), or as Peter wrote we become partakers of the divine nature.

This is reality—we serve a real God, who created a real universe, and we are real human beings with real minds and hearts, and real spirits, real life animating motivating energy. And our spirits—the animating energy with which we are born—is really infected with fear and selfishness and we need a real change of motivation, drive, energy and this cannot be accomplished by adjusting record books or making legal payments, it can only be accomplished by a real human being purging the fear and selfishness and replacing it with a life of pure love and trust. Jesus did this for us and we can receive that new life by trust.

The Passover was enacting all of this. The Passover lamb, symbolizes Jesus, the Word made flesh. The lamb was slain and the participants in the service, who represent human sinners, ingest the meat. The meat represents the Word made flesh and we ingest the flesh of Jesus when we internalize into our minds and hearts the truth of who God is as revealed by Jesus which displaces the lies and wins us back to trust, and then we open our hearts to Him and receive a new life, a new spirit. Leviticus 17:11 the life is in the blood, symbolically acted out by placing the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the

doorposts of the house, which represents the life of Christ becoming our new life on the doorposts of our hearts.

Jesus confirms this in John when He said,

- “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.” John 6:53-55 NIV84.

Jesus is referencing the Passover symbols with these comments. And these elements were replaced at the Last Supper with bread and wine which symbolize the same thing, truth that wins to trust and a new life, the life of Jesus that we receive by faith into our hearts that gives us new animation, motivation, drive, desires.

So, with this in mind, let’s examine some Scripture and how it confirms our understanding that Jesus partook of the one life, spirit, breath of life, breathed into Adam and how that corrupted life passed to all passing death to all, but Jesus destroyed that infected life and replaced it with a holy sinless life, spirit, breath of life. Romans 5:12-19:

- When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s **sin brought death, so death spread to everyone**, for everyone sinned. Yes, people sinned even **before the law was given**. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. **Still, everyone died**—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even **those who did not disobey an explicit commandment** of God, as Adam did. **Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ**, who was yet to come. But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For **the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many**. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being **made right with God**, even though we are guilty of many sins. For **the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many**. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his **gift of righteousness**, for all who receive it will **live in triumph over sin and death** through this one man, Jesus Christ. Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but **Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone**. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous. Romans 5:12-19 NLT, emphasis mine.

What do you hear? Paul is describing how Adam’s one sin corrupted his spirit, his life, and is out of harmony with God’s design laws for life, a terminal condition and thus death spread to everyone for we are all born of this one man and inherit this terminal condition that causes acts of sins and are still dying before the written law was given to identify and count the various acts of sin. The acts of sin are symptoms of the condition and are identified like fever, cough, and the number of irregular heart beats one has when sick. But the symptoms are not the cause, the cause is the sickness and you don’t get someone well by either suppressing or punishing the symptoms but by curing the cause.

And Jesus came to cure the condition. He overcame and destroyed the spirit of fear and selfishness and restored the spirit of love and trust into humanity and through this action we can be restored to trust with God and receive a new life, a new spirit, be reborn and made righteous.

But this is described by Paul also in Ephesians:

- For he himself is our peace, who has made **the two one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations**. His purpose was to **create in himself one new man out of the two**, thus making peace, and in this one body to **reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility**. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household**, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which **God lives by his Spirit**. Ephesians 2:14-22 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus partook of humanity, the life breathed into Adam and corrupted by him, and merged that life with His divinity and by living sinlessly and dying voluntarily He purged, killed, destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and rose in a purified humanity. We can all partake of this very same spirit, life, through faith and become part of the family of God.

Here is my paraphrase:

- For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and—via the exercise of his human brain—he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan's lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two—our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state—thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God's original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race—regardless of ethnic background—into loving unity with God and each other through the revelation of truth at the cross, by which he destroyed the lies of Satan, reestablished trust, and removed fear, selfishness, and hostility. He came and demonstrated the truth of God's character and the offer of peace available to all humanity—to those far away in darkness and those blessed with the truth of God's word. For Jesus reveals the truth about God to all, and—through what Jesus has done—all have access to the Father by one Spirit. Therefore your minds are no longer confused, and you are no longer in darkness and are no longer foreigners, aliens or outcasts, but members of God's house and citizens with

God's people—living components of God's heavenly sanctuary built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone—the source of all truth. In Christ, the entire structure is unified and grows to become a holy temple filled with God's Spirit, revealing God's character. And with your minds in harmony with Christ, you too are being healed and transformed—rebuilt to become a dwelling in whom God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:14-22 REM

So the Passover service is filled with incredible significance as it teaches God's plan to deliver us from sin through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus who partook of our condition and purged the death causing infection and restored purity, holiness, righteousness into humanity. And we can all receive this new life through partaking of the truth and choosing to trust Him and open our hearts to Him.

SUNDAY

Read first, fourth, and fifth paragraphs,

- The prophet Amos declares that “ ‘the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets’ ” (Amos 3:7, ESV), and through the prophet Moses, He revealed to Pharaoh what was coming next. The most solemn warning was given to Pharaoh. **This will be a just judgment** upon pride, exploitation, violence, and idolatry, all of which have triggered these calamities upon Egypt...

Also, the number ten is significant in biblical symbolism. Ten represents fullness or completeness. (Think of the Ten Commandments as a complete revelation of the divine moral law.) The ten Egyptian plagues point to **God's full expression of His justice and retribution.**

God is the Judge, and He is against pride, injustice, discrimination, arrogance, exploitation, cruelty, and selfishness. He is on the side of the sufferers, the abused, the mistreated, and the persecuted. **God will execute justice, which truly is another expression of His love.** (See Ps. 2:12, Ps. 33:5, Ps. 85:11, Ps. 89:14, Ps. 101:1, Isa. 16:5, Jer. 9:24.) *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 39.

What do you think of the idea that this will be a just judgment upon pride, exploitation, violence, and idolatry?

How do you understand the word judgment? What law lens are you thinking through?

If we use the human law lens, imposed rules that require imposed punishments, then judgment is judicial and it means the infliction of punishment to enforce the law and take retribution on the sinner/criminal for their sins/crimes.

But if we reject the Romanization of Christianity—and when I say Romanization I am talking about believing the lie that God’s law is like that of Imperial Rome—imposed law with imposed punishments like Caesar used. When Constantine converted, he began passing laws to enforce Christian dogma, and the church Romanized. The church began to practice the methods of the state. The church began to teach that God’s government runs on the same type of law that Rome does—and even changed God’s day of worship to the Roman sun holiday because they believed God’s law is changeable like man’s law.

The church corrupted with human law, teaches that God, therefore, in character, is like Caesar, a being who is the source of death inflicted for rule breaking, and this false church is symbolized in Revelation by the harlot and Babylon.

The message for this time in human history, the message we as end-time, Bible believing Christians who keep the commandments of God and give the same testimony Jesus gave, is a call for God’s people who have been captive in Babylon, not physically, but ideologically, to come out of her and return to worshiping God as Creator, the One who made the heavens, earth, sea, and fountains of water. This means rejecting the lie that God’s laws function like human laws and embracing the truth that God’s laws are design laws.

When we do this, then judgment is not judicial, it is actual—God functions like a doctor and judges what is actually wrong, and judges what is required to destroy sin, Satan, death, and heal, save, and restore.

In the context of Exodus, humanity was still in a terminal sin condition and without Jesus all human beings will die eternally from sin. God was working to bring Jesus, the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, for without the fulfillment of that promise no human could be saved from sin. Thus, we recognize God’s actions in Exodus are not judicial, not the inflictions of punishments for sin, but therapeutic actions to save humanity from sin.

Even for those who insist that God’s law is like human law and God must punish sin—the punishment for sin doesn’t happen until after the judgment and the judgment is future, and the punishment is second death not first death, thus by every measure, this is not a judicial legal judgment and punishment but a therapeutic one.

All the plagues upon Egypt were against the gods of Egypt, not the people. They were designed to provide real evidence that the people, both Hebrews and Egyptians, were deceived and to lead them to believe in Yahweh, the Creator God.

- “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—**and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.**” I am the LORD. Exodus 12:12 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great

wonders... **I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.** Deuteronomy 29:2,3 & 6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And a mixed multitude came out of Egypt, many Egyptians came out and left with the Hebrews. And this also teaches that the Passover lamb, Jesus, provides salvation to the entire human race, every nation, kindred, tribe, language, and people group.

Those who partook of the Passover did not have the firstborn die, instead they were delivered from slavery into a new life. But those who did not partake of the Passover had their firstborn die—but note, **the firstborn of the people and the animals died**, what does this reveal?

Did the animals die because they were sinful? No, they were firstborn, and what does this mean?

The firstborn in that culture represents those with the greatest favor, authority, position, power, prestige, blessings of the gods, and symbolically represents Adam the literal firstborn human and Jesus the second Adam,

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:15 NIV84.

Thus the death of the firstborn would signify the death of everyone—meaning, without Jesus, our substitutionary Savior, second Adam, everyone and everything dies because Jesus is the Creator, the source of life, and the Savior, and only through Him is death destroyed, without Him, separated from Him death occurs.

And this is again a big divide between Romanized Christianity and true Christianity. Romanized Christianity teaches God's law functions like human law, made up rules requiring inflicted punishments and the punishment is death, therefore it teaches that God, rather than destroy death and its cause through Jesus, is the one who holds and uses the power of death to punish sin.

One of the people who strongly opposed our presence at the recent GC, holds to this Roman view and wrote in the Adventist Review December 8, 2023 the following:

- I've always been baffled by those among us who deny the penal substitutionary aspect of Christ's death, viewing it as merely a dramatic expression of God's love, as opposed to a legal payment for sin. For them, penal substitutionary atonement goes like this: you break God's law (sin), you face God's wrath (death). Period. However, to spare us, God poured out His wrath against the violation of His law (sin), not on the violators of His law (sinners) but on the sinless Jesus, the only way that God could "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). **In short, rather than killing us for violating His law, the Father killed Jesus instead.** https://adventistreview.org/cliffs-edge/law-freedom-love/?fbclid=IwAR3wAGrpMo-HQQi2KFAIHxfD47q5Aam6lZ6yJTNk-5FH7QZr66b8h_3CqX0

This person is not alone, everyone who accepts the lie that God's law functions like Rome's will always conclude God is the source of death because made up law requires inflicted punishment. But notice what the Bible says:

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 NIV84
- Sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:15 NIV84
- The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction Galatians 6:8 NIV84

And further, the Bible describes that death is not God's power and does not come from God, but it is Satan's power and God destroys it:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—** Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine
- Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine
- For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be **destroyed is death.** For he “has put everything under his feet.” 1 Corinthians 15:25–27 NIV84, emphasis mine.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the instructions on how to celebrate the Passover. What do you think the following means? Why was this instruction given and what does it mean for us today?

- This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. Exodus 12:11 NIV84.

It was not typical to wear sandals/shoes in the house, but for this meal they were to have their clothes on, shoes on, staff in hand, and eat in haste, why?

The inaugural event was the night they were to be freed and they didn't know when the order to leave would come so they were to be ready.

Does this have any significance to us?

We to be ready to be freed from our bondage in sin; we are not to be comfortable in this world; not to settle down and make ourselves home in sin, but be eagerly prepared to leave everything that has held us captive.

We to be ready to go where Jesus leads when the call comes to move out.

TUESDAY

Read first three paragraphs,

- The blood of the sacrificed animal is a key element in this celebration. Those who participated in this feast had put the blood of the slain lamb on the doorframes of their houses. In this way, they demonstrated their faith in God, believing that He would deliver them from what those not covered by the blood would face.

What a powerful expression of the gospel!

The Passover lamb had to be without blemish because it pointed to Jesus Christ, “ ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ ” (John 1:29, NKJV). The animal’s blood played a crucial role: it symbolized protection and **was the sign of life** at a time of death. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 41, emphasis mine.

This is so good! I was so happy to see this in the lesson. Yes, the blood of the animal is a sign of life! As we explained earlier, the life is in the blood, and the life is the life of Jesus. This is the breath of life, the animating energy, the spirit of life Jesus’ humanity received from the Holy Spirit and which He lived by and from which Jesus developed a mature, sinless, human, perfect character. This is the life of Christ the Spirit of Christ that we are to receive and brings us new life when we are reborn and surrender our old life of fear and selfishness.

We receive the life of Christ at the time we die to the old life of fear and selfishness, at our conversion. Our unique personhood, individualities, identities are preserved as we surrender our attachment to fear and selfishness and exercise trust/faith in Jesus and receive the indwelling Spirit of love and trust. And we mature and grow as we then choose to align with and act upon the leadings, drives, motives, directions of the Spirit of love and trust.

How would you explain the next paragraph,

- The whole gospel was associated with the celebration of the Passover because it pointed not only to freedom from slavery and going to the Promised Land but to **Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and His merits applied to all who are covered by His blood**. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 41, emphasis mine.

What does it mean? Does the law lens one holds impact how one understands this?

First let's be clear, no human could be saved from sin without the substitutionary sacrificial death of Jesus. It is only by Jesus and what He accomplished that humanity is saved from sin. So anyone who alleges we deny the substitutionary nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice reveals that they do not know what we teach.

We already explained why this was necessary, to eliminate the spirit of fear and selfishness that separates us from God and causes death. But what are His merits? And what does it mean to be covered by His blood?

Merits means reality, actuality, intrinsically real, objective. The merits of Jesus are everything about Him and what He did. He is the way, the truth, and the life—in reality. He became a real human being. He partook of the infected terminal life through Mary. He also received a sinless pure life from His Father the Holy Spirit. He lived as a human, in reality, exercising real human abilities to think, feel, and choose. And as a human He suffered and was tempted in all points like us, and He chose always sinless perfection and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and rose again in a purified and perfected humanity. This is not merely demonstration of truth, even though it does demonstrate and reveal truth. It is accomplishment, factual, literal, intrinsic. Jesus is human and is a sinless human that partook of the humanity infected with sin—Jesus intrinsically is the connecting link between sinful humanity and sinless God by connecting His life with ours and purging the infection of sin, fear, and selfishness. When we connect with Him in trust, we receive His Spirit, His life and are ourselves cleansed, purified, renewed, recreated, made righteous by receiving the merits, life, spirit of Christ.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points to the importance of teaching our children the truth, passing on to the next generations what God has done for us and the truth of the plan of salvation.

But parents cannot pass on what they themselves do not know. Thus, first priority is for every individual to experience salvation, to come to know Jesus for themselves, to be reborn with a new heart and right spirit, to come to know the principles of God, His character, methods of truth, love, freedom, and then to lead our children to know Jesus for themselves not as a concept, but as a personal Savior, so they will choose to trust Him and open their hearts to Him.

Sadly, however, all too often, many good-hearted people confuse cognitive conversion with heart conversion.

Cognitive conversion is indoctrination into a set of beliefs, ideas, concepts, doctrines—which may all be true, like the Sabbath, state of the dead, healthy living practices, belief that the Bible is inspired, that God is Creator, etc. But the Jews who crucified Christ believed all of this, and the devils believe these facts are true also, but their hearts, their spirits, are not the hearts or spirits of love and trust, but of fear and selfishness.

And the Jews who believed in the Bible, the Sabbath, the Creator God, the advent of the Messiah, their calling as God's people, the sanctuary, the health message—but didn't have hearts converted from fear and selfishness to love and trust practiced a legal religion and accused Jesus of being a law breaker and killed Him.

This happens to people who refuse to worship God as Creator, but insist on worshiping God as dictator, imperial rule-maker, punisher, and inflictor of death. They create a religion of rules and doctrines and will convert people to their cognitive understanding of what is orthodoxy, but without any power to save.

They search the world for a convert and make them twice the son of hell—by teaching them right doctrines set in the wrong law construct that doesn't convert the heart and thus solidifies the spirit of fear and selfishness. This is via the design law of worship, by beholding we become changed. We do become like the God we worship—and if we have the right doctrines but the wrong law and the wrong god we will become God's enemy.

God's plan is to heal hearts and minds, to replace the spirit of fear and selfishness with love and trust, and love rejoices with the truth and thus the true convert loves God, loves others, and practices God's design law methods. And this requires we return to worshiping God as Creator and reset all of our right doctrines, and I believe our 28 doctrines of the SDA church are factually right, but we need to reset them all into design law and get them out of the Roman lie about God's law.

FRIDAY

Read the first paragraph, which is a quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

- “The Passover was to be both commemorative and typical, not only pointing back to the deliverance from Egypt, but forward to the greater deliverance which Christ was to accomplish in freeing His people from the bondage of sin. The sacrificial lamb represents ‘the Lamb of God,’ in whom is our only hope of salvation. Says the apostle, ‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.’ 1 Corinthians 5:7. It was not enough that the paschal lamb be slain; its blood must be sprinkled upon the doorposts; so the merits of Christ's blood must be applied to the soul. We must believe, not only that He died for the world, but that He died for us individually. We must appropriate to ourselves the virtue of the atoning sacrifice.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

Anything particularly significant in this paragraph?

Did you notice this sentence?

- It was not enough that the paschal lamb be slain; its blood must be sprinkled upon the doorposts; so the merits of Christ's blood must be applied to the soul.

The merits must be applied to the soul, which is the individual, the inner person, the heart and mind, not to record books, court ledgers, legal documents. Why? Because God is the God of reality not fiction or fantasy and we have a real problem of sinfulness in us, we are infected with a spirit of fear and selfishness which is out of harmony with God and life and the only way for us to have salvation to have life, is to receive a new life, the life of Jesus, which is symbolized by His blood.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

HELP US CELEBRATE!

Come And Reason Ministries, as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is turning 15 years old on August 5, 2025! To celebrate, we're making everything we gave away at our exhibit booth at the 62nd General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, held in St. Louis, MO, available — for FREE — now until **August 31, 2025**, including free shipping to U.S. postal addresses* (while supplies last). So, if you missed us in St. Louis or didn't have enough luggage space, **you can still get all our resources for FREE**, while helping us celebrate our milestone anniversary!

Help us celebrate by ordering any of the products below — and share them with your friends, neighbors, church, and family.

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NEW RELEASE: *Salvation and You: What It Really Means To Be Saved*, where we explore reality, what sin did to humanity and how God through Jesus fixes that problem bringing genuine healing and transformation to people—here and now.

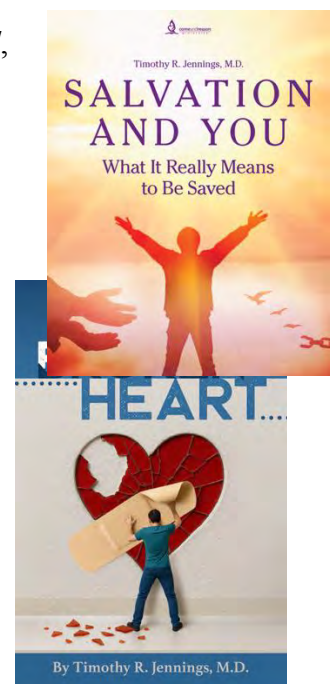
Healing a Broken Heart: Seven Steps to Grief Recovery is now available on our website and print copies can be ordered to US postal addresses. <https://comeandreason.com/healing-a-broken-heart/>

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp



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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

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Newbold College
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New Pamphlet: [Repairers of the Breach](#) is now available on Come and reason Website, download pdf, read online, order FREE copies to any US postal address.

[Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain](#): This program is now available online and slides are available for download.

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South Africa: The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity and Delays the Second Coming of Christ is now available in Afrikaans on our website at <https://comeandreason.com/the-lie-that-deceived-angels-afrikaans/>

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Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison have a Facebook group in Australia and have the following Come and Reason resources available in Australia:

- CIBTS
- God is Love Children's book
- The Heavenly Sanctuary for the Modern World
- The Final Message of Mercy
- The Remedy NT

- The Remedy of the Lord in Song
- First set of tracts

To order, email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com

2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 6

Through the Red Sea

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The events of the Exodus are not only historical realities, they also serve as object lessons in the plan of salvation. Referencing Exodus and going through the Red Sea, Paul wrote,

- Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 1 Corinthians 10:6 NIV84.

One of the lessons we can learn from the Exodus as recorded in Scripture, is God's plan to free us from sin, personally, individually, and globally—the human species at the second coming of Christ.

Most people recognize the global object lesson application of the Exodus:

- the slaves in Egypt are a type for all humanity being enslaved by sin
- Pharaoh who denies God and will not submit to Him represents Satan the sin-slave master
- the bondage, degradation, and abuse the people received as slaves represents the bondage, degradation, and abuse sin causes in our lives
- Moses represents Christ who entered the enemy's seat of power and confronted and overcame him in order to lead the people to freedom
- Pharaoh didn't die in the 10th plague—meaning Pharaoh was not first born; Jesus is Firstborn over all creation—which is a position of authority not birth order.
 - “He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”
Colossians 1:15

But Satan wanted the position that Jesus held in heaven and not inherently being God, not actually able to, by reality, occupy the position of Jesus who is the Creator, the eternal, divine, second member of the Godhead, Satan therefore, sought to use claims, proclamations, assertions and artificial divisions—i.e., made up laws to seek to rise up and rule over. Failing in heaven, Satan enslaves the people of God through his falsehoods.

Pharaoh, represents Satan, who is the enslaver of the people and who denies all evidence that he is merely a creature and not equal to our infinite God, and Pharaoh dies in the waters of the Red Sea, which represent, as we will see in a moment, the fires of God's infinite glorious love and truth.

These lessons are powerful, meaningful, encouraging, and give us hope and confidence in the soon return of Jesus who will free us permanently from sin and take us to our heavenly promised land!

What may be less obvious are the lessons for individual freedom over fear, selfishness, and sin and how we can experience this victory today.

The Hebrews of the Exodus generation were born into slavery. They did nothing to indenture themselves into slavery, it was their station and condition from birth. Likewise, the Bible teaches that we are all born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5), this is our condition at birth. None of us ever chose to become sinners—we were born enslaved to fear and selfishness, constituted with a carnal nature inherited from Adam. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt were incapable of freeing themselves and we are incapable of freeing ourselves from sin.

God sent a deliverer, Moses, to confront Pharaoh in order to free the people. And,

- “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” John 3:16-18 NIV84.

We are already enslaved to sin by birth. We are not condemned because we sin, we sin because we were born infected with a fearful, self-centered, sinful spirit or nature. Our freedom comes from Christ—if we refuse Christ our station, position, heart/mind, does not change, we remain enslaved to sin, thus we remain condemned by this terminal sin condition because we have refused the healing, the transformation, the new life, the freedom that comes only through Christ—by receiving His life via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Imagine and HIV infected man and woman give birth to an HIV infected baby—what did the baby do wrong? Nothing, but despite the baby doing nothing wrong it is still born infected (metaphor for us being born in sin); it still has a terminal condition that without remedy will result in symptoms (metaphor for sins) and death (first death/sleep represents the wages of sin second death/eternal destruction), unless remedy is provided. But if the child is offered free antiviral meds that will put the infection into remission (metaphor for the blood of Jesus which is a symbol of His sinless life/spirit that we receive through faith which replaces the terminal life/spirit we inherit from Adam) and they refuse (upon age of accountability) to take them, they remain condemned, not for being born with the condition, not for the symptoms they have, but for refusing the remedy. But if they take the free remedy, despite being born infected, they are no longer condemned to die from that condition. That is what Jesus is saying above.

So, Jesus came, confronted Satan, overcame all his evil forces, purged the spirit of fear and selfishness replacing it with the Spirit of love and trust and opened a new a living way for each of us to leave the slavery of sin and live a new life of freedom—a life of love and trust, by becoming our substitutionary Savior.

- “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84.

Jesus took up humanity, broken and damaged by Adam’s sin, and purged the infection, spirit of fear and selfishness, and replaced that terminal life with His sinless, perfect, eternal life and thereby became the second Adam. For more on how Jesus procured the Remedy, cures this condition, see our blogs [Salvation and the Cleansing of our Spirit Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). Or get our FREE booklet, [Salvation and You: What It Really Means to Be Saved](#).

But in our journey from the slavery of sin to a life of victory and freedom, there are often many battles to fight. The events of the Exodus serve as a powerful object lesson to encourage us in our sojourn to freedom.

The Hebrew slaves prepared to leave Egypt by celebrating the Passover, which, as we discussed last week, was instituted at that time as both a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, but also an object lesson pointing forward to Jesus’ becoming our Passover Lamb to deliver us from the slavery of sin (1 Corinthians 5:7).

We will never succeed in escaping the bondage of sin without first partaking of Jesus. In other words, freedom from sin starts with taking Jesus into our heart!

As we discussed last week, the Hebrew slaves were instructed to sacrifice a lamb or goat, symbolic of Jesus’ sacrifice for us (John 1:29), and to eat its flesh with bitter herbs and put the blood on the doorpost of their homes.

This symbolizes the starting point in our individual deliverance from sin. Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-14). To ingest the “flesh” of Jesus means to internalizing the Word, the truth of Jesus, of who God is. The truth about God will destroy the lies about Him and set us free from doubt (John 8:32) and bring us to the point where we choose to trust Him and open our heart to Him. When we open the heart in trust we receive a new life, the life of Christ (Galatians 2:20), via the indwelling Holy Spirit, which is symbolized by the blood (the life is in the blood Leviticus 17:11). This is what it means to be born again, to be born of the Spirit, is to surrender one’s attachment to the motivational, animating, spirit of fear and to receive, identify with, cling to and act upon the Spirit of love and trust. Jesus described this in symbol when He said,

- “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. John 6:53-56 NIV84.

All of this was prefigured in the Passover celebration prior to their departure from Egypt. Just as the Jews ingested the meal prior to leaving Egypt, we must ingest the flesh (truth) and blood (life) of Jesus prior to our departure from the slavery of sin. In fact, it is the truth and life of Jesus that sets us free!

The bitter herbs symbolize the hardships and bitterness of this world of sin that enslaves us. Despite the nurturing and revitalizing strength and power received from the “flesh” of the Lamb, we are still living in the bitterness of a sinful world and struggling with the impact of what the enslavement to sin has done.

The Passover symbolizes conversion, the beginning point on our freedom. We cannot start our journey to the heavenly promised land until we are converted to Jesus Christ. The Passover represents, for the individual, how God has passed over our sinful lives, not allowing the full natural results of sin (eternal separation from Him and subsequent death to be realized), but instead has intervened (interceded) with grace to free us from this sin condition through Jesus who provides us the truth (Word/flesh) and a new animating spirit/life (blood).

Once we have surrendered to Jesus in trust and been reborn, then the journey to freedom begins and the experiences of the Hebrews during the Exodus provide additional powerful lessons that are applicable to our individual experience.

Once they left the land of Goshen, God led the people with a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. The pillar of fire gave them light to see and kept back the cold, the cloud sheltered them from the brutal and oppressive heat of the day. When we follow Jesus, He provides light to enlighten our minds and guide us through the darkness of this world and He also shields us from the burning heat and assaults of the enemy.

As they followed God’s leading (pillar/cloud), notice where He led them—to the Red Sea which was bordered by mountains. This resulted in a situation in which it appeared they were trapped with Pharaoh’s army bearing down upon them with no human way to escape.

Why did the people end up in this situation in which it appeared they were trapped? Did God make a mistake, take a wrong turn, miscalculate? Of course not, God brought them to this very point intentionally, purposefully, why? Because it was necessary for the Hebrews to be truly free, not just bodily free, but free mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

How was bringing the Hebrews to border of the Red Sea, in which they appeared trapped, a therapeutic action by God to help free them? Free them from what? What was truly enslaving them and what is enslaving us? Fear and selfishness—our sinful condition, which causes distrust in God and obstructs His ability to heal us.

So God brought them to this place to free from their fear, guilt, shame, selfishness, distrust of Him, and reliance on Egyptians pagan beliefs, so that they could choose to trust in Him and then move forward in that trust.

God brought them to this point, so they would face their own fears, doubts, and human limitations and choose to trust Him and thereby experience His goodness, love, and faithfulness and through this experience overcome their fears in love and trust to Him.

As we trust God and follow His leading, we are often led to places in our lives where it appears we are trapped and destructive forces, emotions, circumstances, finances, relationships, divorce, child custody issues, job problems, come bearing down on us and from a human perspective it appears there is no escape. It is then that God longs for us to stop focusing on the threats and to turn to Him in trust, to remember He is our gracious, loving, powerful, and healing Savior who has led us to this very place—why? So we can choose to trust Him and be freed from our own fears, doubts, and insecurities.

But notice what the Hebrews did when they saw Pharaoh's army, are we in danger of doing the same when we face the threats in our life?

- As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” Exodus 14:10–12 NIV84.

Notice the spiritual warfare being described by these events and the object lesson application. We are born in fear and selfishness, Jesus came to free us from this terminal sin-condition and give us new hearts that love and trust. After we have received Jesus, been reborn with new hearts that love and trust, Satan, the enemy of all that is good, marshals his forces to attack ***in order to inflame our fear and cause us to distrust God and turn against Him***. The goal of the enemy's attacks is to make us afraid and activate old habits, old maladaptive coping, old unhealthy comfort measures, to get us to run back to the old “gods,” rather than turning to our Creator and Savior for deliverance. In other words, Satan tempts us to run back to the things that enslaved us in order to “feel safe.”

But notice Moses' response,

- Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm [other versions “stand still,” in other words, stop being frantic and panicking] and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:13–14 NIV84.

And this is the reason God leads us to these very places, so that we have the opportunity to choose—to choose to trust Him rather than choose to try and save ourselves through our old destructive fear-based coping patterns. It is only by our choice to trust God that we heal, mature, grow, and are set free from the slavery of fear and selfishness. Thus God in mercy and love always leads us to the various decision points that we need to face in our lives in order to free us from what has been enslaving us so that we will never have to deal with those old enemies again.

But we can't be freed of the old enemies, if we keep choosing to run back to them as a way to try and make ourselves feel safe in the moment of our distress. We need to do as God advised, stop running back to the old ways and simply “be still,” trust God, and watch Him fight for us!

The people listened to Moses—which is an object lesson for us when we are in distress, fearful, being tempted to turn back to our old enslaving choices or relationships, to listen to Jesus, turn to Him, and follow His directions, and then be still and watch Him fight the battle and open the way for our deliverance.

- Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, **coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel**. Throughout the night the **cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side**; so neither went near the other all night long. Exodus 14:19–20 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This cloud is a symbol of Jesus, who comes between us and our enemy. He provides a protective hedge, holding back the principalities and power of darkness sufficient for us to move forward in faith, walking through the sea of problems on dry ground.

But notice the cloud brought darkness to one side while it brought light to the other side. This enacts a powerful truth, God is the source of light and truth, but if we reject the light and truth, if we refuse to walk in the light of truth, then we are left only with darkness. It is only by advancing, moving forward, in the light of truth that we stay in the light, that we stay on the path of truth. Even if we once had God's light/truth, if we refuse to move forward as more truth/light is revealed then we leave the light and end up in darkness. Jesus described this process with these words,

- If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! Matthew 6:23 NIV84.

Prior to Jesus birth, sinless life, and sacrificial death, the Jews had the truth that the Messiah was coming through Judah and would be born in Bethlehem (Genesis 49:10; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6). Jesus is the fulfillment of these prophecies, the truth manifested in human history. Yet many Jews rejected this unfolding truth. And having rejected Jesus as the Messiah, when today Jews cling to the old "truths," and look for the Messiah yet to be born from their descendants in Bethlehem, they are no longer in the light, they are in darkness.

Likewise, Pharaoh, having rejected all the light that had been revealed to him prior to the Red Sea had hardened his heart and destroyed within himself the faculties that recognize truth, so that even when in the presence of the divine source of truth, he sees only darkness. This is how it is for all those who refuse to advance in the truth, for those with hardened hearts even when in the presence of the source of truth, they see only darkness.

We must develop hearts that love truth, that keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and eagerly seek to advance and move forward in the light of truth as we comprehend it. When we do this after our conversion, when we do this when faced with the threats and attacks of the enemy, when we do this when our fears are rising and the temptations to run back to our old enslavements are pressing in, then we will see the light, we will see the way God opens through what seemed impossible and impassable to us. Our freedom comes as we trust and as we move forward by choice to apply what we know is true.

The lesson from Exodus continues,

- But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. Exodus 14:29–30.

They were saved by the power of God, but only because they chose to trust and to obey, to actually move their own selves forward into the seabed walking through the walls of water on each side. And this symbolizes baptism, dying to the old life, being cleansed by the Holy Spirit, and coming out of the watery grave to live new lives in a new land.

This is how God transforms us. He provides truth, love, and situations for us to choose—will we choose truth, love, and trust or fear, selfishness, and our old dysfunctional patterns? As we choose to move forward in truth, love, and trust then we receive divine power to succeed and step by step, choice by choice we are transformed, cleansed, baptized, as the old habits, false beliefs, and unhealthy desires are washed away and we come out of this journey with Jesus with a new life.

- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 NIV84.

And the **very same waters** that symbolically cleansed and purified the people drowned the armies of Egypt. Peter also teaches this lesson when he describes Noah and his family delivered through the waters that drowned the unbelievers as an object lesson of baptism,

- In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. 2 Peter 3:20-22 NIV84.

What a powerful object lesson—the waters symbolize the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit that for all who trust God die to fear, selfishness, sin, the old carnal life and are reborn, washed clean, and given a new heart and right spirit. The saved go through the watering grave through faith in Jesus and surrender their old lives of fear and live only because they receive a new life of love and trust, the life of Christ, through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

But the wicked, refuse to give up their life of fear, sin, selfishness and thus the very same waters that cleanse the righteous destroy the wicked. This is symbolic of the final end of sin and sinners when the fires of God's life-giving glory flow through, transform, invigorate, and revitalize the righteous, as we live forever in God's glorious presence. But the wicked, who cling to sin, find the fires of God's presence, the fires of infinite love and truth terrible to be in because truth and love is hateful to the liar

and the selfish. In infinite truth and love they experience the truth of who they have chosen to become and the truth of what they have done to others. Their unconverted hearts can no longer deny, distort, and blame. In the unveiled presence of God's life-giving glory the unsaved experience full awareness of reality—and they hate it and prefer death over life in God's presence. Peter makes this connection between the waters and the final end in the fires,

- First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 2 Peter 3:3-7 NIV 84. (If you would like a full detailed biblical exploration about the final end of sin and sinners and God's eternal fiery glorious presence, see our blog [The Truth About Hell](#)).

The events of the Exodus are powerful lessons for us. God longs to set us free from everything that enslaves us. The enemy will do everything in his power to inflame our fear, doubt, discouragement, tempting us to turn back to our old ways, to enslave ourselves all over again. **It is at those moments, when we see no human way out that we stand at the door of our greatest opportunity for deliverance and victory.** God is longing for us, encouraging us, pleading with us to stop our frantic fighting to survive, we must refuse to run back to our old “gods,” our old dysfunctional comfort measures, and simply turn to Him in trust. When we do this, when we stop running and stand still in trust, get ready, for God will open the way through whatever obstacle is interfering with His calling, will, and purpose for our lives and we will walk through to a new victorious life beyond our imagining! He is only waiting for us to choose to trust Him and act upon that trust by choosing to follow where He is leading. He wants us free—what will you choose?

SUNDAY

The lesson is focused upon Exodus 12:31-36,

- During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.” The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians. Exodus 12:31-36 NIV84.

Read the second and third paragraphs,

- How interesting that Pharaoh, in telling the Hebrews to go and worship, adds this request: “And bless me also.” *And bless me also?*

Why would he, the king of Egypt, a “god” on earth among his people, ask that? It sounds as if he’s finally catching on to the power of the Hebrew God and would like to benefit from it. However, how can God bless him while he is steeped in rebellion, stubbornness, sin, and pride? Sure, he finally gave his consent, but it wasn’t out of submission to the will of Yahweh. It was, instead, out of defeat. He wasn’t repentant—as his later actions will reveal. He simply wanted to stop the devastation that was destroying his kingdom. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 47.

Are there object lessons in this?

Pharaoh represents Satan and all the unrepentant peoples. As reality unfolds, as God’s gracious interventions are slowly removed, as Satan and his forces reap more fully their choices they eventually, some now, but all at the end of the 1000 years, acknowledge what Pharaoh acknowledges here—that their artificial, made up fantasy way of functioning doesn’t change reality. On the way, many will ask God, in their distress, when they hit their rock bottom, when the results of their rebellion against reality, against love, against God’s design laws for life, for His blessing.

But for those who are like Pharaoh only want deliverance from the pain, suffering, and consequences of their sin, not from the sinfulness in themselves, and therefore God cannot help them—because God is the God of reality, they continue to choose rebellion but want to live in fantasy where destructive choices are not destructive. God can do nothing for them, not because God doesn’t want to, not because God in heart is against them, but because they refuse to let God do what God must do in order to save them—and that is free their individuality, personhood, self from the spirit of fear, selfishness, pride, and they refuse to allow it.

This is reality. It is not penal legal, it is the actual operations of our being. The blessing Pharaoh wants is not an actual blessing. He wants more wealth, more power, more adoration for self—which if given to him would only further solidify his character into rebellion and sin. The actual blessings God has already been providing, but he has refused—and that is the blessing of truth and love with the freedom to choose to trust God. If Pharaoh would have received the truth and chosen to trust God He would have been blessed as Nebuchadnezzar was.

When the Hebrews left they took with them everything, so many things are not mentioned or described, so what do you think of this interesting detail in the text:

- So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. Exodus 12:34 NIV84.

The SDA Bible Commentary has this to say about this verse:

- This reflects the urgency of the Egyptians. The Israelites were probably about to bake bread for their journey. Though warned by Moses several days earlier, the people seem not to have expected so hurried a departure, and their preparations were not as yet complete. Though they had been told that for seven days after partaking of the paschal lamb they should eat unleavened bread (v. 15), many had either not taken this injunction to heart or had planned to bake leavened bread for the days that would follow the seven days of unleavened bread. However, the pressure of necessity obliged them to be content with unleavened bread, or as it is called in Deut. 16:3, “the bread of affliction.” Nichol, F. D., ed. (1978). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 1, p. 555). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

I have no disagreement with these observations, it is likely they didn’t all hasten to prepare as instructed given; all the other failures to trust and apply God’s instructions they demonstrate support this conclusion.

But is there, in addition to just the fact it happened, some object lesson in this—and perhaps is the reason this detail was included by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Yeast in the context of the Passover, being left out, represents sin. And the unleavened bread represents Jesus. But the dough unleavened, is also unbaked, not ready for ingestion—what might this represent? Could it represent the Word of God, the Bible, which we are to carry with us, as they carried the dough upon our shoulders and protected in our hearts, depicted under our clothing? And as the dough is living so too is God’s Word:

- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV84.

And as the dough is not ready for ingestion but must be kneaded and baked before it is ingested, God’s Word, has many truths that require study, wrestling with, and development at the proper time before it is ready for ingestion, just like the prophecies of Daniel for example.

And as this dough will continue to produce bread for generations to come, so too God’s living Word continues to produce new truth for each subsequent generation.

MONDAY

Read the second and third paragraphs,

- God mercifully guarded the Israelite families who were under the blood because, by faith, they had marked their doorframes. These new directions came from the Lord through Moses: “

‘Consecrate to me every firstborn male’ ” (Exod. 13:2, NIV). This legislation was valid for humans as well as for animals.

One principle behind this injunction is that everything belongs to Him because He is our Creator and the Owner of everything: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1, NIV). “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts” (Hag. 2:8, ESV). The Israelites’ firstborn sons were the firstfruits of God’s blessings, which He had bestowed upon them; they were also a sign of their total consecration to Him and of their understanding that all they possessed came only from Him. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 48.

What do you understand is happening here?

Are we to believe that animal blood can protect from death and sin? Or is this theater, a living enactment of symbols that are designed to teach reality? So, what is the reality which this teaches?

- What does the blood represent? The righteous, holy, sinless life of Jesus (Lev 17:11).
- What does the doorpost represent? The heart, the entry into the inner sanctuary or home. Jesus stands at the door of the heart and anyone who opens the door He comes in and dines with them.
- And what do the firstborn represent? Adam the firstborn of humanity, the individual in whom God breathed the breath of life and from whom every other human life is derived. Adam was the human individual who inherited God’s authority as governor vicegerent of Earth, ruling under the authority of Christ. Adam corrupted himself, his spirit, his life, with fear and selfishness and distrust of God, which without divine intervention causes separation from the source of life and death. Thus all humanity is born in sin, terminal, and the firstborn represent this terminal condition that all humanity inherits through Adam.
- The blood represents Jesus, the Firstborn over all Creation, the true Son of God and authority of the Godhead who became a real human being and purged the infection of fear and selfishness in humanity and replaced it with His holy, righteous, pure spirit/life of love and trust through exercising human abilities. We can now receive this new sinless life into our hearts through faith and when we do, despite being born of Adam the firstborn human, we are reborn into Jesus the Firstborn over all creation, and therefore God saves us from death by giving us a new life.

The reality that God is the owner of everything by creation, by sustaining all things, by redemption protects us from the worldly ways of trying to protect ourselves from the spirit of fear. Fear causes insecurity, fear of the future, rejection, helplessness, punishment, exploitation, etc., and for those who are not converted to Jesus and live by a new spirit of love and trust, they try to suppress their constant fear through many means—greed, gaining wealth, and through all history in all societies a few greedy people accumulate wealth to make themselves feel safe while exploiting others, the rich young ruler found his security in his wealth.

Others in history who are driven by the spirit of fear and selfishness but who were not able to accumulate personal wealth, seek power to take wealth and rule over others, this is the motivation behind socialism, Marxism, Communism, which deceives by exploiting the fear and jealousy in the masses to promote the false system that the state should be the owner who then can equitably distribute the wealth to everyone, but instead, because this is fear driven and not love driven, always causes more exploitation and abuse as people themselves are viewed as commodities or property of the state.

The lesson points our attention to Exodus 13:9 and 16

- “On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand... And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.” Exodus 13:8,9, 16 NIV84.

This is from the SDA Bible commentary on this passage:

- Some scholars think that this instruction was not carried out literally until the time of the kings, or possibly even the Maccabees. Clear non-Biblical evidence that the Jews wore portions of the law fastened to their left arms and foreheads comes from about the time of Christ. The Jews called them tephillin, which has been explained to mean “prayers,” whereas the Greek designation was phylakterion (Matt. 23:5), from which the English word phylactery is derived. These consisted of little pouches made from the skin of ceremonially clean animals, sewed to leather bands by which they were strapped to the forehead between and immediately above the eyes and to the left arms of males who had reached the age of 13. The four compartments of the head phylactery each contained a strip of parchment bearing one of the four following passages faultlessly written: Ex. 13:2–10; 13:11–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21—30 verses altogether. The arm phylactery had but one pocket, yet contained the same four passages written on one skin. It was tied to the inside of the left arm a little above the elbow, so that the Scripture passages might be near the heart. This was done, presumably in compliance with the command, “These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (Deut. 6:6). Phylacteries were customarily worn by pious Jews during the daily morning prayer, but by some reputedly devout men all day long. With a pretense of piety they often made their phylacteries more conspicuous by broadening the bands, a practice severely criticized by Christ in Matt. 23:5. Even now conservative Jews wear phylacteries.

It is known that Egyptians often wore amulets on their bodies in the form of miniature papyrus scrolls, on which magic words were written. The Israelites in later centuries may have adopted this superstitious practice from the Egyptians. But God did not intend that the Jews should make a literal application of the command here given by binding certain portions of the law to their arms and foreheads (DA 612). He spoke exclusively of the acceptance of right principles in the mind and heart, the intellect and emotions, and of the application of these principles to

the life. Nichol, F. D., ed. (1978). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 559–560). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

What do you think of taking literal something that God use symbolically? God said the Passover and all that it taught was to be like a sign upon their forehead and your hand a symbol of God's law in their hearts and minds and thus directing the conduct of their lives.

But they took it literal and began wearing pieces of parchment with Bible words written upon them upon their bodies. Did such a practice help them experience the reality of what God wanted or obstruct the reality of what God wanted?

Why would the practice obstruct it? Because it would give them something to do, that appeared to be in harmony with God's instructions, but in fact was not, but this false application would allow them to believe they are in compliance with the instructions of God and thus rest satisfied that they are in good standing with God, when in reality they are still terminal, dying in sin.

Does Christianity do anything similar?

Yes, functionally the same, when Christianity accepts Rome's lie about God's law, believing God's law is imposed rules then they teach that salvation is getting the blood of Christ applied to record books in heaven, which are outside the person, to make legal adjustment and to declare people to be righteous when in reality they are still unrighteous. But the New Covenant is writing the law in our hearts and minds, which is what this instruction in Exodus was referring to. Yet, just like wearing Scripture on your body to declare you are righteous when one is not, the penal legal atonement model creates an external system of application of God's provisions that leads people to rest satisfied that they have met God's requirements when they are still dying in sin.

If you think I am making up a straw man, a false argument to attack, consider these quotations:

- “Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, and when you put your trust in him, he takes his righteousness and **credits it to your account**. You gain access to righteousness not because of anything you have done but because Christ **applied it to your account**. This **imputed** righteousness puts you in right standing before the Father **as if** you had done the right thing all along” (<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-imputed-righteousness.html>, emphasis mine).
- [Imputed righteousness] is “**charging to an account**, used in the Bible with **legal reference** to sin and salvation being recorded by God. ... When Scripture speaks of the imputation of good or evil, **it does not suggest that any change of moral character is involved**. Scripture does affirm that, from God's perspective, righteousness or sin is **charged to an individual's account**. Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In Tyndale Bible dictionary, pp. 630–631. Tyndale House Publishers, emphasis mine.

Many of those who oppose what we teach do so because they find comfort, security for their spirit of fear and selfishness in the external application of Christ's accomplishments to record books because

they fear what God will do to them if they don't and sadly, this gives them the false sense of security rather than the reality of being reborn and having God's living law restored within the believer.

We covered TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY's lesson already in our review of the events of crossing the Red Sea.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Moses' song is all about God, about who He is and what He is doing. The Lord is exalted, praised, and admired for His outstanding work for His people. Gratitude and worship are natural outcomes of God's goodness toward us. Appreciation for His love is the pre-requisite of a vibrant spiritual life. God's steadfast love is especially emphasized and glorified because He will lead the people whom He has redeemed, and He will guide them to the holy abiding place. Moses predicts that God will establish the sanctuary on the mountain of His inheritance (Exod. 15:17), all pointing ahead to Zion and to the temple in Jerusalem. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 51.

What is to be our song today? What is the message we are to be taking to the world? Is it not the truth about God's as our Creator, the truth of His character of love all built upon the design laws that originate and emanate from our Creator who sustains the operations of all reality?

Is the message you hear from Christianity praise to God for His grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, and sacrifice to deliver us from Satan's lies, Satan's power of death, from our own fallen fear based selfish spirit and restore us to life, health, holiness, righteousness, unity, at-one-ment with Him? Or do you hear far too many Christians praising God for sending Jesus to protect us from Him, from the death they claim He will inflict upon them if they don't claim Jesus' blood to pay for their sins?

And what was the temple pointing forward toward? Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem the city of God, the ultimate promised land where the meek inherit the Earth and God and Jesus will be the temple?

Read the last paragraph, which is referencing Revelation 15:2-4, the song of Moses and the Lamb:

- Notice the last line of the song. " 'For all nations shall come and worship before You. For Your judgments have been manifested' " (NKJV). That is, when all of God's judgments—especially His judgments upon the evil and oppression that have for millennia gone unpunished—have all been made manifest, the redeemed of the nations will praise Him for those judgments. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 51.

What is the lesson suggesting here? Do you hear the lesson promoting the penal legal view and they are using a translation of the Bible which supports that explanation. But this is not the only translation or way to understand it. Consider the NIV translation of the same verses:

- “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for **your righteous acts** have been revealed.” Revelation 15:3-4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

When you hear “judgments” what comes to mind? The lesson is suggesting that all worship God because He rules like Caesar and eventually uses power to inflict just punishments upon unrepentant sinners. This is Satan’s lie still being promoted, the lie that God’s law functions like human law and therefore God is the source of death, the wielder of death, the power of death—when the Bible teaches that sin causes death and Satan holds the power of death.

So the NIV is correct in its translation, that the nations worship God because His righteousness, His righteous acts have been revealed. God wins because the truth of His righteous character, methods, principles, and design laws are revealed by God’s actions, including the beauty of the Sabbath, which was created and set apart when God rested, when God refused to use power as the lesson suggests to inflict punishment upon Lucifer and his angels for their rebellion. Instead, God left His creatures free, including freedom not only to rebel, but to kill Him at the cross.

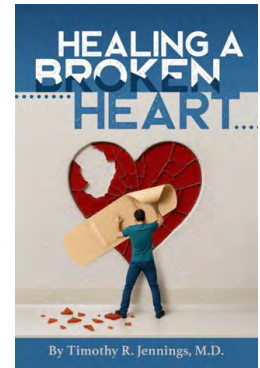
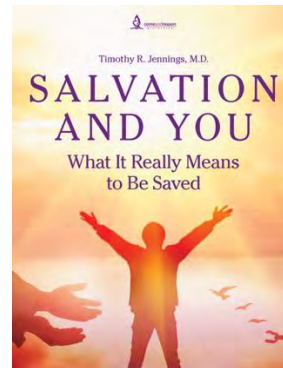
Oh, how diabolical is Satan that he has so succeeded in getting people to prefer his method of law and law enforcement over the truth of our righteous, holy, glorious, Creator God of love whose laws are the design laws of reality. When we realize this truth and all the righteous acts of God we will worship Him in truth. This is what the Bible is teaching.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW RELEASE: *Salvation and You: What It Really Means To Be Saved*, where we explore reality, what sin did to humanity and how God through Jesus fixes that problem bringing genuine healing and transformation to people—here and now.

Healing a Broken Heart: Seven Steps to Grief Recovery is now available on our website and print copies can be ordered to US postal addresses.

<https://comeandreason.com/healing-a-broken-heart/>



Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

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October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

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Newbold College
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New Pamphlet: [Repairers of the Breach](#) is now available on Come and reason Website, download pdf, read online, order FREE copies to any US postal address.



2025 Q3 Lesson 7

The Bread and Water of Life

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

And the Lord said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' So the people rested on the seventh day. (Exodus 16:28–30, NKJV).

From the Lesson:

After leaving Egypt, Israel was on an unknown journey to the Promised Land. The people faced a demanding and long trek, and they needed to learn a multitude of new lessons. The Lord would lead and care for them; and, yes, He desired to help them grow, but they must learn discipline, self-control, sacrifice, unselfishness, trust in the Lord, and **especially obedience**. Moses was a visible [**ed: human**] leader, and the people had to follow him and his leadership if they were to triumph. It was crucial for them to stay together, to cooperate as a community, and to assist each other. There were many hindrances and challenges ahead. So much of their spiritual growth would depend on how they met those challenges and how they responded to Moses, especially when the challenges became great. (Adult SS Lesson, 3Q 2025 Exodus, pg 85. emphasis mine)

Why "especially obedience"?

What **kind** of obedience?

"There are two grand forces at work in the salvation of the human soul. It requires the cooperation of man with the divine agencies—divine influences, and a strong, living, working faith. It is in this way only that the human agent can become a laborer together with God. **The Lord does not sanction in any one of us a blind, stupid credulity.** He does not dishonor the human understanding, but, far from this, He calls for the human will to be brought into connection with the divine will. He calls for the ingenuity of the human mind, the tact, the skill, to be strenuously exercised in searching out the truth as it is in Jesus.... Ye are labourers together with God. (Our High Calling, pg 310. emphasis mine)

The "Angel of the Lord" in the pillar of cloud was their "visible leader" 24/7/365. Moses was a type of Christ [fully human following the direction of God], and he was not visible to everyone in the camp at all times.

From the Red Sea the hosts of Israel again set forth on their journey, **under the guidance of the pillar of cloud**. The scene around them was most dreary—bare, desolate-looking mountains, barren plains, and the sea stretching far away, its shores strewn with the bodies of their enemies; yet they were full of joy in the consciousness of freedom, and every thought of discontent was hushed.

In their horror and despair they reproached Moses for having led them in such a way, not remembering that the divine presence in that mysterious cloud had been leading him as well as them. In his grief at their distress Moses did what they had forgotten to do; he cried earnestly to God for help. (Patriarchs & Propjets, pg 291. emphasis mine)

SUNDAY

Bitter Waters

But for three days, as they journeyed, they could find no water. The supply which they had taken with them was exhausted. There was nothing to quench their burning thirst as they dragged wearily over the sun-burnt plains. Moses, who was familiar with this region, knew what the others did not, that at Marah, the nearest station where springs were to be found, the water was unfit for use. With intense anxiety he watched the guiding cloud. With a sinking heart he heard the glad shout. “Water! water!” echoed along the line. Men, women, and children in joyous haste crowded to the fountain, when, lo, a cry of anguish burst forth from the host—the water was bitter.

In their horror and despair they reproached Moses for having led them in such a way, not remembering that the divine presence in that mysterious cloud had been leading him as well as them. In his grief at their distress Moses did what they had forgotten to do; he cried earnestly to God for help. “And the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.” Here the promise was given to Israel through Moses, **“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”** (Patriarchs & Prophets, pg 291. emphasis mine)

Did God bring disease on the Egyptians, or did the Egyptians live out of harmony with the Laws of Health?

It was, of course, God who sweetened the water, not the tree, but might there be some other lessons for why God chose a tree to make the water drinkable and not sand, or coins, or a human sacrifice??

Consider the following:

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God. Deut. 21: 22, 23.

Many Christians connect this passage with foreshadowing the Crucifixion, believing that Christ was "cursed of God" and God exercised His power in killing his Son on "a tree". This passage was instructive to the children of Israel for the purpose of dealing with someone who was put to death by hanging or displayed in a tree [?? as a lesson to others?]. It was the Jews who demanded Christ be crucified on a cross. They could have demanded he be run through with a spear, beheaded, thrown to the lions, or any other number of possible deaths, but they insisted on crucifixion. Why? I suspect it was, likely, as a demonstration that He was "accursed of God."

Might there be a better metaphor for the healing of the waters with a "tree"?

Water is symbolic of peoples / populations in Scripture, and the water at Marah was bitter / unfit for providing or sustaining life, symbolizing humanity in its natural state since Adam's fall. If not for Christ's "hanging from a tree", humanity would remain unfit for Life. When humanity is reconnected with Christ [His Life, Death, and Resurrection], we become fit for Life and have endless springs of Life welling up from within us [See the Woman at the Well -- John 4: 1-26].

I want to add these are my thoughts only that came to me as I was preparing for class. I have not read any other inspired writings suggesting this connection, however. Any additional thoughts from the class??

“Believe, believe, believe in Jesus,” is the soothing fallacy that is lulling many to sleep in the cradle of carnal security, and we need to be alarmed. When you bring Jesus into your daily life and character, you will not talk of your feelings, but of what God hath said. When Christ is in the soul, then we will work for those around us who are in darkness. There will not be heard from any man, “Give me Christ, but away with the commandments of God, I do not want to hear anything about them.” We must know that our feet are upon the eternal Rock. It is not for us to bring the word of God to our feelings and ideas, but to bring these to the word of God. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” We are in the perils of the last days, and Christ has said that false teachers shall arise in the world, and deceive many with their pernicious doctrines. Then how shall we know the true from the false?—“Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Do they teach obedience to the law of God, or do they teach men to break his commandments? We are living in a world of false doctrines, and we must know what is truth. We do not inquire, What is for my convenience? but, What is God's word? If Christ had studied his convenience, he would never have left heaven to come to our world to die, to hang upon the accursed tree for us. Jesus has

died for you, and now what will you do for Jesus? He says, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” And if you love Jesus, you will have your feet planted in the blood-stained foot-prints of the Man of Calvary, and at last those who have gained the victory will enter in through the gates into the city, and have a right to the tree of life. God has given us reasoning faculties, and he wants us to use them. He has given us a chart which marks out for us the only right way to reach eternal life. Study the Scriptures for yourselves. Hear what the voice of the true Shepherd says to you, and then walk in the path of humble obedience, and at last the gift of eternal life will be granted to you. We cannot afford to lose eternal life. May God grant that we may meet this dear people around the great white throne, and with them sing the song of redemption in the kingdom of glory. (Review & Herald, 10 June 1890)

MONDAY

Quail and Manna

From the lesson:

It is important to notice that temptations in the Bible are often related to food. In the Garden of Eden, the Fall was related to eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 3:1–6). In Jesus’ wilderness temptations, Satan’s first shot at Him was through food (Matt. 4:3). Esau lost his firstborn rights because of his undisciplined appetite (Gen. 25:29–34). How often was Israel’s disobedience connected to food and drink! No wonder Moses reminded later generations:

“ ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’ ” (Deut. 8:3, ESV).

Manna, of course, was a heavenly bread that God supplied the Israelites with during their 40 years of sojourning in the wilderness. Through this gift, He taught them that He is the Creator and the Provider of everything. Also, God used His supernatural provision of manna to show them how to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Each week four miracles happened: (1) for six days, God gave a daily allotment of manna; (2) on Fridays, a double portion of manna was given; (3) the manna did not spoil from Friday to Sabbath; and (4) no manna fell on Sabbath. God was constantly performing these miracles so the people would remember the Sabbath day and celebrate God’s goodness on that day. God said: “ ‘Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath.’ ” (Adult SS Lesson, 3Q 2025 Exodus, pg 87)

Manna was both literal and symbolic, meeting the physical needs of the Israelites and symbolizing Christ [Bread of Heaven] meeting their / our spiritual needs. A jar of manna was the second thing put in the ark of the covenant later on in history. What were the other two things in the ark and what do they symbolically represent?

I don't think it's any mystery that many of the health issues we see today are related to undisciplined appetites, but does the unrestrained appetite only affect individual health or are there societal issues related to it as well??

TUESDAY

Water From the Rock.

There are some obvious symbols / metaphors in this account.

- Rock -- Christ
- Water -- Life
- Struck -- Injured ONCE.
- Moses -- Type of Christ. Christ voluntarily "struck" Himself on Calvary in order to provide Life for humanity.

Any others??

Moses named the place Massah and Meribah, according to the lesson meaning "testing" and "quarreling", respectively. The lesson also stresses the need for obedience.

In Hebrew, "Meribah" (מריבה) translates to "strife," "contention," or "quarreling." It is a noun derived from the verb "rib," meaning "to quarrel" or "to strive". The name "Meribah" is given to a place in the Bible where the Israelites quarreled with Moses and tested the Lord. **Per A.I. search**

Water is a symbol of life because without water there is no life. Every cell in our body needs water. We are 60 percent water ourselves. Even our bones are composed partly of water. Thus, providing water in the wilderness for them was a sign for the Israelites that God cared for their needs and that they could trust Him. But, again, **they had to obey**. (Adult SS Lesson, 3Q 2025 Exodus, pg 88, emphasis mine)

Again, why do we need "to obey"??

WEDNESDAY

Jethro

From the lesson:

At the same time that Jethro learned about the true God, he himself had something to offer God's people: wise and beneficial advice. (Adult SS Lesson, 3Q 2025 Exodus, pg 89)

From Scripture:

Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. (Exodus. 18:1 NKJV).

Was Jethro a priest of the Creator God [like Melkezedek], or "of Midian"?

Moses was humble enough to listen to wise counsel, no matter where it came from. I like Jethro's take on his own advice.

If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.” (Exodus. 18:23 NKJV).

Jethro is still leaving things in God's hands / wisdom.

Any thoughts on whether or not this kind of hierarchy [rulers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens] is a pattern from heaven or was it simply what was necessary to deal with the unruly mob of recently enslaved Israelites?

THURSDAY

The Bread and Water of Life

From the lesson:

Paul explains that all the things that happened to the Israelites are examples and warnings for Christ's followers and will help them avoid the same troubles; that is, they will learn from these examples. This is pertinent instruction for us, we who live at “the end of the ages” (ESV). God gives His people the Holy Spirit to strengthen the believers with “power, love and self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7, NIV) so they can make correct decisions and follow His teaching. Jesus Christ is the Source of new life (John 14:6), and only He can turn us into “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. . . . Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1, 2, ESV). (Adult SS Lesson, 3Q 2025 Exodus, pg 90)

This is an excellent passage and summary of the metaphor[s] of the Bread and Water of Life.

Jesus pointed to Himself as both the Water of Life [John 4:1-26] and the Bread of Life [John 6: 31-51]. Which ceremony commemorates this now?

FRIDAY

Further Thought

Not long after the incident with the water, the nation faced a new danger (see Exod. 17:8–16)—a fierce and warlike tribe, the Amalekites, attacked them.

The Amalekites were not ignorant of God's character or of His sovereignty, but instead of fearing before Him, they had set themselves to defy His power. The wonders wrought by Moses before the Egyptians were made a subject of mockery by the people of Amalek, and the fears of surrounding nations were ridiculed. They had taken oath by their gods that they would destroy the Hebrews, so that not one should escape, and they boasted that Israel's God would be powerless to resist them. They had not been injured or threatened by the Israelites. Their assault was wholly unprovoked. It was to manifest their hatred and defiance of God that they sought to destroy His people. The Amalekites had long been high-handed sinners, and their crimes had cried to God for vengeance, yet His mercy had still called them to repentance; but when the men of Amalek fell upon the wearied and defenseless ranks of Israel, they sealed their nation's doom. (Patriarchs and Prophets, pg 300)



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 8

Covenant at Sinai

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Exodus 19:4–6, NKJV.

What covenant? God says, “My covenant,” what is His covenant?

A covenant is an agreement or an arrangement between two parties; it could be between two people, like the marriage covenant, but in this context, it is the arrangement or agreement between God and sinful humanity.

So, what is God's covenant or agreement with humanity? Is the covenant at Sinai the same or different than the one with Adam, Noah, and Abraham? Is it the same or different than the one to all humanity through Jesus—what Jeremiah and Hebrews calls the New Covenant?

Is there one covenant or are there two covenants—is there an old covenant and a new covenant? Are they different names for the same covenant or are they different in some way? Are the old and new covenant connected but still different?

There are two covenants that are based upon two laws, two promises, two lands, two starting and ending points. One covenant is universal and eternal and is based on God's eternal design law and eternal promise, the other covenant is provisional and temporary and is based on provisional temporary arrangement of the law and a regional temporary promise.

And people mix these two covenants, laws, and promises up all the time and it causes confusion on so many levels.

God's eternal universal covenant is God's covenant of grace to save sinners from sin that was promised in Eden (Genesis 3:15). It is the fulfillment of God's eternal plan that was in existence from the foundation of the world. This is the covenant, agreement, arrangement made amongst the Godhead before Earth was created and which was communicated and offered to Adam, the head of the entire human race, in Genesis before any children were born.

This universal covenant is the agreement between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that Jesus would be become human, take up humanity damaged by sin, suffer the full weight of sin, in harmony with

God's eternal design laws and justice, and as our sinless substitute, in harmony with the laws of life, destroy the infection of fear and selfishness, the spirit of fear and selfishness (cause of death), and through His sinless human life and sacrificial death purge the spirit of fear and selfishness from humanity and the spirit of love and trust, restore holiness, perfection, sinlessness, a righteous and holy spirit of life back into humanity and become the redeemer, the second Adam, the new head of humanity, the connecting link between mankind and God.

This is the agreement the Godhead made, and it was this covenant, the covenant of grace, that was communicated to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

This eternal covenant, made among the members of the eternal Godhead, is based upon God's eternal law, His design law, the laws that reality and life are built to exist and operate upon. Mankind, the species created in Eden, could only be saved by a human, someone who is a part of that species, who shares the life breathed into Adam, and who eradicates the terminal spirit of fear and selfishness and restores a holy spirit of love and trust.

This must be done in harmony with God's law and justice—meaning in harmony with reality, the laws life are built by God to operate upon and thereby restore human beings to unity, at-one-ment with God.

In order to do this, Jesus had to become a real human being. And He became a real human being by partaking of the life/spirit/breath of life breathed into Adam, corrupted with fear and selfishness by Adam and passed down to all of us. He partook of this life through His human mother Mary and thus became a real human being, part of this family. But the Father to His humanity was the Holy Spirit so He was born as a real human being but one who had a sinless life, a pure spirit of perfect love and trust, and in His humanity He could experience temptation in all points just like us but choose to live only by the life of love and trust and thus was without sin.

In order to complete the covenant, the agreement made among the Godhead, Jesus, in His humanity had to suffer the full weight of God's justice—which is God doing what is right or just in harmony with His law. This means that God would not artificially interfere, would not change, abridge, modify, or abrogate His law, but would sustain the operation of His law to the full extent and result of His law.

This means the impact of sin was fully experienced by Jesus our human substitute. And that means Jesus experienced the full weight of what sin does without any intervention by His Father, without the Father blunting it, anesthetizing it, reducing it, or removing it, and sin tempted Jesus, Jesus was tempted with pain, fear, and the spirit of fear and selfishness to act to save self. And the spirit of fear and selfishness, with its terror, dread, guilt, and shame tempted Jesus to believe the lie that His separation from the Father would be eternal (even though Jesus knew better and had already told His disciples multiple times that He would die and rise again). The Father did not remove the burden, but when Jesus fell down dying in Gethsemane, the Father instead sent an angel to strengthen Christ's humanity so that He could complete Their covenant, mission, agreement.

The spirit of fear inherited from Adam tormented Him, and at the cross Jesus died when the Father *separated* from Him, because sin severs the connection with God, the source of life. And Father sustained His design law, the law of liberty, and left Jesus free to reap what Jesus chose. And Jesus chose to be our Savior, our human substitute, to complete the covenant of grace He had established with His Father, and at the cross Jesus killed, purged, eliminated, destroyed the spirit of fear and selfishness from the humanity He inherited through Mary and rose in a purified sinless humanity animated only by the sinless holy spirit He inherited from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, covenanted, agreed, arranged with His Father and the Spirit, to take up humanity terminal in sin and cure it, perfect it, redeem it, and restore it to God's sinless family.

This is God's covenant of grace which is the eternal covenant and which is the outworking of God's design laws for life being sustained by God and lived out by Jesus.

And this covenant is universal in its application. The species human was saved, put right with God, justified with God, in the person of Jesus Christ and every human sinner, because of Jesus, is offered free healing, free salvation, free restoration, free exchange of their terminal sinful life for Jesus' sinless life. And simultaneously, God's covenant, completed by Christ, secures the sinless universe in loyalty.

- “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Colossians 1:19-20 NIV84, emphasis mine).

This is the universal eternal covenant that extends to the unfallen beings as it demonstrates the truth of God's character, His unchangeable design laws, and confirms them in their loyalty.

Peter describes this Eternal Covenant:

- “He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:20 NIV84).

Revelation references it also:

- “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8 NKJV).

Bible commentaries also recognize this:

- “By Christ the work upon which the fulfillment of God's purpose rests was accomplished. **This was the agreement in the councils of the Godhead**... God gave to His Son all who would be true and loyal. **Christ covenanted to redeem them from the power of Satan**, at the price of His own life. We have the condition of this **covenant**. The LORD says, “It was my will that he should suffer; his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness. And so he will see his descendants; he will live a long life, and through him my purpose will succeed. After a life of suffering, he will again have joy; he will know that he did not suffer in vain. My devoted

servant, with whom I am pleased, will bear the punishment of many and for his sake I will forgive them. [Isaiah 53:10,11 GNT]” EG White, 13LtMs, Lt 126, 1898, par. 15. (NOTE: the author quoted the KJV, I replaced the KJV with a more modern translation for easier reading).

It was the Father’s agreement, will, arrangement, that Jesus would be our Savior, our substitute, to take upon Himself the sin-condition for the purpose of eliminating it and restoring humanity to sinless perfection and eternal life. This is the Father’s will—to destroy sin and save sinners. This is the eternal covenant of grace which was repeated to Noah when God saved the human family from eternal destruction by keeping open the avenue for the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 promise.

And is the covenant communicated to Abraham in the promise

- In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. Genesis 22:18 NKJV.

And this universal promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob:

- To Isaac: “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 26:4 NKJV.
- To Jacob: “in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 28:14 NKJV.

This eternal covenant is based upon God’s eternal design law, the laws life and the operations of reality are built upon and it is global in its application.

But God made a separate provisional, regional, and temporary covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Israelites at Sinai and that was the agreement or **mission covenant** that it would be through their branch of the human family that the global eternal agreement would be realized. In other words, God made a temporary **mission focused** covenant with the Jews for the purpose of fulfilling His **eternal global covenant**. This temporary covenant or agreement was for the descendants of Jacob to be the repositories of the inspired Word of God, the object lesson teaching tools, and the branch of the human family through whom Jesus would come.

This temporary provisional regional covenant was the covenant for the Jews to possess the land of Palestine. And it included the temporary imposed laws, ordinances, rituals, ceremonies, and the *added* and *temporary* arrangement of the Eternal Design law in the form of the Ten Commandments, written for the need of sinful humans.

It included the temporary imposed laws, ordinances, rituals, ceremonies, and the added and temporary arrangement of the Eternal Design law in the form of the Ten Commandments, written for the need of sinful humans. All of these were added for the purpose of establishing an organization in a sinful world, composed of sinful, unconverted people, with sufficient externally imposed structures to maintain organizational integrity long enough for the fulfillment of the global eternal covenant that would actually resolve and remove sin—meaning until Jesus was born and completed the eternal covenant of grace agreed by the Godhead and communicated to humanity in Eden.

God’s promise for the local regional fulfillment to Abraham’s biological descendants:

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land” Genesis 12:7 NIV84.

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

But God’s promise to Abraham of the global application, the universal application that is the fulfillment of Gen 3:15 is communicated later, and it is this promise that all who have faith like Abraham and are reborn into the family of God by receiving the life of Christ are heirs.

- The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84.

What is promised in this text is not a strip of land in the Middle East, but the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the Earth. As Jesus said, it is the meek that will inherit the earth, not just the Middle East.

The covenant with and promises to Abraham were dual, a local regional and a global eternal. These covenants had two laws, two promised lands, two applications, two purposes, two starting points, two ending points.

The local application is the one in which Abraham’s genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan **for the purpose** of fulfilling their mission of protecting the inspired record and being the avenue through whom Messiah would come **so that** Jesus can fulfill God’s greater universal promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent’s head **so that** the “meek will **inherit** the earth” (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

The *genetic* descendants inherited Canaan *in order* to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that ... the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Paul confirms this:

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free,

male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Galatians 3:26–29.

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points. The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur. The ending point of the global is when Jesus recreates the Earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Jesus masterfully weaves these two covenant promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept the prophetic writings intact, kept open the avenue for Messiah and Jesus came, but they rejected Him and now there is no further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth. (For more on the land our blog [Israel and the Promised Land Today](#)).

Two Covenants

Grace	Law
Eternal/Universal	Temporary/Provisional/Regional
Design law	Imposed law
Law written on Heart	Law written on stone
Entire world	Palestine
All humanity	Jews
Started with Adam's fall	Started with Abraham's call
Purpose eliminate sin win GC	Written Word/Avenue Living Word
Applies to all the universe	Applies to Jewish nation in Bible times
Never ends/completes at end 1000yrs	Ended at Jesus crucifixion/resurr.

So, I am taking the position that there is an eternal/universal covenant of God's grace, built upon God's eternal design laws, applicable to all God's creation, with specific application to redeeming sinful humanity, but also purifies the entire universe from sin, that went into effect when Adam fell, was ratified, certified, accomplished when Jesus died, and is completed at the end of the 1000 years when sin and sinners are eliminated from the universe and all intelligent beings are back in perfection and unity with God.

I am also saying that in the process of God completing this eternal/universal covenant God made a temporary/provisional covenant or agreement—not one of salvation as that is the eternal covenant, but one of mission and purpose, and that mission was to be the repository of the written word, the object lesson teaching tools, and the biological branch/avenue of the human family through whom Messiah

would be born. That temporary agreement or covenant was with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and it was based on imposed laws, rituals, ceremonies, none of which brought salvation, but only brought structure and order in a sinful world for the purpose of accomplishing the mission or goals in this sinful world for the purpose of completing the eternal/global covenant.

Consider these historical quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church, which the current leadership of our church would claim they believe to be inspired by God, not just her opinion. Isn't it strange how they don't actually teach what these quotes state:

This first quote was written in the aftermath of the 1888:

- I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments... "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. *Selected Messages vol. 1*, p. 233, 234.

It was at the 1888 GC that God brought the truth that the Ten Commandments were added and not eternal, but the leadership rejected that truth and took the position that only the ceremonial law was added. That decision prevented the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which would have empowered us to fulfill our mission to call people back to Creator worship, for we would have advanced since 1888 the truth that God's laws are design laws and set all our doctrines in their right setting of love and trust. But instead, having rejected this truth and instead insisting that the Ten Commandments are eternal leadership has sustained the Roman lie that God's law functions like human law and we have continued to present our true doctrines in the setting of Roman imposed law with the spirit of fear rather than love and trust.

Consider this quote:

- As the Bible **presents two laws**, one changeless and eternal, the other **provisional and temporary**, so **there are two covenants**. The **covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden**, when after the Fall, there was given a **divine promise that the seed** of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men **this covenant** offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also **promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law**. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.

This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it, and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the **authority of God's law**. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and **be thou perfect**." The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Gen. 17:1; 26:5.

The **Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ**, and it is called the "**second," or "new," covenant**, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant.

The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the **everlasting covenant**.

There is hope for us only as we come under the **Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus**. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today... Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the author and the finisher of our faith.

Faith I Live By p. 77, emphasis mine.

Now back to our memory verse:

- You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep **My covenant**, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to **Me a kingdom** of priests and a holy nation. Exodus 19:4–6, NKJV, emphasis mine.

Which of the two laws, two covenants, is God referring to in this passage?

This is the covenant of grace, the one given to Adam, the universal one—the one He established before the foundation of the world. It is the kingdom based on His eternal design law, the only covenant, law, or kingdom in which people can become holy.

After this God established the temporary/provisional agreement based upon the temporary provisional law, including the added Ten Commandments, which were specifically written for sinful human beings. And that temporary/provisional system or covenant was still in operation and effect when Jesus was Earth before His crucifixion. And with that system still in operation on Earth Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." He did NOT say, "My kingdom is not of this world except for Israel, that system of rules, regulations, and laws represents my kingdom!" No, it did not. It was a temporary/provisional system set up for the mission of maintaining a people for Messiah to come to fulfill the eternal/global covenant and establish His true kingdom, the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom all built upon design laws that emanate from and are sustained by God.

SUNDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- After two months of traveling, the Israelites arrived at Sinai (Exod. 19:1), where they would remain for about one year (compare Exod. 19:1 with Num. 10:11, 12). During this year, many laws were issued, as described in Exodus 19–40, Leviticus 1–27, and Numbers 1:1–10:10. Israel’s stay at Mount Sinai is the central piece of the narrative found in the first five books of Moses. Here is the foundation of their becoming God’s chosen people, the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 65.

What do you think of the last sentence, “Here is the foundation of their becoming God’s chosen people, the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry”?

It is certainly true God is working to establish them as His chosen people—chosen for the mission we already discussed, not for exclusive salvation. But is it true they are the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry?

What was the golden calf? What about the rest of their history? Did they have a long history of idolatry that resulted in the 70-year captivity and the eventually captivity and dispersement of the 10 tribes to the north?

It is often suggested that after the 70-year captivity they were cured of idolatry. And it is true, that after that period, those who rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple and established Yahweh worship there, never returned to worshiping images made with their own hands, or going after Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech or the other gods they had worshiped in the past. In fact, the record supports that they stayed faithful to the script, the written laws of Moses and the prophets, following the blueprint given by God after the Exodus. Does that mean they were not steeped in paganism and idolatry? Or were they?

A couple of questions about this and then evidence:

Who were the ones demanding the death of Jesus? Was it the Jewish religious leaders who claimed to be faithful to the law, Moses, the Scriptures and to be worshipers of Yahweh or was it the pagan Romans? Didn’t pagan Pilate make a weak attempt to prevent Jesus’ crucifixion? So, would their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus suggest they were worshiping God or were they idolaters?

What is idolatry? Is it only the worship of physical images, or is it the worship of any concept or belief system that replaces the truth about God? Could a person be an idolator, a pagan, while reading the Bible and claiming to be worshiping Jesus?

Jesus said to the church leaders of His day,

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39-40 NIV84.

Were they worshiping God or something else? Is this bibliolatry? Making the Bible an idol?

Consider this Bible commentary, do you agree?

- Thousands have a **false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. *Faith I Live By* p. 59, emphasis mine.

Does having the right Bible, the right Sabbath, the right belief that God is the Creator, the right sanctuary, the right list of Ten Commandments, the right foods, and belonging to the right organization that is called by God for mission, mean one is worshiping God, and is not a pagan or an idol worshiper?

Doesn't Satan and his fallen angels believe the Bible is inspired by God, God is Creator, Jesus is the Savior, and that God gave the Ten Commandments?

My point is that believing right facts, right doctrines, does not equal salvation and does not mean one is worshiping the true God.

Salvation is being reborn, having our individuality, identity, personhood, freed from the spirit (animating energy, motivational power) of fear and selfishness and receiving, through trust/faith, the life, the spirit, the animating motivating power of Jesus via His indwelling Spirit. It is being reborn in the inner man.

All such people will no longer live controlled by fear, including the fear of being wrong, the fear of having their ideas challenged, the fear of making mistakes, they will love God and therefore, because God is infinite truth, they will love truth and acknowledge the truth that they are not infinite. This means all the saved acknowledge that they don't know everything, that what they believe, the way they believe it, is imperfect and partial and they will love to grow, mature, advance in unfolding truth as God reveals it to them.

But the unconverted are controlled, not just tempted, but controlled by the spirit of fear and they mitigate their fear through various means including religious dogma, laws, rules, rituals, ceremonies, and actions, all designed to make them feel safe, to give them a sense of security. They feel safe by knowing the right facts, keeping the right rules, having their foot on first base—you can't tag me out if I have my foot on the bag—God!

And anything that questions or undermines their beliefs is not celebrated, it inflames fear, which causes them to seek to silence such voices rather than seek to explore the truth and identify where they themselves are wrong.

This is what the religious leaders in Jesus' day did. This is what the religious leaders did to the Reformers throughout all ages. And this is what continues to happen today. And those who function like this give evidence that they are not worshiping God, but are worshiping the imposter, the creature whose government operates upon made up rules with inflicted punishments.

The message from Jesus is a call away from the imposed law constructs and into the reality of worshiping Him as Creator and opening the heart to Him to be reborn with a new heart and right spirit, a spirit of love and trust and then to live free, free in Jesus, free from the domination of that old life.

MONDAY and TUESDAY

The focus is on the Ten Commandments

What questions do you have about the Ten Commandments?

- Are they eternal or temporary?
- Have the Ten Commandments always been in existence or were they added at Sinai?
- Did angels in heaven have a law to honor their mothers and fathers, or that sins would pass down 3-4 generations, or not to commit adultery?
- Did Adam and Eve in Eden have a law to honor their mother?

Consider this:

- God blessed them [Adam and Eve] and said to them, “**Be fruitful and increase in number;** fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and **it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.** Genesis 1:28-31 NIV84.

When was this?

God instructed them, before they sinned, on the sixth day of Creation week, to be fruitful and multiple, to have children. If they would have stayed faithful, if they would not have sinned and done this, would they have sins passing down 3 and 4 generations?

So, were the Ten Commandments in existence at this point? No, but the design laws of reality were, and if they would sin, then they would pass along their spirit of fear and selfishness, and their lifestyle choices would epigenetically modify them and they would pass down those epigenetic changes three and four generations. Thus, the principles, the design laws, built into the operations of reality and our being were in existence, but this particular manifestation would never be seen had they stayed faithful.

So, again, this is evidence that the Ten Commandments are codified expressions of the design law of love that did not exist until after man sinned, and were added specifically for sinful humankind.

Further, the text cited is day six of Creation week—was the Sabbath in existence at that point? Or does the Sabbath get created or made on the following day?

Jesus said,

- “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Mark 2;27-28 NIV84.

If the Sabbath was made for man, it had a beginning, and that beginning was *after* man was created just as the Genesis account states, then the Sabbath law was added. It was added after sin entered the universe, but before human beings sinned, as a special blessing, gift, resource for human beings to help them in a universe in which sin now exists.

Do you know that those who oppose our message do so because they take the same position as the leadership of the 1888 GC who opposed Jones, Waggoner, and EG White? They reject the advancing light, the truth that the Ten Commandments were added because of human sin, a special distillation and codification of God’s eternal design laws specifically structured or written for the needs of sinful humanity.

While God’s design laws are eternal, the written code of the Ten Commandments are not—those who have not experienced the rebirth and become animated by the spirit of love and trust become afraid at this, their fear causes them to feel threatened and they react with authority, power, external means rather than seeking to come and reason together in pursuit of God’s eternal truth.

Consider these quotes:

- The **law of God** existed before man was created. The angels were governed by it. Satan fell because he transgressed the **principles** of God's government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them His law. **It was not then written**, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah.

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden. After God had made the world and created man upon the earth, He made the Sabbath for man. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. **The principles of the Ten Commandments existed before the fall and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state.** *The Story of Redemption* p. 145, emphasis mine.

- **The law of Jehovah, dating back to creation, was comprised in the two great principles,** "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely

this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." These two great principles embrace the first four commandments, showing the duty of man to God, and the last six, showing the duty of man to his fellow-man. **The principles were more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression.** *Review and Herald*, May 6, 1875 par. 13, emphasis mine.

Other questions about the Ten Commandments?

Why did God write it on stone? Because the living law of love for God and others was no longer written upon the heart. The law of fear and selfishness was the animating power in humanity, so God wrote the code of conduct of how love functions on stone as a diagnostic tool to expose how far short we fall and as a protective hedge.

Where are the Ten Commandments placed within the theater of the Sanctuary? In the covenant box under the golden lid—what does this represent?

Those who hold the imposed law lie will argue that law in the box represents the broken law and that Jesus sprinkling His blood above the mercy seat 7 times on the Day of Atonement is Jesus paying the legal price of His death for our salvation.

But this is false on all levels. First the Bible doesn't teach that blood of the sacrificial animal represents death, it says that the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). Thus the blood of Jesus represents His life, not His death. It represents His sinless life, the new life, the right spirit, the spirit of Christ that we receive when we are reborn.

Second, there were two copies of the law given to Moses, the first set was broken by him at the golden calf event and then a second set was given—it was the second *unbroken* set that went in the ark. Thus, the sanctuary doesn't teach that the broken law is in the ark, they had broken pieces to place there to represent that idea, but instead the unbroken law was placed in the ark. Why? Because the box represents sinful humanity purified, and restored to holiness and unity, at-one-ment with God and the universe.

In the MH place was the Shekinah, representing God; the angels on the lid, representing the heavenly angels, the golden lid represents Jesus, the connecting link. The Shekinah shone/touched the lid, the angels were touching the lid, and the lid rested on the box. All connected to the lid, which Paul says represents Jesus. All things in heaven and earth are reconciled to God through Christ

And the box, made of porous wood covered completely in gold represents sinful humanity perfected by the righteousness of Christ (gold), and in the box were three items, the manna, representing the Word of God (Jesus) that we must ingest to be converted, the Ten Commandments (which represent the living law of love for God and others that we receive when we receive the life/spirit of Christ). This happens after we partake of the truth that wins us to trust, then in trust we open the heart and receive the new spirit, the new life of love and trust and the law, motive, life, principles of love and

truth become our new animating motivating drive energy, the law is written upon our hearts and minds. And the last item placed in the box is Aaron's rod that budded. We who are dead in trespass and sin, after we ingest the Word of God and are won to trust and open our hearts to die to fear and selfishness and receive the life/spirit of Jesus we come to live and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson explores the purpose of the written law of the Ten Commandments, a protective hedge and a diagnostic instrument.

Read the fourth paragraph,

- A mirror can reveal your defects, yes. But there is nothing in the mirror that can cure them. The mirror points to the problems but offers no solution to the problems. It's the same with God's law. Trying to be justified before God by keeping the law would be like staring at the mirror in hopes that, sooner or later, the mirror will make your defects go away. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 68.

This is exactly true, but rather than realizing that God's true laws are design laws and the Ten Commandments are diagnostic, and after being diagnosed as terminal we are to go to our Creator to receive a new life, to be reborn, to be healed and recreated in righteousness, sadly, Satan has tricked billions into substituting a false legal theology of claiming Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death as a legal payment to their god of death, (I say their god of death because they all teach that their god must use the power of death to punish sin, but the Bible teaches that Satan is the one who holds the power of death and that Jesus destroys death), and that their god of death will then make a verbal and legal proclamation that they are recognized, or accounted to be righteous while they remain sinful or unrighteous.

This is truly an evil and diabolical thing to teach. It is like telling a person who has terminal leukemia for which there is a 100% cure, that instead of partaking of the remedy and being healed, they need to claim their healthy brother as their legal representative and get the doctor to examine the healthy brother and record the perfect health of their brother into their medical record and then legally declare them to be cancer free while they continue to die of cancer.

This penal legal system is corrupt. It is a fraud. It is a lie. It actively interferes with the plan of salvation. We serve a real God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and we have a real sin problem and a real Savior who provides us a real solution, a new heart and new spirit a new life, a new sinless life that we become partakers of through faith, the divine nature, and Christ actually lives in us by His Spirit when we are reborn. This is reality, the legal view is fantasy, a form of godliness without power.

THURSDAY

The lesson points us to Romans 3:20-26:

- Therefore no one will be declared **righteous** in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a **righteousness** from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This **righteousness** from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a **sacrifice of atonement**, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his **justice**, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his **justice** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who **justifies** those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:20-26 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The phrase sacrifice of atonement is an interpretation, the Greek is the word for the lid to the ark of the covenant, Jesus is presented as the lid to the ark, and Paul is saying the place where God resolves or deals with the sin problem, the means through which God deals with sin and unifies the universe again.

This is one of those places where the translators translate in their bias leading to a false legal understanding of things. They are not linguistically wrong, they are theologically wrong.

The Greek words in this passage translated righteous/righteousness and justice/justified are the same Greek words, and they can be translated as either righteous/righteousness or justice/justified. So why not be consistent all the way through? Because they have a Roman legal bias that causes them to think punishment is justice, so they think God is showing justice here rather than righteousness.

But other versions are consistent all the way through,

- For no one is **put right** in God's sight by doing what the Law requires; what the Law does is to make people know that they have sinned. But now God's way of **putting people right** with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. God **puts people right** through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are **put right with him through Christ Jesus**, who sets them free. God offered him, so that **by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven** through their faith in him. God did this in order to **demonstrate that he is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to **demonstrate his righteousness**. In this way God shows that he himself is **righteous** and that he **puts right** everyone who believes in Jesus. Romans 3:20-26 GNT, emphasis mine.

Do you see the difference in this?

And then my paraphrase:

- Therefore no one will be recognized as having a **healthy relationship with God** and **being like Christ in character** by adhering to a set of rules; rather, it is through the Ten Commandments that we become aware of our sickly state of mind. But now God has revealed **a healthy state of being** — a character that is **right and perfect** in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This **perfect state of being** comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are **healed freely** by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as **the way and the means of restoration**. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God's character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is **right and good** — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how **right and good** he is, so that he would also be seen as **being right when he heals** those who trust in Jesus. Romans 3:20-26 REM, emphasis mine.



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 9

Living the Law

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: “You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.” ’ ” Exodus 20:22, 23, NKJV.

The text is about not making idols, and from last week’s lesson—**SUNDAY**, the second paragraph states the following:

- After two months of traveling, the Israelites arrived at Sinai (Exod. 19:1), where they would remain for about one year (compare Exod. 19:1 with Num. 10:11, 12). During this year, many laws were issued, as described in Exodus 19–40, Leviticus 1–27, and Numbers 1:1–10:10. Israel’s stay at Mount Sinai is the central piece of the narrative found in the first five books of Moses. Here is the foundation of their becoming God’s chosen people, the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 65.

What do you think of the last sentence, “Here is the foundation of their becoming God’s chosen people, the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry”?

It is certainly true that God is working to establish them as His chosen people—chosen for the mission we discussed last week, not for exclusive salvation. But is it true they are the only nation not steeped in paganism and idolatry?

What was the golden calf? What about the rest of their history? Did they have a long history of idolatry that resulted in the 70-year captivity and the eventually captivity and dispersement of the 10 tribes to the north?

It is often suggested that after the 70-year captivity they were cured of idolatry. And it is true, that after that period, those who rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple and established Yahweh worship there, never returned to worshiping images made with their own hands, or going after Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech or the other gods they had worshiped in the past. In fact, the record supports that they stayed faithful to the script, the written laws of Moses and the prophets, following the blueprint given by God after the Exodus. Does that mean they were not steeped in paganism and idolatry? Or were they?

A couple of questions about this and then evidence:

Who were the ones demanding the death of Jesus? It was the Jewish religious leaders who claimed to be faithful to the law, Moses, the Scriptures and to be worshipers of Yahweh. It was not the pagan Romans. Didn't pagan Pilate make a weak attempt to prevent Jesus' crucifixion? So, would their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus suggest they were worshiping God or were they idolaters?

What is idolatry? Is idolatry only the worship of physical images, or is it the worship of any concept or belief system that replaces the truth about God? Could a person be an idolator, a pagan, while reading the Bible and claiming to be worshiping Jesus?

Jesus said to the church leaders of His day,

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39-40 NIV84.

Were they worshiping God or something else? Is this bibliolatry? Making the Bible an idol?

Consider this Bible commentary, do you agree?

- Thousands have a **false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. *Faith I Live By* p. 59, emphasis mine.

Does having the right Bible, the right Sabbath, the right belief that God is the Creator, the right sanctuary, the right list of Ten Commandments, the right foods, and belonging to the right organization that is called by God for mission, mean one is worshiping God, and is not a pagan or an idol worshiper?

Doesn't Satan and his fallen angels believe the Bible is inspired by God, God is Creator, Jesus is the Savior, and that God gave the Ten Commandments?

My point is that believing right facts, right doctrines, does not equal salvation and does not mean one is worshiping the true God.

Salvation is being reborn, having our individuality, identity, personhood, freed from the spirit (animating energy, motivational power) of fear and selfishness and receiving, through trust/faith, the life, the spirit, the animating motivating power of Jesus via His indwelling Spirit. It is being reborn in the inner man.

All such people will no longer live controlled by fear, including the fear of being wrong, the fear of having their ideas challenged, the fear of making mistakes, they will love God and therefore, because God is infinite truth, they will love truth and acknowledge the truth that they are not infinite. This means all the saved acknowledge that they don't know everything, that what they believe, the way they believe it, is imperfect and partial and they will love to grow, mature, advance in unfolding truth as God reveals it to them.

But the unconverted are controlled, not just tempted, but controlled by the spirit of fear and they mitigate their fear through various means including religious dogma, laws, rules, rituals, ceremonies, and actions, all designed to make them feel safe, to give them a sense of security. They feel safe by knowing the right facts, keeping the right rules, having their foot on first base—you can't tag me out if I have my foot on the bag—God!

And anything that questions or undermines their beliefs is not celebrated, it inflames fear, which causes them to seek to silence such voices rather than seek to explore the truth and identify where they themselves are wrong.

This is what the religious leaders in Jesus' day did. This is what the religious leaders did to the Reformers throughout all ages. And this is what continues to happen today. And those who function like this give evidence that they are not worshiping God, but are worshiping the imposter, the creature whose government operates upon made up rules with inflicted punishments.

The message from Jesus is a call away from the imposed law constructs and into the reality of worshiping Him as Creator and opening the heart to Him to be reborn with a new heart and right spirit, a spirit of love and trust and then to live free, free in Jesus, free from the domination of that old life.

Read the first paragraph:

- God desired His people to be different from the surrounding nations. He wanted them established as a devoted community of faith who would live under His leadership and authority. Everyone would be subject to His law. Judges were to be appointed as administrators of the law, and the priests were to teach it. Parents also played a crucial role. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 72.

How is faith established? Biblical faith is best described in today's English as trust, an abiding trust in God.

Can trust be established by legislation? Can trust be established by claim or proclamation? Can trust be established by threatening to punish people who don't trust you? Can God establish trust by threatening to punish people who don't trust Him? No this is why Paul wrote,

- Do you show contempt for the riches of [God's] kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" Romans 2:4 NIV84.

Genuine, living, faith or abiding transforming trust is only established but the evidence of trustworthiness—which is the reality of who God is. God is love and truth and gives real freedom and is the source of life, not death.

But, can people place their faith, their trust, in something other than God?

- What if people are taught that sin is a legal problem, that sin doesn't actually destroy, sin doesn't harm, sin doesn't cause death, but that God, in order to be just, must use His power to punish, and the minimum punishment in God's universe for the smallest sin is execution at His hands?
- And what if it is taught that the bigger the list of sins, that God, in addition to using His power to execute, must first torture for appropriate lengths of time before killing?
- And what if it is taught this is the way things are because God must enforce His law?
- But it is also taught that God is love and would prefer not to do this, but because He is just He is required by law, and also by the holiness of His character, to kill, to torture, to wield the power of death?
- And what if it was taught that you were born in sin and even though it wasn't your choice to be born in sin, you have still sinned, and therefore are legally condemned and justly deserve torture and execution by God?

If you were taught all of this, and you still believed in God, where would you place your trust?

In Jesus? What would you trust Jesus to do for you in this penal legal scenario?

- Take your place and take your punishment, even though He is innocent?
- And then would you have faith in a god who kills the innocent and calls that justice?
- Would you trust Jesus to pay your legal debt—which would be a human sacrifice paid to a punishing god?
- Be executed by the Father so the Father won't execute you?
- Plead to His Father His blood as the legal payment for your sin debt in order to propitiate His wrath, which means without that action God wouldn't lash out against you?
- Cover you in His robe of righteousness so the Father won't see your sinfulness—because if the Father saw it He would have to kill you?
- Apply His blood to your record book so in the judgment the Father won't have a legal record of your crimes—because if there are any records of sin in your account God will use His power to torture and kill you?
- Apply His life record in place of your life record so in the judgment the Father legally declares you righteous while you remain unrighteous?

If you have ever believed any of this or know people who do, where is faith being placed in these teachings?

All of these teachings lead people to place their faith in various mechanics, legal processes, intercessors, but not in the Father. All of these ideas teach people to distrust the Father, to fear the Father, to believe that if something isn't done to the Father that Father will use His power to harm, to

torture, to kill. Faith in God is not restored in these false penal legal theories, it is undermined, and the knowledge of God is not advanced, it is obscured.

What is the spirit behind such teachings? Fear, every one of these false doctrines are motivated by fear and inflame fear, fear of punishment, fear of rejection, fear of shame and guilt, and all of them increase fear of God and are motivated to protect self from God, not surrender self to God for the death of our sinful life and the infusion of a new life, the life of Christ. And this is what is required for salvation, the death, surrender, of our fear infected life and the receipt of the sinless holy life of Jesus through the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is called being reborn with a new heart and right spirit—and this only comes by faith, which is trust, that opens the heart and surrenders to Jesus. This is the righteousness by faith message that was rejected by the imposed law legalists in our church at 1888.

Imposed law with human style justice of imposed penalties, obstructs this because it teaches people to place their trust in the mechanics of legal loopholes and inculcates into the heart a belief in a god that cannot be trusted, one who is the source of death, one who needs something done to him to keep him from harming us. And this is Satan's goal, to so twist the truth about God, His law, His methods, His government, the plan of salvation, that while people claim to believe in Him, they are actually worshiping God's enemy and promoting lies about God—just like the Bible believing, Yahweh claiming, Jews who crucified Christ 2000 years ago.

Read the last paragraph, but before we do, let's remind ourselves of Jesus' words:

- God's law reveals Him, that is, His goodness, love, values, righteousness, and His restraints against evil. As the law is holy and just, so is God. While creating space for an abundant life, the law also helps protect us from dangers and calamities. Respect for God, for each other, and for life's values were the basis of His legislative system. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 72.

I don't know the intention of the author or editor in this paragraph, but its wording, particularly the last sentence is at best just very poorly worded, or at worst, destructively false.

If poorly worded, the author does not mean, "God's legislative system" but meant the temporarily added system of rules given to the Jews at Sinai to help them in their sinful and unrenewed state to maintain civil order and avoid anarchy and societal destruction.

Remember, Jesus said that His kingdom is **not** of this world when He was standing in Jerusalem with this Levitical system still in operation. Jesus did not say, "My kingdom is not of this world except for Israel." He did not say, that that legal and legislative system was His kingdom—no, imposed rules with imposed penalties are not God's eternal kingdom.

It is true that God's law reveals Him—and the entire Great Controversy has occurred because of a question over God's law. What a person believes about how God's law functions directly and immediately **determines** who they believe God to be, what character they ascribe to Him.

If a person believes God's law is legislative, made-up rules, the kinds of laws a creature makes, then they always believe in a god that must use his power to police and punishing law-breaking, and their god is the god of death, the god who is the source of death inflicted for so-called justice sake.

But when we return to worshiping God as Creator, and understand that His laws are the laws of the Builder of reality, the laws that the universe and life are built and operate upon, gravity, physics, the law of health and worship, and all moral laws, then we understand reality, we understand that deviating from God's laws takes one out of harmony with life and causes death and God has been using His power to hold death at bay, to eradicate sin, and save sinners by restoring His living law into our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10).

Consider this commentary,

- **The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah**, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 582. emphasis mine.

The final issue in this war is over how we understand God's law and, thus, how we understand God's character and government to function. Do we understand God's laws are the laws only the Creator can establish, the laws the govern the operations of reality itself, or do we prefer the laws of men and teach God's laws are functionally no different that what creatures use, made up rules?

Consider this commentary,

- **“Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition.” *Prophets and Kings*, p. 625 emphasis mine.

God's law is not legislative, that is Roman, that is human, that is what a creature does. And our battle is not between rival churches, have you ever heard preachers focusing on other church organizations and running them down and suggesting our battle is with rival churches? It is a battle for your heart and mind over whether you are a worshiper of the Creator or you worship a creature-god, a pagan god, and the law you believe your God governs by defines whether you are worshiping the Creator or a creature.

Consider this commentary:

- “The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God**, and men are led to

worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator**, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers." *The Great Controversy*, 1888, x.1, emphasis mine.

This is the issue, how do we understand God's law, and that directly determines who we understand God to be; it determines who we are worshiping, and that determines, via the law of worship, who we become like, what methods we use, whose character we reveal. It determines what we understand sin to be, what we understand justice to be, what we understand the plan of salvation to be, and whether we trust God or trust some legal formula to protect us from God.

The message for this time in human history is the message to call people out of the Roman imposed law legal system and back to worshiping the Creator God whose laws are design laws and who has provided everything we need to be healed from sin through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY

Read the third paragraph,

- The Code of the Covenant is described in several chapters (Exod. 21:1–23:19). All these regulations and laws were issued to stop the avalanche of evil and to build an orderly society. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 73.

This is correct, the laws given in Exodus were issued for the purpose of establishing societal order, to prevent anarchy, tribal warfare, and to keep the people together long enough for the promised Messiah to be born through them and complete the plan of salvation. This system of laws did not provide salvation, and it does not represent how God's government works, it was added because of sin.

MONDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- God's laws included different issues. There were specific regulations against putting down or humiliating people. He did not want any kind of exploitation. In His mercy, God corrects the sinful tendencies of the human heart and restrains people's natural inclinations. Society was to be kept safe, evil eliminated, and good interpersonal relationships cultivated. Justice and love must rule all actions. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 74.

What do you think of this paragraph? As the lesson states, the only righteous use of imposed law with external imposed punishments is for the purpose of restraint, discipline, and protection.

Law and law enforcement cannot produce love, trust, holiness, sinlessness, righteousness. Law and law enforcement cannot remove fear, cannot remove selfishness, cannot cure an addiction, cannot take away envy, lust, pride, arrogance, perversity, and corruption.

God cannot punish sin out of His universe—and this is what the legalists don't understand, the legalist teach that God does punish sin out of His universe, but it is not possible to do so. The more inflicted punishments, the more people fear God and the less they trust Him.

This is why Satan works so desperately to sow his agents into Christianity to teach that God's law functions like human law and that God must use power to inflict punishment for sin—because it actively prevents trust in God and keeps people afraid of the Father.

Law and law enforcement cannot correct the sinful tendencies of the human heart, it can only restrain, discipline, and protect, and thereby place law-breakers in places where they can reflect, consider, and choose to repent and experience the rebirth with a new heart and right spirit. But, the use of law and law enforcement to restrain the evil doer (i.e., prison), does not change the heart, it only places reality-based barriers to their exploitation of others, providing them opportunity to reconsider. But, just like Pharaoh with each of the Ten Plagues had opportunity to reflect and reconsider but instead hardened his heart, many people choose to harden their hearts into further rebellion with law and law enforcement.

One of God's design laws is the law of exertion, if you want something to get stronger you must exercise it, because if you don't use it, you lose it. Jesus taught this reality in the parable of the talents, if you invest your talents they grow and you get more, if you bury them, you lose what you had. This is true not just for muscles, but for neurobiology, if you want strong math ability you must work problems, strong musical skill you must practice your instrument, strong language skills you must speak the language, strong reasoning ability you must practice reasoning things out. This is why Hebrews states that the mature are those who *have developed by practice*, the ability to discern right from wrong (Hebrews 5:14).

Understanding this design law, it exposes the fallacy that God can correct sinful tendencies of the human heart through law and law enforcement. We can use imposed laws to lock a pedophile away in prison, thereby restraining, protecting, and disciplining. But can we control what the pedophile imagines while they are in prison? And if they spend 10 years in prison imagining dastardly deeds, they come out a more rebellious, perverse, recidivist pedophile than they were when they went in.

Law and law enforcement cannot correct sinful hearts. The written law only diagnosis, exposes the terminal sin condition so that we might go to Jesus, place our trust in Him, and surrender our old terminal fear-based life inherited from Adam that causes all the acts of sin and receive a new life, the

life of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the animating motivating spirit of love and trust and be reborn so that we no longer live the fear-based selfish life but the life of Christ.

Paul makes this clear throughout all of his writings:

- Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Romans 3:20 NIV84.
- You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. Romans 8:9-10 NIV84.
- I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 NIV84.

This is reality, it is the only path for salvation because the life we inherited from Adam is terminal, is the spirit of fear, the animating motivating energy of me-first survivalism and is out of harmony with God and the design laws He built life to exist and operate upon. We are born terminal, dead in trespass and sin. And we can only have life by receiving a sinless, righteous, holy life through trust in Jesus and this is received into our hearts here and now, it is not a legal declaration in a book somewhere.

Read the third paragraph,

- The Sabbath and the festivals were about worship and were re-minders of crucial events in salvation history. Worship was carefully regulated because this was the theological basis for all other activities. The Sabbath was established at Creation (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8–11), was connected to Israel's deliverance and redemption (Deut. 5:12–15), and, in a powerful way, points to worshiping God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord (Mark 2:27, 28). *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 74.

A couple points from this paragraph, worship was carefully regulated because the Jewish system of ceremonies and festival worship was all object lesson, theater, teaching tools. Just as in any drama, play, or act there are actors with costumes, a stage, props, and a script, so too, this system of religious ritual, ceremony, and festivals was all theatrical, to teach by enactment the reality of sin and salvation. So, of course it had a very precise script, that we call Scripture, because God wanted the lessons to be accurate.

But that system of theater did not provide salvation—there is no salvation in going to the annual festivals, in sacrificing animals, in burning offerings, in dressing in priestly garments, etc. It was all teaching the reality of God cleansing and healing us from sin in reality.

This is why the writer of Hebrews wrote:

- The gifts and sacrifices being offered *were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper*. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order... But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. Hebrews 9:9,10, 10:3,4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is why Jesus directly and specifically stated that for salvation to happen that His flesh and blood must be applied inside the sinner, not to His Father or to record books in heaven. Jesus said,

- “I tell you the truth, unless **you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you**. Whoever **eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood** remains in me, and I in him.” John 6:53-56 NIV84, emphasis mine.

This is a metaphor describing that Jesus is the Word made flesh. We must partake of the flesh, the words of Jesus, the truth of who He and the Father are and how they function, the laws upon which reality operates. We must reject the imposed law lies about God and be won to trust. Then, when we are won to trust we open the heart and drink the blood—the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and thus to drink the blood means to receive the life of Jesus, the sinless life, the holy life, the immortal and eternal life, and we are reborn by the indwelling Holy Spirit who brings us this new life. This is reality, all built upon the design laws of our Creator who built and sustains the universe.

Satan seeks to replace this reality with a fiction, a fantasy, of legal adjustment, that leads people to have faith in legal payments but which obstructs them from receiving this new life, from being actually reborn with a new life of love and trust.

The second point to note from the lesson is that they correctly state that the Sabbath was established in at the Creation, in Genesis. Thus, they correctly acknowledge that the Sabbath was made, as Jesus said it was, and therefore has a beginning and is not eternal. The Sabbath didn't exist before the creation of this planet, yet the angels already did as Job 38 tells us they sang together for joy when Earth was created.

The Sabbath didn't exist before this time in history because it wasn't needed. God created it because He created this planet and humanity after the war broke out in heaven, after Satan started his rebellion, after 1/3 of the angels believed his lies about God, that God makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers. And therefore, after God used immense power to create this planet, God created the Sabbath as evidence, revelation, proof that Satan lied. And what is it that makes the Sabbath different from all the other six days of Creation week? The Bible and Commandment tells us—it is the only day of that week when GOD RESTED, it is when God STOPPED using power, when God refused to use power to punish sin, to force Satan and his rebellious angels to bow, when God demonstrated by His own action that He does not make up laws and enforce those laws through external punishments, but creates reality and leaves His intelligent creatures free to choose for themselves.

Satan hates the Sabbath because the Creator built it into the flow of time itself and thus it cannot be removed by a creature. Every single week all intelligences pass through this time and are to remember the Sabbath, are to reflect on why God created it, what makes it holy? God RESTED, God STOPPED using power, God gives real freedom, God's law and government are NOT the law and government of creatures, not made-up rules that require external inflicted punishments.

So Satan has attacked the Sabbath, first by corrupting it through the lie that it is just a made-up rule and it is enforced through external punishment. And thus the Jews wanted to kill Jesus for His actions of breaking their laws on the Sabbath. But then, Satan sought to replace the Sabbath with another day, a day that was not set apart by Creation, not a day when God rested (in fact after God's work of Creation He rested and after Jesus' work of redemption He rested in the tomb further demonstrating God doesn't win by use of power, but truth, love, and freedom), but the first as a day of worship was set apart by human legislation.

And today, while many SDAs have returned to recognize the Bible Sabbath is Saturday, they have not restored it to its design laws settings of holiness of God as Creator whose laws are design laws, but sadly teach it as Roman—a made up rule a cosmic imperial dictator who will use his power to punish you if you break his made up rule. The Sabbath taught this way continues to teach the lie about God and has not freed people from the Roman distortion about God and His character.

We are calling people out of Babylon, out of that system of imposed law with a god who is the source of death, and back to worshiping our Creator whose laws are design laws, back to delighting in the Sabbath as a gift from God built into time for us to remember that He is our Creator, our Savior, the One who makes us holy when we trust Him, because what He wants is our love, trust, and loyalty and that can never be achieved through law and law enforcement, only through truth, love, and freedom all of which the Sabbath embodies.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the eye for an eye tooth for a tooth laws, and references Jesus bringing this up in the Sermon on the Mount, and the lesson states in the first paragraph,

- “By His words, Jesus was restoring the original meanings of these laws.” *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 76.

I couldn't agree more with this statement, however, after making this statement and referencing Jesus as the authority to teach the true and original meaning of these laws, the lesson goes on to say the following, paragraphs 4-6:

- The **original intention of this law** was formulated against any personal revenge. It was to stop blood feuds, or retaliation without an investigation first. Injury had to be evaluated by judges, and then a proper monetary compensation would be established and paid. This practice was

done in order to stop people from “taking the law into their own hands.” **Justice was to be done, but it had to be done according to God’s law.**

Jesus Christ, who gave these social laws to Moses, **knew the purpose of this law**; therefore, **He could apply it in an objective way, according to its original intention.** The motive behind it was to bring justice and reconciliation, and to restore peace.

One could argue that, in a sense, **justice implies a kind of vengeance.** The proper application of these laws was, it seemed, an attempt to find the **right balance between the ideas of justice and vengeance.** *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus, p. 76.*

This is quite a disturbing paragraph, incredible really, consider they are using Jesus as the authority for their conclusions.

If they are going to cite Jesus and what Jesus did with this law, if they want to be honest, want to be true, shouldn’t they actually quote the very words and teachings of Jesus instead of citing Him, rightly recognizing that He would know the true purpose and meaning of the law, but then substituting their own ideas in place of His words?

This is what Jesus actually said in the Sermon on the Mount, see if this sounds like justice as vengeance to you?

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘**Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.**’ But **I tell you, Do not resist an evil person.** If someone strikes you on the right cheek, **turn to him the other also.** And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, **let him have your cloak** as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, **go with him two miles.** **Give** to the one who asks you, and **do not turn away** from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: **Love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his **sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** Matthew 5:38-48 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Does Jesus teach what the lesson attempts to tell us Jesus teaches? What does Jesus teach is the true meaning of this law?

And this takes us into

THURSDAY

lesson on vengeance.

If we want to use the idea of justice as vengeance, what is the design law view of this?

Who is Jesus at war with? Who is the prime enemy of Jesus? Satan, not human sinners! And if Jesus wants vengeance on Satan, what does He do? He hits Satan where it hurts him the most—and what is it that has been Satan’s primary goal since he started his rebellion? To replace God as the one worshiped and adored. In other words, as Isaiah tells us, Satan sought to rise up and be worshiped as God.

So, how would Jesus take vengeance upon Satan then? He takes Satan’s victims from him, He redeems sinners, He removes their sin, their fear, their selfishness. In other words, Jesus removes from the sinner the elements and attributes that make sinners like Satan and restores them to His likeness, He restores the image of God in sinners.

And this is done through the application of truth and love, through the design laws consistently being applied, which is what Jesus describes the Father doing, sending sunshine and rain, equally, the laws of nature are cited by Jesus and they do not discriminate, they treat everyone the same. So too God’s law of love and truth are constants, and we are to be conduits of His love and truth and shine His character and glory of truth and love on everyone in how we treat them.

And Isaiah confirms for us specifically that this is what God’s vengeance is:

- Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and **avenge myself** on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; **I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.** Isaiah 1:24-15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

God is like a surgeon using a radiation knife to kill cancer cells—the attack, the vengeance, is against the sickness, the cancer, not the cancer patient. Likewise God takes vengeance against sin, the fear, selfishness, lies, not the sinner, for the purpose of healing, saving, redeeming, restoring, and thereby not only saving the sinner but removing from Satan his followers.

Doesn’t it break your heart to see the exact opposite of what Jesus taught being attributed to Jesus in the lesson?

It is time for the message of the 3 angels to go forward, to return to worshiping God as Creator, to come out of Babylon that system of imposed law with imposed punishments, and embrace the truth that God’s laws are design laws that He wants to restore into our hearts and minds as the basis of our existence, life, and operations.

Read the second paragraph, do you see the Roman law infection?

- Jesus was not against the principle of reward and punishment. Justice is a matter of principle; it is a crucial part of life. However, no individual is to take the role of judge, jury, and “executioner” upon himself or herself. How easy it would be for us to pervert justice! It is not

up to us to repay harm. If some evil is to be addressed, this must be performed by an objective court; it is the work of judges. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 77.

This is talking about a crime, not civil law, not a dispute over property lines or inheritance, but the question of doing evil and the repayment of harm.

First, what method did Jesus, and does the Bible teach, about the principle of reward and punishment?

All of Jesus' parables taught design law, reality, how things work. The sower sows truth, but depending on the soil gets different results. This is how reality works, good soil brings forth good fruit when good seed is sown, gravel does not. And the soil represents the condition of the hearts of people, not the quality of the seeds of truth. There is a reward for receiving the truth into the heart, it is the transformation of the character and the productions of the fruits of the spirit; and there is a punishment for rejecting the truth, it is the hardening of the heart, warping of the character, developing the fruits of a demonic spirit, fear, guilt, shame, selfishness, and cutting oneself off from God, the source of life.

There is nothing more absolute and certain that God's design laws built into reality. They cannot be changed, we can be changed, but God and His laws cannot be changed. So, yes, Jesus believes in reward and punishment, but it is not artificial, it is the natural results of sowing into our hearts either truth and love or lies, fear, and selfishness. As Paul wrote,

- Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A **man reaps what he sows**. The one who **sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction**; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

God is the Creator and He will not be mocked by the made-up system of rules and rule enforcement. You can teach all you want that this is a legal problem with made up rules and external punishments, but it doesn't change reality. And people will reap what they choose to sow into their hearts and minds, either truth, love, and trust or fear, lies, and selfishness.

Secondly, the authors also wrote,

- If some evil is to be addressed, this must be performed by an objective court; it is the work of judges.

Maybe I am misinformed, maybe I have misunderstood, but I was taught that the Old Testament legal justice system was set up with the injured person functioning in the role of prosecutor. The victim of the crime, or their family, had to bring the accused before the court, the state did not have police to do this. And then the court officials, judges and priests, were to act the role of defense attorneys, to cross examine the witnesses who were prosecuting the case against the accused.

In other words, the system was not set up like Roman courts with impartial judgments, but honest judges who were biased to find the truth and particularly biased toward defending the accused, but only through the investigation of the truth.

Our courts with impartial judges are not actually interested in finding the truth, they are interested in adhering to the application of the law, the rules, the legal proceedings, and thus impartial judges in our system will often knowingly make rules that suppress evidence and obstruct the truth because they are not primarily concerned with the life of the accused, but with the operations of the made up system of laws.

But God is the God of reality and the system He set up, even though with imposed laws, was to model, educate, teach, the principles of God's reality-based design law kingdom, which is love for the sinner, truth above all, and actions to seek to save and restore, not punish. Yes, if the truth was that the accused was guilty, then the judges would dispense the proper inflicted punishments for that society, just like reality works, if you are breaking the laws of health, you will reap that results unless God acts to heal and restore.

- One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If a malicious **witness** takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. **The judges must make a thorough investigation**, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you. Deuteronomy 19:15-19 NIV84.

The judges interrogate the witnesses who are bringing the accusation, they act the role of defense attorneys to pick apart the witness and their testimony. They are not unbiased toward the legal proceedings, but biased toward acquittal.

Zechariah chapter three depicts this more clearly, Satan who is the accuser is bringing accusation against Joshua the high priest, and God rebukes Satan and then God removes the filthy garments from the high priest, which are symbolic of his sin-sick life founded in fear and selfishness, and dresses him in fine clothing, symbolic of the new life of Christ, the spirit of love and trust. Thus, God's justice is to silence the accuser and heal the sinner restoring the sinner into harmony with the design laws of truth, love, and trust upon which God built the universe to operate.

TUESDAY

The lesson does a good job of describing God's original plan was NOT for the people to go to war and fight and kill to take over the land, but God would go before them and the hornet would go before them and gradually the people in the land would move away and abandon it and the Jews would slowly take it over. But sadly, the people didn't trust Him to fulfill His plan.



2025 Third Quarter: Exodus

Lesson #10: The Covenant *and the* Blueprint

by Linda Ojala

SABBATH

Memory Text: “So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” Exodus 24:3, NKJV

These descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, these rescued slaves, and the Egyptians who decided that the God of these slaves was all powerful and should be followed, walked safely through the sea. They viewed the walls of water on either side of their path as well as the sea floor. They then witnessed the entire Egyptian army drowned when the watery walls came crashing together. A cloud lead them and shielded them from the blazing desert sun by day and emitted fire that provided light by night. They knew that whoever this God was, He was leading and protecting them.

Now they saw the fiery mountain of Sinai, shielding them from this God’s very presence. Twice Moses had been invited by God to come up and speak with Him in this fire, and twice Moses returned 40 days later unharmed. He was glowing so brightly from being in God’s presence that seeing him was painful; the congregation begged him to shield his face when talking with them.

So, it’s no surprise that when Moses told them all that God had told him, they immediately agreed to do everything God had said. They promised God. They covenanted with God to do what they were asked to do. But even a cursory reading of the book of Exodus and the Bible demonstrates that what we *say* we will do and what we *actually* do too often are totally different.

This week, we will investigate how we learn to understand and love a Being we cannot see, feel or touch; a God whose actual presence usually operates outside of our senses. How do we love and obey an all-powerful God we dread and are so afraid of that we want to hide from Him? Adam and Eve hid from Him in the Garden of Eden. The Israelites designated Moses as their spokesman so they wouldn’t have to hear directly from God. And at the end of time, “The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb? For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’ Revelation 6:15-17 NIV The wrath of the Lamb is the perspective of the wicked when God comes to reclaim His Earth; whereas the righteous are bathed in God’s presence and are perfectly fine, as detailed in Isaiah 33:14-16

How do we connect with an invisible God, and keep our covenant, our promises with Him? How do we become the people who are described as saints, “who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12 NKJV?

In the first paragraph on Sabbath afternoon, the lesson talks about our “vertical relationship with God.” Haven’t we often envisioned God as being extremely far away, so that we direct our prayers toward a distant location when we try to talk with God? But listen to what God says, “I live in a high and holy place, BUT ALSO WITH HIM WHO IS CONTRITE AND LOWLY in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite”” Isaiah 57:15, NIV

Could it be that God is so close to us, He is so a part of us, that we can’t see Him outside of ourselves because He is living within us; occupying our minds with us?

SUNDAY

The Book and the Blood

Exodus 24:1-11, NIV says, “Then he said to Moses, ‘come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the people may not come up with him.’ When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, ‘Everything the Lord has said we will do.’ Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.’ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.’ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.”

It’s interesting to note that among those who saw God, ate and drank, were Moses’ brother Aaron, and Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu. Remember, Aaron was the one who later assisted with the creation and worship of the Golden Calf while Moses was on the mountain with God, Exodus 32. Giving hope to us all, Aaron was later designated as a priest of God, Exodus 40: 12-15, as were his sons, Nadab and Abihu. Leviticus 10:1-5 documents that Nadab and Abihu’s lives were ended by fire from the presence of the Lord when they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. Priests were to represent our priest and mediator Jesus Christ, and anything the priests did contrary to instructions would give the wrong message about our Ultimate Priest’s role.

We also, who call ourselves Christians and followers of Jesus, should think especially what the second commandment means when it says, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” Exodus 20:7 NIV. Do we truly represent Jesus, His life, His ministry, His love, His compassion, His forgiveness, His healing grace in the way we live our lives and interact with others?

The third paragraph says, “The ratification of the covenant at Sinai was to reinforce the special relationship that God wanted to have with His people. In the ceremony, the people twice shouted that they would obey God in everything that He required....They meant it, too, but they did not know their brokenness, fragility, and lack of power. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled on the people, indicating that only by Christ’s merits was Israel able to follow God’s instructions.”

We should ask ourselves how Christ’s merits enable us to follow God’s instructions. Does Jesus’ sacrifice just cover over who we really are, or does a replacement actually occur, where we receive what Jesus developed through His life, death and resurrection? What does it mean to actually have “the mind of Christ?” Do we understand it like David did when he plead for God to, “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. THEN I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.” Psalm 50: 7-13 NIV

There is a hint of how we interact and are impacted by this invisible God in Isaiah 55, which includes, “Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David....Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.... My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace...”

These thoughts are mirrored in Revelation 3:17-21 NIV, which councils to the Church of Laodicea, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am: I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

Isaiah 53:4-6, NIV, sheds this light on how God feels about us and takes care of us, “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, YET we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. BUT he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed.”

Essentially, a covenant is a promise, an agreement between people or between people and God. Today, we more often might call our formal agreements a Contract. Trust is promoted when the covenant/contract is kept, while breaking of a covenant produces distrust, and broken relationships. God is all about relationships and healing, fixing our brokenness, enabling us to live in love, truth and true freedom.

At creation, two institutions were established, marriage as well as the Sabbath. Marriage was created for the connection and bond between husband and wife, and Sabbath was to enhance the relationship and bond between the Creator and His creatures. The Ten Commandments are divided between how we show love for God in the first four, and love for others in the last six.

MONDAY

Seeing God

The second paragraph points out that in the Middle East during biblical times (and to a certain extent today), eating together was a high experience, great honor, and privilege. It offered forgiveness and formed a bond of friendship. It implied being there for each other and staying together in times of crisis and problems. By eating together, they promised each other, without words, that if something should happen to one party the other would be obliged to come and help. To be invited to a meal was a special treat that was not extended to everyone.

Paragraph 4 emphasizes the tragedy of some who ate before the Lord (as we talked about earlier) who were not transformed or converted by that experience, and what a powerful lesson about how possession of truth and sacred privileges does not automatically mean conversion. Having experienced what they did, these men should have been the last ones to have done what they would later tragically do.

This might serve as a warning if we believe that once you say that you believe in Jesus, you are saved, no matter what you do or how you live later. Seeing God, even believing in Him, does not mean automatic salvation. “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.”

Consider from the Old Testament, Ezekiel 18: 21-24, 30-32 NIV, “But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the offenses he has committed will be remembered against him. Because of the righteous things he has done, he will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die....Therefore...Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit.

Why will you die...For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!”

Or these from Paul in the New Testament, Romans 11:20-22, NIV, “But they [Israel] were broken off because of unbelief, and you [Gentiles] stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.” And “...I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” 1 Corinthians 9:27, NIV

TUESDAY

Power to Obey

We are self-centered helpless hostages of Satan, the once powerful arch angel of God, Lucifer (“Light-bearer”) who walked among the fiery stones of God’s very presence? How can we keep our promises, our covenants, with God? How do we actually DO what God wants us to do, so that we can be healed, saved and rescued from ourselves and this evil-filled planet, which I call the prisoner of war camp of the universe?

The only ability we have is the power of choice. We can choose to align ourselves with our evil captor, who wants to ruin and destroy us and everything we love or have (see the book of Job), or we can choose to align ourselves with our creator, who designed us and gave us life. The Bible is very clear about how to exercise our power of choice so that we are healed of our lethal condition of deception and selfishness, and enabled to live in truth, love and freedom.

Look at these steps from the NIV:

1) CHOOSE - Luke 9:23-25, “Then he (Jesus) said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?’”

2) SEEK – Matthew 6:33-34, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

3) LINK TO GOD – Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

4) ASK and KNOCK – Matthew 7: 7-12, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For EVERYONE who asks receives; he who seeks finds;

and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

5) TALK WITH GOD – Matthew 6:6-14, “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then our Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

6) TAKE NOURISHMENT – Isaiah 55:1-3, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.” Matthew 26:26-28 says, “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ What happens when you eat and drink? The ingredients become part of you, they sustain and energize you. These symbols were used by Jesus to explain how the Holy Spirit and the mind of Jesus becomes part of us. We think about his words, we drink of his never-failing spring of a pure life. As we daily take into ourselves the perfectly unselfish, perfect nature he created through his life, death and resurrection as a human, we are changed. It’s like my stem cell transplant recipients, who get rid of their own damaged cells that are killing them, and get fresh, undamaged cells that enable them to live.

7) LOVE – John 12:1,3-5, 13-17, “It was before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love...Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him...’You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them’.”

8) SHARE – Psalm 50:10-13, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. THEN I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.”

We choose to let the Holy Spirit of God in, and He fixes and enables us. If we could fix ourselves, we wouldn’t need a savior. That’s why Satan works so hard to get our attention and trust away from God, so we don’t stick with God, but go our own way and do our own works and pleasures.

WEDNESDAY

In the Midst of His People

How do you explain to people something they don’t understand? How many of you have tried the fruit called Rambutan, which is red and has soft spikes in every direction, but inside is a smooth, oblong fruit with a seed in the middle? I would likely explain that this fruit tastes like a combination of a grape and pear. But it is unique to all other fruits. We use something we know to help understand what we don’t know.

Likewise, God showed He dwelled in the middle of His people and explained the spiritual process of salvation through the teaching tool of the sanctuary, and the yearly feasts. You might compare it to a play, with actors, costumes, activities, processes and a script, that Christians call the Scriptures. Thinking back on some of my days of teaching case management, I could also compare this process to a workflow.

So, God told Moses how to create a sanctuary for Him in the very center of the tribes of Israel. Surrounding the sanctuary on every side, were the tribe of Levi. Beyond them, 3 tribes camped on each of the four sides. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, “You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.” John 4:22 NIV

If you wanted to come to Israel’s God, you would first have to travel through the tribes, learn what direction to go to find Him, and hear about what He had done and was still doing for this huge group of people. If what they told you intrigued you to get closer to this God, you would move forward to the sanctuary to see and understand the process of how God saves His people.

The ONLY thing the members of the tribes did at the sanctuary was to bring to the entrance an offering, something they owned of which they were willing to be deprived; a financial loss. If the offering was to be a certain animal, it had to be a living perfect animal, and the man slaughtered it as a sacrifice to make atonement for himself and his family for the wrong done. The priests, Aaron and his descendents, did EVERYTHING ELSE in the process of taking the rest of the steps toward being united with God.

As a quick overview of the process once the priests took over, the priests washed in the water of the basin, placed the blood of the sacrifice wherever instructed on the altar of burnt offering, then went

into the Holy Place and replaced the bread weekly then ate the bread, kept the lamps burning with olive oil, used specially formulated incense and offered prayers at the altar of gold.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to cleanse the sanctuary of the accumulated sins of the people, Levites and priests, the high priest put on the breastplate with a different precious stone for each tribe and two stones for determining God's yes or no answers. The High Priest offered a bull as a sacrifice for himself and his family, then took the blood from that sacrifice and from the sacrifice of the people, burning coals from the altar and incense through the curtain and into the presence of God in front of the Ark of the Testimony. He would then throw incense on the coals to create smoke that would conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony and keep him from dying in the presence of God. In the Ark was the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:3-5), a bowl of manna (Exodus 16:31-35), and Aaron's rod that budded, flowered and fruited with almonds overnight (Numbers 17:1-10). Afterward, lots were cast between two goats. The goat for the Lord was sacrificed for the sins of the people, while the priest placed his hands on the head of other goat, the scapegoat, and confessed all the wickedness and rebellion of the people over it. It was then released live out to the desert and left there, reminiscent of the Millennium that Satan spends on a desolate planet earth after the wicked are dead and the righteous are in heaven. Time to think, which sadly doesn't change his mind about God at all.

There are too many more details about this whole enactment than we have time to go through today, but essentially, God wanted us to see that the human Jesus, born of a sinful human mother, lived an unselfish, perfectly loving and obedient human life. He brought this perfect sacrifice of himself and laid down his life to accomplish the healing perfection that he could offer to us to replace the selfish, unloving and disobedient people of the human race. Then as our priest, He does the washing away of our filthiness, the taking of the sacrifice of our sin-filled bloody selves into the sanctuary, where He feeds us of the bread of His word, shows us truth through the light of the Holy Spirit, offers our prayers to God, and after tearing down the curtain between the Holy and Most Holy places, provides the way we can enter the very presence of God without dying.

Isaiah 26:12 NIV explains, "Lord, you establish peace for us; ALL that we have accomplished YOU HAVE DONE FOR US."

THURSDAY

Filled With the Spirit of God

To make the sanctuary, God told Moses exactly who was to do the craftsmanship. They were men who had been especially equipped by God with the needed special capabilities. We don't often think about how our individual capabilities are fostered by our creator for the purposes He has in mind for us. He can use every capability we have in ministry to His service.

"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what

we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and CANNOT understand them because they are discerned ONLY through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 NIV

God’s banner of the seventh-day Sabbath was a blessing given to us at creation, to keep us wholly connected to Him, to keep us rested and balanced, and especially to help us understand the character of the One who used His power to create this earth and everything on it.

Whose banner do we stand under in this spiritual war between God and Satan?

- 1) The powerful God who creates everything and weaves His laws into our entire and universal existence then leaves us free to ponder His abilities and our relationship with Him, understanding that breaking His laws carries their own inherent punishment, (ie. Breathing under water breaks the law of respiration and causes death, or the spiritual law of “by beholding we become changed” which turns us into whatever we think about, good or bad, and if bad, cuts us off from the life-giving presence of God and prevents us from being saved, etc.)

OR

- 2) Satan who cannot create and wants us to believe that God’s laws can be changed and manipulated, so that we must be punished by God for breaking them. (ie. Arbitrary fines for exceeding the arbitrary speed limit, etc.)

FRIDAY

Further Thought

“The law of God, enshrined within the ark, was the great rule of righteousness and judgment. That law pronounced death upon the transgressor; but above the law was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God was revealed, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus in the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized by the sanctuary service, ‘mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Psalm 85:10.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p 349

Remember, the Ten Commandments, housed in the Ark and in the Bible are like an MRI, which shows us what is wrong, how we are damaged and damaging others, but cannot fix us. Only the healing provided by our heavenly savior and physician make us whole again and save us. “This is what the Lord says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:23, 24 NIV



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 11

Apostasy and Intercession

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God called Moses to spend time with Him. Forty days and forty nights might have been a short period for Moses, but it seemed long, too long, for the Israelites. Their visible leader was absent. They became disoriented, impatient, fearful, and insecure. They wanted to have a visible god who would lead them, the “gods” whom they had seen all their lives in idolatrous Egypt. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 89.

Why do you think the people, without Moses presence, so quickly became disoriented, impatient, fearful, insecure and wanted to turn back to the gods of Egypt?

Where did this fear come from? Why were they afraid? Every human being born since Adam and Eve are born with a spirit of fear and selfishness, this is the animating, motivating drive or energy that we all come into the world with. This is life that we inherit from Adam—we all share that one breath of life breathed into Adam and corrupted by him. And this life, with which we are born, is already corrupted by fear that causes us to act in distrust and selfishness. This is why every person must be reborn to receive new heart and right spirit, the life of Christ.

This spirit of fear can be temporized, moderated, suppressed—not removed, cleansed, cured, but suppressed, by connection with another person that we trust. You see this in small children who will be playing in a park or at a beach or walking in the mall with their parents without fear, but if they lose sight of their parents, you immediately see fear on their face. Where did that fear come from? They were born with it. But the connection with the parent suppressed it. These small children have not yet experienced for themselves the new heart and right spirit but rely on connection with the parent. If they do not, at some point, surrender their life in trust to Jesus and be reborn with a spirit of love and trust, they will instead bring into their lives and attach to their hearts various things whose function is to numb their fear and make them feel secure or bring them comfort.

- Wealth
- Power over others
- Rules and imposed laws
- Rule keeping
- Ritual and ceremony
- Luck charms
- Comfort eating

- Drugs
- Other people who step into the role of the parent, and they place their trust in those people and allow those people to direct them.

The people in the Exodus were not yet converted, not reborn, thus they were animated, moved, motivated by the spirit of fear and distrust which leads to selfishness, doing what makes them feel best and safe. When Moses is around, he functions like a parent to them, they feel safer, but in his absence, the spirit of fear takes control—and the spirit of fear is the spirit of God's enemy and they are more susceptible to influence by satanic forces, and people will turn back to their old comfort measures, old gods, unless they are reborn with a new spirit.

Salvation cannot be obtained by allowing others to tell you the answers, even if the answers are right, it requires one be led to a trust relationship with God where they actually open the heart and are reborn with a new spirit, and this means they have an experience with God for themselves. As Jesus said, life eternal is knowing God, not knowing about God.

Do you see the children of Isreal struggling with this, not knowing God for themselves? And therefore, no spiritual renewal, still living controlled by the spirit of fear and selfishness, and Moses' presence functions like a parent, making them feel safe and when he is gone they become afraid and want to turn back.

Do we see this throughout the history of the church, many Christians functioning in fear and church leaders functioning in the role of parent and people following the leader without an experience with God for themselves?

At Come and Reason Ministries we have always recognized that every single person has their own mind, their own individuality, their own ability to think, discern, choose, their own heart to love, and their own soul that needs saving. And we have always taken the position that we are not here to do your thinking for you, to tell you what to think, our goal is and has always been to teach people to reason and think for themselves, to help them mature as Hebrews 5:14 says by practice and learn to discern for themselves.

This means we don't believe something because another person says it is so, but because we have studied it out and understand that it is so.

We do not believe $2+2=4$ because either the math teacher or the math textbook says it is so, but because the teacher and textbook have taught us why it is so and how to do addition, subtraction, multiplication, division—in other words we understand the design laws of mathematics upon which the answer to the problem rests.

Likewise, we don't believe something because a pastor or church leader tells us or simply because the Bible says so, but because a good pastor and the Bible has taught us why it is true and we believe the truth because it is truth and we understand the design laws of God upon which the truth rests.

But many of the friends of Come and Reason Ministries have been accused by pastors and church leaders of being mindless followers of Tim Jennings, which is the exact opposite of what is happening. What is happening is that those who study with Come and Reason Ministries are no longer mindless followers of the pastor or church leader and have begun asking questions to understand the reason for what the pastor is telling them and they are now able to understand reality and bring evidence when the pastor or leader is wrong. Did you ever have the experience of having math teacher grade one of your answers wrong when it was actually right and bringing their error to their attention?

Read third paragraph,

- People willingly gave gold to make the idol, and Aaron not only did not stop them but, in fact, he invited them to donate. He then participated in the molding of this false god. Afterward, the people declared: “This is your god, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Exod. 32:4, NASB). So sinful, wicked, and shortsighted. They had just fabricated this idol and then stated that it, the idol, had delivered them. Isn’t it amazing how sinful desires can pervert our thinking and actions? People celebrate their own creations, and their humanity and morality become debased in the process. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 89.

What lessons do we learn from this history?

Remember these real historical events also serve as object lessons for us, what is the object lesson?

- Moses goes into the mountain and talks with God about the law and the sanctuary, this represents Christ who in heaven planned with God the plan of salvation and how to restore His living law back into humanity.
- Aaron, in this setting, represents the priesthood, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron represents Jesus, but in this moment, he does NOT represent Jesus, but represents the priests, who give into pressure from people, to remain popular, and who lead the people away from God into false worship.

Consider what Paul wrote to Timothy,

- **Preach the Word**; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the **time will come** when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, **to suit their own desires**, they will gather around them a great number **of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear**. They will turn their ears **away from the truth and turn aside to myths**. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Just as Aaron gave into the demands of the people and gave them what they wanted, thereby using his office to reinforce their own fear and desires to make themselves feel safe, the history of Christianity is filled with clergy who give in to popular demand and give people what they want, but which is turning from truth to myth.

The number one myth that the leaders have embraced is that God’s law functions like human law rather than teaching reality—that God is Creator and His laws are constants, they are the protocols of

life and reality, and originate in God and are sustained by His power. It is myth, fantasy, make-believe to teach that God's kingdom, government, law operates like that of a creature. In other words, this teaching makes a god who is in our image, an imperial dictator who uses power to punish people who displease him and don't do what he says.

This is the number one myth taught in Christianity today and the myth that is the most important belief held by those who oppose the call to return to Creator worship, to leave Babylon the fallen system of imposed law with artificially imposed penalties.

Where people get confused is when they look in the Bible and see God giving law at Sinai, giving rules on how to enforce the law, how to punish, what the punishment is—and they conclude that what I am saying is only true for the laws of nature, like physics, gravity, laws of health, but not the moral laws, those are made up rules enforced through punishment.

This is because they conflate, mix two things that are not the same. They mix the punishment for sin, which is eternal death, with the disciplinary artificial punishments of grace that a loving Father imposes upon the immature to try and teach them in order to prevent them from experiencing the real punishment, eternal death.

It is like a parent who sets a made up rule, don't play in the street, with a made up artificial punishment of a time out, or a spanking, to protect the child from the real punishment of getting hit by the car and the laws of physics and health causing death. But the child can't understand how reality works, so the parent steps in between the child and reality with these artificial rules and artificial punishments as a means to protect and teach. But what if a child insists on rebellion, insists on doing their own thing, refuses to learn, and insists, despite their age, of playing in the street, in traffic, what happens?

Further, they fail to recognize God in OT times was not setting up His heavenly kingdom, but a civil government for the unconverted, unrighteous, unholy, idolatrous, rebellious Jews to keep order for the purpose of maintaining the branch of the human family through whom Christ would be born.

MONDAY

Read last two paragraphs,

- Idolatry denies the theological understanding that God is God and man is man. **Idolatry erases the gap between God and man** (Eccles. 5:2) and **breaks the connection with Him**. Whether it is blatant and open or something concealed in the heart, idolatry quickly ruptures our relationship with the Lord and leads in a downward moral spiral. No wonder the text talks about what they did the next day: after offering sacrifices to the idol, they then began to party, in what Ellen G. White depicted as “an imitation of the idolatrous feasts of Egypt.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 320.

Humans are geniuses at fabricating their own idols. They create their own gods, which is bad enough, but then they go and serve those gods. **The Creator is replaced with things that, sooner or later, lead to moral degeneration.** *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 90, emphasis mine.

This is exactly true, and the number one way we have done this is to teach that God's law functions like human law and therefore God functions like us, a creature.

Consider this quote from the commentary *The Great Controversy*:

- The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's **holy law**. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator,** may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator,** and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers (*The Great Controversy* x1 emphasis mine).

But read the first paragraph,

- The golden calf resembled the Egyptian bull god, called Apis, or cow god, called Hathor. This was a blatant transgression of the first and second commandments (Exod. 20:3–6). **This violation could not go unpunished because it openly broke their relationship with the living Lord.** Instead of worshiping their Creator, the Israelites worshiped their own creation, which could not see, hear, smell, speak, care, love, or lead. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 90, emphasis mine.

How do you understand this?

What is the actual punishment for idolatry and what law is it based upon?

Why does the first commandment say: Thou shall have no other gods before me?

Is it a rule? Or is it a design law?

It is based on the design law of worship, by beholding we are changed, (2 Corinthians 3:18). We become like the god we admire and worship.

- They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5 NIV84.

The lesson references Romans 1:22-27: They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, they preferred images made with their own hands, and their minds became darkened, depraved and futile.

God says to have no other gods before Him because humans are the highest created beings on planet earth, and there is nothing on earth we can worship that will develop, ennoble, advance us, anything we worship degrades and destroys us. Therefore, God, who is love, who is infinite in majesty, truth, and love directs us to worship Him, the infinite one because only by worshiping Him to we never stop advancing, growing, developing, maturing ever more fulling into His image. This commandment is not for God's need, rights, feelings, but for our health, wellness, maturity, and development.

Worshiping anything other than God in truth, degrades us and destroys us, even if we call that being God, Creator, Yahweh, or Jesus. And the key again is, are we worshiping the Creator whose law is design law, the laws of truth, love, and liberty, or have we replaced that with imposed human law and therefore teach myth and degrade ourselves?

The lesson describes this nicely in the third paragraph of:

TUESDAY's lesson:

- An idol is something that replaces God, and even though we know it is not right, we still worship it, often repeatedly. It captures our imagination, affection, time, and mind more than does God. It can even enslave our thinking. In fact, we become what we behold, and we will rise no higher than whatever "god" we serve. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 91.

And this is why the final message to enlighten the world for Christ's return is a call to worship God as Creator, a call to leave the false system of human law, imposed law, described in the Bible as Babylon, the system that teaches God functions like a creature and who is the source of pain and death inflicted as punishment for sin. These lies, rooted in the lie that God's law functions like human law, enslaves minds and hearts and people do become like that false god. That is why they focus on dos and don't's, the externals, the outward appearance rather than the heart, rather than the motive, rather than the spirit of love and trust and the development of Christlike character.

That is why they will use their power to coerce others to conform, because they believe justice is the use of law and law enforcement to punish disobedience.

And the beast of Revelation is a governing system that operates just like this. It will establish imposed laws and use external power to punish law breakers.

The last paragraph describes the law of worship very nicely, and how vulnerable we are to fall into this:

- We are very creative and inventive in this regard. We can turn anything that is good, beautiful, and meaningful into an idol. Idolatry is extremely dangerous because it transforms our

personality, our way of thinking, our affections, and our social life. It changes our identity and replaces genuine personal relationships with hollow and ultimately meaningless interactions that, in the end, cannot save us. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 91.

We are creative, we make our own gods and make them in our image, and the number one god we make in our image is the god that functions the way we like, with power over others to force them into obedience or punish them appropriately if they don't and ultimately use power to destroy our enemies. This is the god of Babylon, Rome, this is Baal, a god who requires appeasement, a god who is the source of pain, suffering, and death, one who is just like we are in character.

But the Bible shows us the true God in Jesus and all God's actions through history. The God who did not think equality with God was something to be held onto. The Creator God who left power, privilege, and position and sacrificed Himself for the benefit of others. The God who when injustice was being done to Him He refused to use power to stop it and refused to use power to punish His enemies. The God who when Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels rebelled in heaven did not use power to punish them but created the Sabbath, the day when God rested, when God stopped using power, the day where God demonstrated by action that He is the God of truth, love, and freedom.

There are two versions of God being taught, the true God as revealed in Jesus, the Creator whose laws are the design protocols of life built into the operations of all reality, and every other false version of God which ultimately functions like a creature with made up rules and artificial externally imposed penalties.

It is time to reject the Roman view of God's law and return to worshipping Him as Creator!

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- While Moses was still on Mount Sinai, **God said that He would destroy the rebels** and make Moses' posterity into a great nation. But that was **not what Moses wanted**. Instead, he pleaded with the Lord, pointing out that the Israelites were not Moses' people—they were God's. He, Moses himself, had not brought them out of Egypt, but God had done it through His mighty works. And so Moses pled with God, stressing His early promises to the fathers. **Moses was truly working as an intercessor between God and humanity**. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 92, emphasis mine.

What are the implications from this paragraph?

Does this not seem to be teaching that sinful Moses has more love, more mercy, more grace, more desire to save the sinful people than God? That God has an anger and wrath problem and that God needs a sinful human to plead with Him, to intercede in order to prevent God from using His power to destroy the people?

This is what happens when people read things in isolation, without the full picture, without understanding and knowing God, without understanding and knowing the Great Controversy, without understanding and knowing God's design laws and how reality functions. It is like taking one or two pieces of a 10,000 piece jigsaw puzzle and describing the picture. The pieces they hold are legitimate pieces of the puzzle, but their interpretation of what the picture is is distorted and wrong because they leave out so many other pieces.

What are they leaving out?

Does God have foreknowledge? Did God know, *BEFORE* He said to Moses that He was going to destroy them and start over with Moses descendants, how Moses was going to respond and also that He was not going to wipe out the people? Or did God not know, and He was taken by surprise and had to alter His plans because Moses was such an effective intercessor?

And if God foreknew then God was never planning on destroying the Israelites, but instead put Moses in this position for another purpose—what could that be?

- For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 1 Corinthians 4:9 NIV84

Do you think Moses would be one of God's called people who would be on display before the universe? Would angels be watching?

And Moses wrote the book of Job before this, and the book of Job starts out with the angelic host in a meeting before God and Satan coming before them and alleging Job is not faithful, that Job only pretends to be. And we know the story unfolds with Satan destroying and Job staying faithful, never once did Job distrust God.

And now, can't you envision, Satan again in heaven alleging all kinds of things, that God's ways don't work, that these people having just been delivered by miracles and power don't want God, they want to go back to Egypt, they want Satan and God's ways are ineffective. Can't you see God saying to the angels, don't be deceived, my ways do work, check out Moses, don't you remember 40 years ago he used the methods of survival of the fittest, he lived motivated by the spirit of fear and used violence to murder an overseer and then ran away in fear. But watch him now, after spending time with me, watch what he does when I offer to wipe out the rebels and reward him and his family.

And Moses responds beautifully, demonstrating His heart and mind have been transformed and He now lives motivated by the spirit of love and trust. And can't you see Jesus in heaven turning to the angels and saying, "See, my methods of truth, love, and freedom work. For all who spend time with me, who love truth, who trust me, they will be healed and will be safe citizens of heaven."

This is the real story of Moses interceding. But what about the object lesson, doesn't Moses represent Jesus and doesn't that mean Jesus is pleading with the Father in our behalf? Consider this paragraph in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

- In the prayer of Moses our minds are directed to the heavenly records in which the names of all men are inscribed, and their deeds, whether good or evil, are faithfully registered. The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. If any of these depart from Him, and by stubborn persistence in sin become finally hardened against the influences of His Holy Spirit, their names will in the judgment be blotted from the book of life, and they themselves will be devoted to destruction. Moses realized how dreadful would be the fate of the sinner; yet if the people of Israel were to be rejected by the Lord, he desired his name to be blotted out with theirs; he could not endure to see the judgments of God fall upon those who had been so graciously delivered. The intercession of Moses in behalf of Israel illustrates the mediation of Christ for sinful men. But the Lord did not permit Moses to bear, as did Christ, the guilt of the transgressor. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me," He said, "him will I blot out of My book." *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 326.
- In the prayer of Moses our minds are directed to the heavenly records in which the names of all men are inscribed, and their deeds, whether good or evil, are faithfully registered. [books are the description of where individualities/identities/characters are recorded. Thus our books register the reality of our lives.] The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. [Names represent character/individuality, not linguistic identification]. If any of these depart from Him, and by stubborn persistence in sin become finally hardened against the influences of His Holy Spirit, their names will in the judgment be blotted from the book of life, and they themselves will be devoted to destruction. [Describing reality—why the lost are lost, because they have hardened their hearts and minds in sin, into fear and selfishness and are beyond responding to the Spirit of truth and love.] Moses realized how dreadful would be the fate of the sinner; yet if the people of Israel were to be rejected by the Lord, he desired his name to be blotted out with theirs; he could not endure to see the judgments of God fall upon those who had been so graciously delivered. [This is a revelation of his love for the people, which reveals the Father and Son's love for fallen man. John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son..." They, the Godhead, would rather die Themselves, than lose us. This is how Moses intercessions reflect that of Christ. Remember EGW elsewhere described how it was a struggle with the Father to surrender Jesus and how Jesus plead with the Father to allow it.
 - Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them. Angels were so interested for man's salvation that there could be found among them those who would yield their glory and give their life for perishing man. "But," said my accompanying angel, "that would avail nothing." The transgression was so great that an angel's life would not pay the debt. Nothing but the death and intercession of God's Son would pay the debt and save lost man from hopeless sorrow and misery. EW 127.1

- My view of this is that God so loved the world He sent His Son, but would have preferred, as any Father would, to come Himself. It was never a question of the Godhead to save humanity from sin, it was a struggle among them as to which member would take up the burden of incarnation to complete their joint mission. You can imagine if you had a child dying in some situation and they could be saved but it would require sacrifice to do it, how you might have a struggle as a parent allowing one of your children take up the burden rather than you doing it yourself. This is what I understand the struggle to be. EGW wrote elsewhere:
 - **Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us**, veiling His glory and humbling Himself, that humanity might look upon Him, **the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed** in unfolding its record of His own condescending grace. **In every act of Jesus**, in every lesson of His instruction, **we are to see and hear and recognize God**. In sight, in hearing, in effect, **it is the voice and movements of the Father**. But language seems to be so feeble! I refrain, and with John exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" [1 John 3:1].--Letter 83, 1895, emphasis mine.
- So, how do we understand Jesus pleading His case to the Father? Is it to prevent the Father from hurting us or to be the One whom comes instead of the Father to save us? This is how Moses represents Christ's pleading, Moses is pleading just like Jesus, I will sacrifice myself to save them. The intercession of Moses in behalf of Israel illustrates the mediation of Christ for sinful men. But the Lord did not permit Moses to bear, as did Christ, the guilt of the transgressor. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me," He said, "him will I blot out of My book." *Patriarchs and Prophets* 326. [Moses could not experience the guilt of sin that Adam brought upon the race, Jesus as the second Adam experienced the guilt that sin causes and which ultimately separated Him from His Father.]

So then what is God's wrath?

From the SDA Bible Commentary:

- **The wrath of God.** That is, the divine displeasure against sin, resulting **ultimately in the abandonment of man** to the judgment of death (see Rom. 6:23; John 3:36). The wrath of the infinite God must not be compared to human passion. God is love (1 John 4:8), and though He hates sin, He loves the sinner (SC 54). However, God does not force His love upon those who are unwilling to receive His mercy (see DA 22, 466, 759). Thus, **God's wrath against sin is exercised in the withdrawal of His presence and life-giving power** from those who choose to remain in sin and thus share in its inevitable consequences (see Gen. 6:3; cf. DA 107, 763, 764; SC 17, 18)...

When **God's wrath** against sin fell upon Christ as our substitute, it was **the separation from His Father** that caused Him such great anguish. "This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequence of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression" (DA 686). Finally, on the cross, "the wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul

of His Son with consternation. ... **The withdrawal of the divine countenance** from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man” (DA 753).

Thus, as Paul explains in Rom. 1:24, 26, 28, God reveals His wrath by turning impenitent men over to the inevitable results of their rebellion. This persistent resistance of God’s love and mercy culminates in the **final revelation of God’s wrath on that day when the Spirit of God is at last withdrawn**. Unsheltered by divine grace, the wicked have no protection from the evil one. “As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose” (GC 614). Then fire comes down from God out of heaven, and sin and sinners are forever destroyed (Rev. 20:9; cf. Mal. 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10).

But even this final revelation of God’s wrath in the destruction of the wicked is not an act of arbitrary power. “**God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life**” (DA 764). God gives men existence for a time so that they may develop their characters. When this has been accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. “**By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire**” (ibid.; cf. GC 543). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, pp. 477–478, emphasis mine.

This is exactly correct and this is what we teach, yet the critics of our ministry in the church take a different position and teach that God’s wrath is the use of God’s power to inflict punishment, and then they turn around and accuse us of not being in harmony with Adventist beliefs, when they are the ones who are failing to align with the truth and the church.

The lesson also points out that when Moses saw their idolatry and partying, he threw down the tablets of stone and broke them. And later he cut stone and God wrote on the second set a second version of the Ten Commandments that differ from the first set in one particular, the reason for the Sabbath.

This is important for a couple of reasons:

First, what does it illustrate that in the ark the unbroken law was placed there and not the broken set?

If the lesson of this illustration is to teach that the broken law is being covered by Christ and the penalty is being paid by His blood, then the broken pieces of the law would have been placed in the ark.

However, the lesson is NOT about legal payments for breaking the law. The lesson is about restoration, healing, and recreation, thus the unbroken law was placed in the ark, which symbolizes God writing His law into our hearts and minds. And the symbolism of what went into the box is an illustration of how God heals us. The three elements were manna, the law, and Aaron’s rod that budded. And the manna went in first, which represents Jesus, the bread of heaven, the word made flesh, that we must ingest, partake the truth as it is in Jesus which destroys the lies and restores us to

trust, then in trust we open the heart and we are reborn with the Holy Spirit bringing us the spirit of Jesus, the living law of love is written upon our hearts and minds, and then we who were dead in trespass and sin bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thus, the lesson of this acted out illustration is one of design law healing and refutes the imposed law legal punishment lie.

Second, the change in the Sabbath language reveals what God wants for us but how He has to step down and meet us where we are and communicate in childlike ways for the immature. The Sabbath in the first set was given because God is Creator, it is a call to recognize that His laws are design laws, how reality works, that we have real freedom with Him. But they couldn't comprehend freedom, couldn't comprehend design law, they were level one might and power thinkers and thus God met them where they were and reminded them He is powerful and He was able to destroy their enemies in Egypt and set them free. God wants maturity, for us to be His understanding friends who have His law written upon our hearts and minds, but He meets us where we are and uses external rules and might and power like a loving parent who has rules not to play in the street, protecting from self destruction until we grow up and realize it was never about the rules or external punishment, it was about the law of worship, how worshiping a false god destroys our hearts, minds, characters, and souls.

THURSDAY

Read fourth paragraph,

- In Exodus 32:32, the word translated “forgive” is from a verb whose basic meaning is to “bear” or “carry,” such as in Isaiah 53:4, which reads (about Jesus): “Surely He has borne our griefs” (NKJV). It is the same verb—translated “forgive” in Exodus 32:32, and “borne” in Isaiah 53:4. What a powerful insight into the process of salvation and forgiveness and what it cost God to save us. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 93.

What did it cost God to save us?

Was the cost a legal one? Did God need to receive a payment for Him to be able to save? Was the ransom price paid to God?

To whom was it paid?

John 6:53—to you and me.

And we will study for all eternity what it cost God to save us, the sacrifice is an infinite sacrifice.

For God so loved the world He GAVE us His only begotten Son, He did not loan Him, He gave Him. Jesus took up humanity and has kept His humanity.

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, a quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets* and discuss:

- Love no less than justice demanded that for this sin **judgment should be inflicted**. God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. **He cuts off** those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin. In sparing the life of Cain, God had demonstrated to the universe what would be the result of permitting sin to go **unpunished**. The influence exerted upon his descendants by his life and teaching led to the state of corruption that **demand the destruction** of the whole world by a flood. The history of the antediluvians testifies that long life is not a blessing to the sinner; God's great forbearance did not repress their wickedness. The longer men lived, the more corrupt they became. *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 325.

What do you hear? Are we reading through imposed human law or design law? Are we including the entire weight of the 66 books of Scripture and also this author's other writings to correctly understand the meaning, or are we so steeped in Romanism, the idea that God's law functions like Roman law that we read this as penal legal?

What kind of judgment should be inflicted? Is it the judgment of law and law enforcement, or the judgment of a physician intervening to cauterize a lesion, to stop the spread of disease, to provide remedy?

What is the context?

After humankind sinned, could any human be saved without Jesus? No! Thus, the context is that the entire human species is dead in trespass and sin, terminal in sin, and will die unless Jesus comes. God promised in Genesis 3:15 that Messiah was promised. What is happening through the OT is Satan working to stop God's plan to save humankind and God intervening to bring Jesus to save humankind and also eradicate sin from His universe.

Why did the world at the time of the flood and their condition demand God intervene to destroy them? Because at the time of the Flood there was only one righteous man left and his family, the rest of the entire world had been so hardened in sin they were beyond reach, they would not respond to God. Thus, if God was going to save humanity from sin, He had to act to keep open the avenue for Messiah, because if Noah and his family die, the plan of salvation is lost.

But realize, that destruction was mortal destruction, it was the first death, the sleep death, not the wages of sin death. This is the death of grace, the death of mercy, the artificial state of suspended animation when the living being sleeps in the grave awaiting resurrection. They come up out of the grave with the same current of thoughts as when they died. This is not the punishment for sin, which is eternal death.

This first death, which is an act of saving grace to save and heal, is what God controls and is referred to in texts like:

- “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84.
- “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. 1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84.

This is the artificial state of grace that God controls and this state would NOT exist if God was not acting in love and grace to create this sleep state. This is NOT the wages of sin death. The wages of sin death is the second death, the eternal death, the death from which there is no resurrection, and that death doesn't happen until after the judgment and at the end of the 1000 years. And that death is not caused by God, it is caused by sin and Satan is the one who holds the power to that death, which God, through Jesus destroys:

- “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “**Sin**, when it is full-grown, **brings forth death**” (James 1:15 NKJV, emphasis mine).
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction**” (Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Sin is the cause of eternal death.

- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.**” Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**” 1 Corinthians 15:24–26 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And Satan holds the power of eternal death, not God, for eternal death comes as a result of sin separating us from God, and we do not have life separated from God. And Christ destroys death by destroying sin and reuniting His universe into eternal love and loyalty with God, the source of life.

Those who hold to the lie that God's law functions like human law teach that God is the source of death that He inflicts upon people who do not appease His wrath by claiming the blood of Jesus as their legal payment to pay their sin debt.

2025 Q3 Exodus, Lesson 12

Show Me Your Glory

by Stanley Baldwin

This quarter we have been studying the Book of Exodus. In each story God is revealing Himself to those of us who are open to learning about Him.

Today we have world-wide communication via radio, TV, books, magazines, news papers and now personal computers and phones which out rival Buck Rogers by having almost unlimited information storage and almost instant information retrieval.

It is hard to imagine what it was like for Moses in a time when chiseling pictures and words into stone was the method of choice for historical records. In a verse covered by this week's lesson (Ex. 34:27) we even read this: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write down these words...'"

For millenniums Jews have believed that Moses had followed this command of God and that as a result he was the inspired author of 6 books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, as well as the book of Job. The miracle, and I use this term advisedly, the miracle of the preservation of these books for 3,500 years is unparalleled!



[Epic of Gilgamesh](#) The Flood Tablet, 11th cuneiform tablet in a series relating the Gilgamesh epic, from Nineveh, 7th century BCE; in the British Museum, London. Britannica

God told Moses to write down the covenant for posterity close to a 1,000 years before the reign of Ashurbanipal in Ninevah. I mention this because it was in Ashurbanipal's library of clay tablets that the Gilgamesh Epic was found by archeologists.

If the Gilgamesh of the Epic was the same man as the Gilgamesh listed among the Sumerian list of kings then he was probably a contemporary of Moses or at least close to being a contemporary. However, when this Epic was pressed into a soft clay tabled is unknown.

Amazing how stories told over decades even centuries can change over time! Gilgamesh and Moses both record the early history of humanity. But the history of the creation, the fall, the promise of eternal life, and the flood are diametrically opposed in these two records!

Satan's twisting of the facts is evident in the fantasy portrayed in the Gilgamesh Epic. No wonder God wanted an accurate record of His relationship with humans and the revelation of His true character. It needed to be accurately preserved for us and not twisted and distorted as was the dubious history recorded in the Gilgamesh Epic.

“The fullest extant text of the Gilgamesh epic is on 12 incomplete Akkadian-language tablets found at Nineveh in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (reigned 668–627 BCE).... The Gilgamesh of the poems and of the epic tablets was probably the Gilgamesh who ruled at Uruk in southern Mesopotamia sometime during the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE and who was thus a contemporary of Agga, ruler of Kish; Gilgamesh of Uruk was also mentioned in the Sumerian list of kings as reigning after the Flood. There is, however, no historical evidence for the exploits narrated in poems and epic.”

S. S. Quarterly ChatGPT Outline

Ex. 1, 2 First 40 Years of Moses
Ex. 3, 4 Commission of Moses
Ex. 5-6 Jewish Life Becomes Worse
Ex. 7-10 First Nine Plagues
Ex. 11, 12 Tenth Plague and Passover
Ex. 13-15 The Exodus and Red Sea
Ex. 16-18 The Journey to Sinai
Ex. 19, 20 The Commandments
Ex. 21-23 God's law Applied
Ex. 24-31 Covenant Confirmed, Blueprint
Ex. 32 Golden Calf Apostasy
Ex. 33, 34 [God's Self-revelation](#)
Ex. 35-40 Tabernacle Built

I. Ex. 1-12 Israel in Egypt
II. Ex. 12-18 Journey to Sinai
III. Ex. 19-24 Covenant at Sinai
IV. Ex. 25-31 Tabernacle Blueprints
[V. Ex. 32-34 Rebellion and Renewal](#)
VI. Ex. 35-40 Building the Tabernacle

Most Others

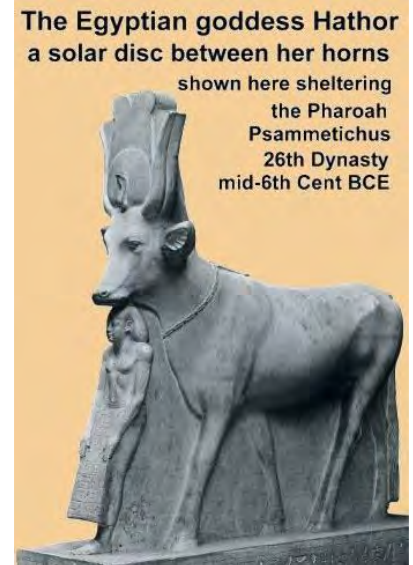
I. Ex. 1 -18 Exodus from Egypt
A-?
II. Ex. 19 -40 Israel at Sinai
A-?

Britannica Jiri Moskala tells us in his preface to the lessons for this quarter that he has divided up the book of Exodus into 13 sections as summarized here. Now, obviously, the divisions are not as neat as portrayed here. For example: the title in blue, which is today's lesson, he actually starts in vs. 7 of chapter 33, not vs. 1. The same is true of a number of other sections as well.

For interest's sake I have also included two other outlines of the Book of Exodus. The first is what the AI (artificial intelligence) software ChatGPT told me when I asked it to outline the Book of Exodus. Most other sources divide Exodus into two divisions with a varying number of sections in each of these two divisions. I reference this because I want to point out how artificial it is to try to divide the study of a Biblical book into 13 discreet sections to fit the typical 13 Sabbaths of a quarter.

We see that today's study of Ex. 33 and 34 is incomplete until we take notice that these two chapters are a continuation of the story in the previous chapter, the story of the Golden Calf as in the outline by Artificial Intelligence. With that in mind let's take a look at the results to Israel, the nation, for their actions of rejecting God's covenant after agreeing to it.

What Were the Results of Israel's Disobedience?



The Egyptian goddess Hathor
a solar disc between her horns
shown here sheltering
the Pharaoh
Psammetichus
26th Dynasty
mid-6th Cent BCE

The Apis Bull and Hathor, a female cow, were two of the gods that were worshiped in Egypt. The book of Exodus reports that Aaron sculpted a **calf** and the Hebrew word used for "calf" seems to specifically refer to a young cow or a steer and not an adult cow or bull.

Whether Aaron was trying to say that Israel's God was an offspring of the Egyptian god Apis or Hathor I do not know. Why almost all artistic depictions of the animal sculpted by Aaron is of an adult bovine and not a calf I do not know either.

But, I do know that human creatures worshiping animal creatures is Satanic and destructive, completely out of harmony with heaven and God's creation of reality. Not only that but picturing God as an animal degrades God in human minds even when miraculous super-powers are ascribed to this animal god. And if God is an animal that concept obscures the fact that humanity needs a character change rather than trying to appease some imaginary, animal-like god. And the idea of such a god leads to a whole host of Satan inspired concepts of a vengeful, autocratic, corrupt, judge as the ruler of the universe.

As a result of the Israelites breaking their agreement to obey the covenant, not only were 3,000 Israelites killed but also the whole congregation experienced at least 8 other consequences that are listed in Ex. 32 through 34. The focus of this lesson is rightfully on God's revelation of His name—His character—with a list of His attributes, however, the total context is vitally important also. BTW the 3,000 Israelites killed were mostly from the mixed multitude according to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg 324.

Results of worshiping the Golden Calf in Ex. 32 through 34:

1. 32:20 Israelites drink water laced the powder of the destroyed golden calf
2. 32:28 About 3,000 Israelites killed
3. 32:33 God says He will blot them "out of His book." (what they deserved!)
4. 32:35 God "sent a plague" on the Israelites.
5. 33:1 -6 God says "I will not go up among you" but He promises to drive out the inhabitants of Cannan, and Israelites removed their "ornaments." (32:6 "play")
6. 33:7 -11 The Tent of Meeting was pitched far out of the encampment.
7. 33:12 -16 Moses's first request, "Show me now thy ways."
8. 33:17 -34:9 Moses' second request to "see His glory." Moses is asked to prepare replacement tablets for the ones he broke.
9. 34:10 -28. The covenant is reestablished.



So here is a list that I came up with of 9 consequences for Israel's blatant sin of worshiping the "graven image" of a calf. The first thing I noticed when I compiled this list was that only the first 6 items are natural, immediate consequences of acting on their decision. The last three are God's response to their rejection of His covenant. And the last 3 are directly opposite to what we would expect!

God allows the natural consequences but postpones the ultimate result of their rejection and gives them another chance to establish a God-centered nation. This gives me assurance that even though I sin, even though I have knowingly and aggregatesly sinned and deserve death, God willingly offers me another opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to change my desires so that I want to reflect His character.

Also, you will notice that the **first four consequences** are found in chapter 32 which was part of last week's lesson, so I won't dwell on them, except to say that three of these consequences are physical, only one is "spiritual."

Since worshiping the Golden Calf was a public rejection of God in favor of an animal-like god who resembled the gods of Egypt the Israelites certainly deserved rejection by God. But chapter 34 makes it clear that this did not happen, in fact the covenant was reestablished! What a magnificent, faithful, loving God we have! Totally unlike the gods dreamed up by the Egyptians.



The the Lord said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here ... **I will send an angel before you**, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. **But I will not go among you** lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. Ex. 33:1-3 (ESV)



Now we turn our attention to result **number 5**, God says, “I will not go up among you.” I like the English Standard Version here because it uses the word “among” and not “with” as several other translations do. Supporting the word “among” is that in the previous verse God promises to send an angel to drive out the inhabitants of Caanan for them. God’s visible presence in the midst of the camp would not be there but he would still be near.

The Israelites recognized that God, in the form of the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire at night in the midst of the camp, had been successfully leading them so far. Because they desired distance from God they depended on Moses to relay God’s directions to them; the loss of God’s ultimate leadership was devastating and they knew that the result would be death in the desert. They were fine with God leading them to Caanan **IF** He just left them alone in their personal lives! Isn’t that just like today, we want a heavenly future but now we want to live like hell. And that is only the first half of the 5th result.

Exodus 32:6 (KJV) And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and **rose up to play**.



Ex. 33:4-6 (NIV) When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and **no one put on any ornaments**.

For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’”

So the Israelites **stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb**.

The second half of this result is they took off their ornaments. Aaron announced a festival by the altar in front of the golden calf. Israel, eager to celebrate, arose early, and led by Aaron, they offered sacrifices on the new altar before the golden calf then they sat down to eat and drink. (Any question about what they were drinking?) And then they “rose up to play,” or as the NIV says, “to indulge in revelry.”

I looked up this Hebrew word “tsaw-khak” translated “play” or “revelry,” and found that it is used 13 times in the O.T. but translated several different ways. For example, Abraham and Sarah “tsaw-khak” when God told them Sara who was 90 would have a baby son. Joseph was accused of “tsaw-khak” by Potifer’s wife. And Samson was brought out of prison so the Philistines could “tsaw-khak.”

So, this Hebrew word can refer to mirth, mocking, sport or even fornication. So what the Israelites were doing exactly is open to question. Whatever they were doing, it was degrading, self-indulgent, and probably drunken. And it certainly didn’t glorify the Creator God who had brought them out of Egypt!

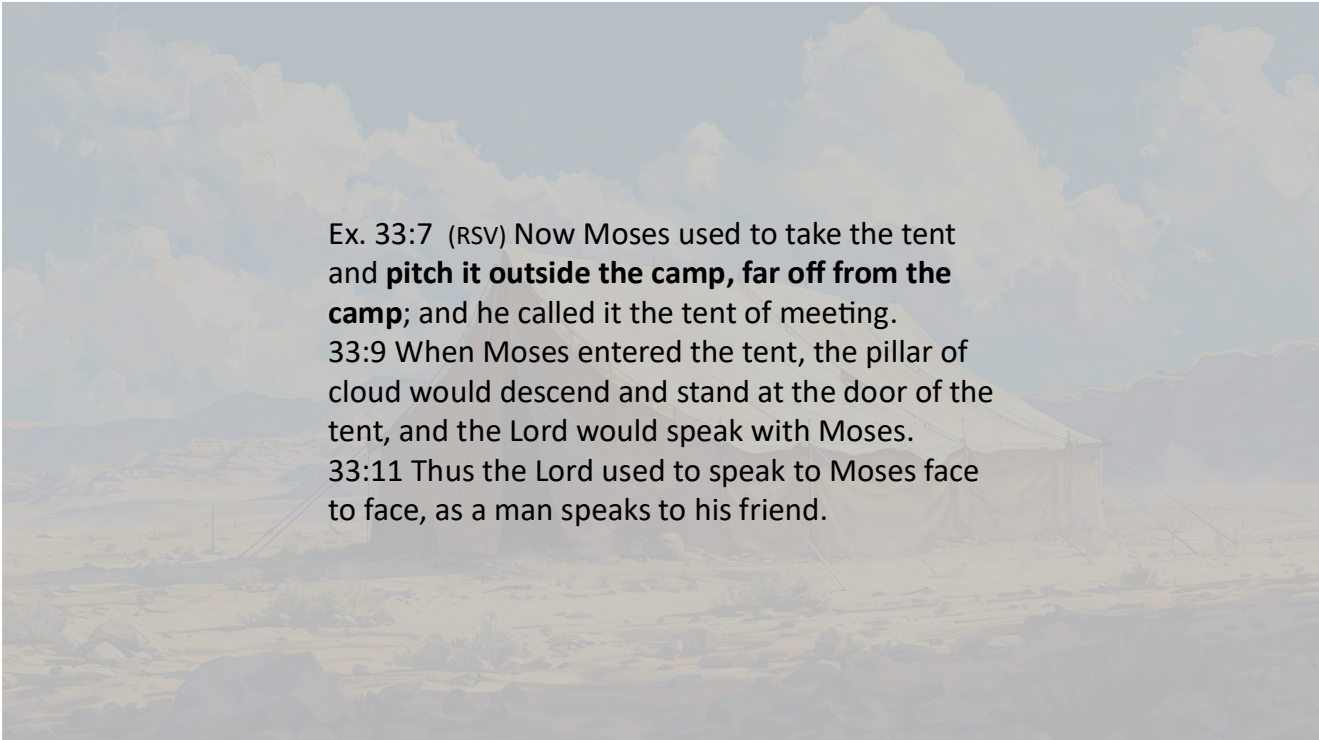
What I specifically noticed was in Ex. 33:4-6 (read slide) Evidently ancient Jewish jewelry, as illustrated in these pictures, was being worn indicating a celebration of the wrong god—maybe they should have been wearing their jewelry as a symbol of celebration on the Sabbath?!!

To some extent the Israelites desire to be left alone was granted, but it came with a cost. God moved out their encampment.

Which brings us to **result number 6**, its importance was a new concept to me, but it was a vital visual experience for the former slaves as they left behind Egyptian slavery and idol worship to establish a new and different type of government.

The covenant God asked Israel to agree to was the institution of a theocratic government established on the principle of love as was God's government of the universe which He had created. All the rules, including the family rules, the health rules, the civic rules, and the worship rules recorded in Ex. Chapters 20-31 were God's attempt to establish a utopian island of reality, a theocracy in the midst of a world of idolatry which was ruled by the usurper Satan and was filled with selfish, covetous, indulgent, corrupt humans just as Israel had experienced in Egypt.

But Israel had publicly rejected God's covenant and one natural consequence was that God, respecting their freedom of choice, moved "out of town." so to speak.



Ex. 33:7 (RSV) Now Moses used to take the tent and **pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp**; and he called it the tent of meeting.
33:9 When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses.
33:11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

Two things to notice in this passage from Sunday's lesson in the Quarterly. First of all, God has just asked Moses to build a Tabernacle or Sanctuary as it came to be known. It would be another 6 months before it would be built! Meanwhile, Moses had been using a tent, evidently pitched within the camp, for his personal devotions and talks with God. We are not told when Moses started doing this,

probably when they first started out. It was there that the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night hovered.

As a result of Israel's sin, Moses, as a visual evidence of the spiritual consequence of worshiping an idol, moved this tent "far off from the camp." God was still there and approachable, just not in the center of the camp or IN their lives. It was a mighty visual representation of the results when we deliberately disregard God's directions for holiness and happiness and by our behavioral choices we ask God to "move out of town!"

He gives us the freedom to do just as we want and to also suffer the natural, built-in consequences. However, as Paul says in Rom. 7 there are times when we do things we really don't want to do, coming from such things as habits, conditioned reflexes, even unrealized destructive thoughts and behaviors. These do not drive God out of our lives. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit He is still in our lives and will continue to work in our minds to change our desires, and our thoughts, in other words change our characters as long as we are cooperative.

I don't know of anyone today who wants to worship a cow. So today, what does Satan try to substitute for God for us to worship? And what are the results?

Have you noticed anything missing from this list?

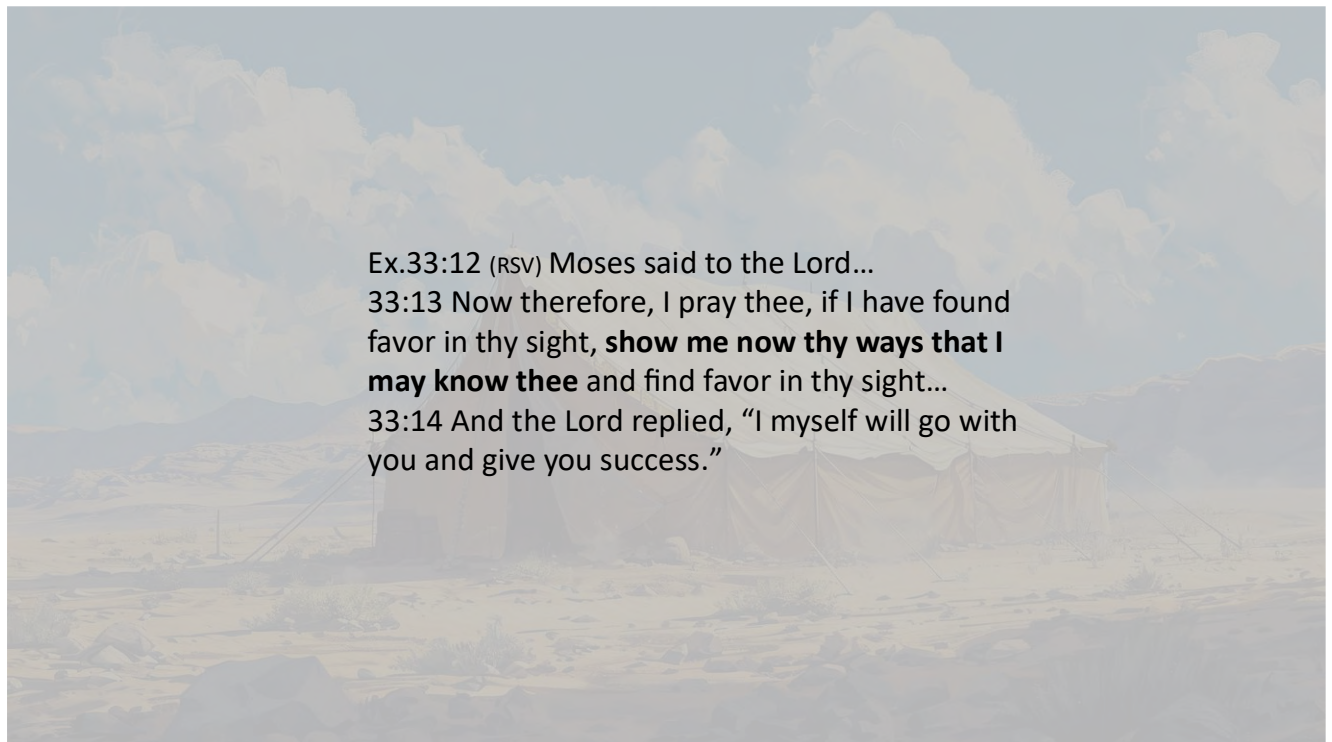
The one thing that I missed from this list is that nothing is recorded here about the results to Aaron for his part in the Golden Calf experience. When Moses was recounting Israel's history just before his death he said in Deut. 9:20, "And the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too." Here in Exodus, Moses seems to be interested in listing the consequences to the nation and doesn't mention Aaron! Ellen White, says in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pg 320, 323 "He [Aaron] was justly dealt with as the chief offender. ... But in answer to the earnest intercession of Moses, his life was spared; and in penitence and humiliation for his great sin, he was restored to the favor of God."

Today the first 6 results listed here in Exodus are often called "punishments," when they are really just a natural result that occurs when disregarding God's directions.

As to the last 3 results (7, 8, 9), they show God's character in marvelous technicolor. Even with such a display of rejection God still loved His creation, desired their redemption, and was determined to provide through them a Messiah for the healing of the nations.

In the re-acceptance of the stubborn, stiff-necked, uneducated, slaves, even though they had damaged themselves spiritually, God overlookd their rebellion and rejection and postponed the deserved consequence of death in the desert, instead He re-establishes the covenant with its promises of land, prosperity, and being the forbearers of the Messiah.

This is God turning an experience designed by Satan to destroy Israel, and to destroy God's plan, but which God turned into a powerful revelation of His love for His creation and His desire to live IN them. I wonder if Paul was thinking of this experience when he wrote Rom. 8:28. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."



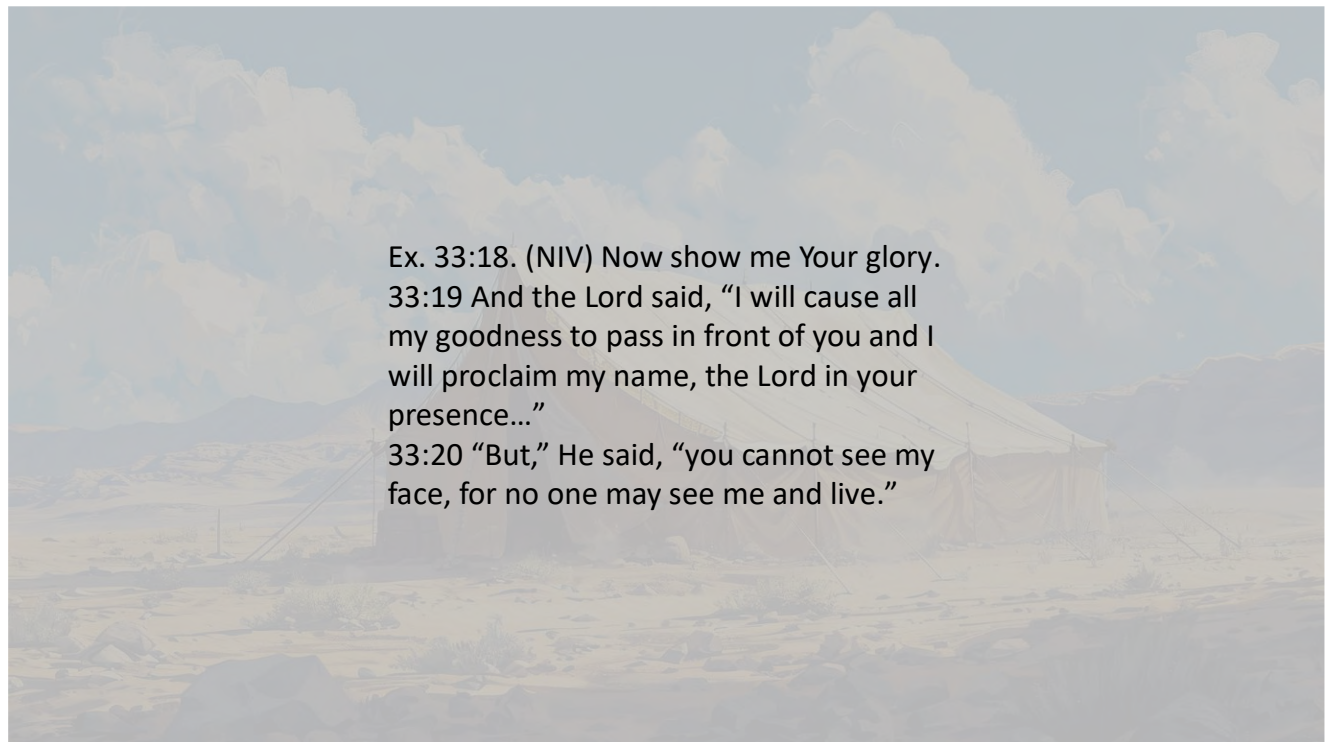
Result number 7 on our list is found in Ex. 33:13 "Show me Thy ways." The Hebrew word for "ways" is figuratively used as a course of life or the motives for actions, or what is it that God really wants.

Moses's desire to "know thee" is more than just an intellectual knowledge—this word "know" is used Biblically to describe the relationship between a husband and wife, an intimate knowledge and understanding and desire to please the other.

In verse 14 God's reply is very Interesting. God reads Moses' heart and answers his heart not his question, "I myself will go with you and give you success." This is just the assurance that Moses wants and needs. God won't abandon him or Israel to die in the desert.

You will notice that I've used the RSV here because it uses the word "success" whereas most translations say that God will give them "rest." God doesn't promise laziness He promises hard work and success in settling in the land, raising families and establishing a flourishing nation, **IF** they trust Him enough to follow His directions.

It is not until God answers Moses' next question that He Describe His own character, that is His name.



Result number 8. Moses re-asks his question, just using different words, "Now show me Your glory." And God finally agrees to answer Moses' question. **But** there are some conditions:

Moses must go up Mt. Sinai again, alone, for the mountain will be off limits to the Israelites and their cattle, and this time he must bring with him two tablets which he has carved out of stone.

And then when he has climbed up the mountain God will hide him in a cleft of the rock with His hand and he will only be able to see God's backside while God proclaims His name, that is to say, He will describe His character. This experience of Moses is a unique experience for only here is God's character, His glory so clearly explained in human language.



Ex. 34:6, 7 (ESV)

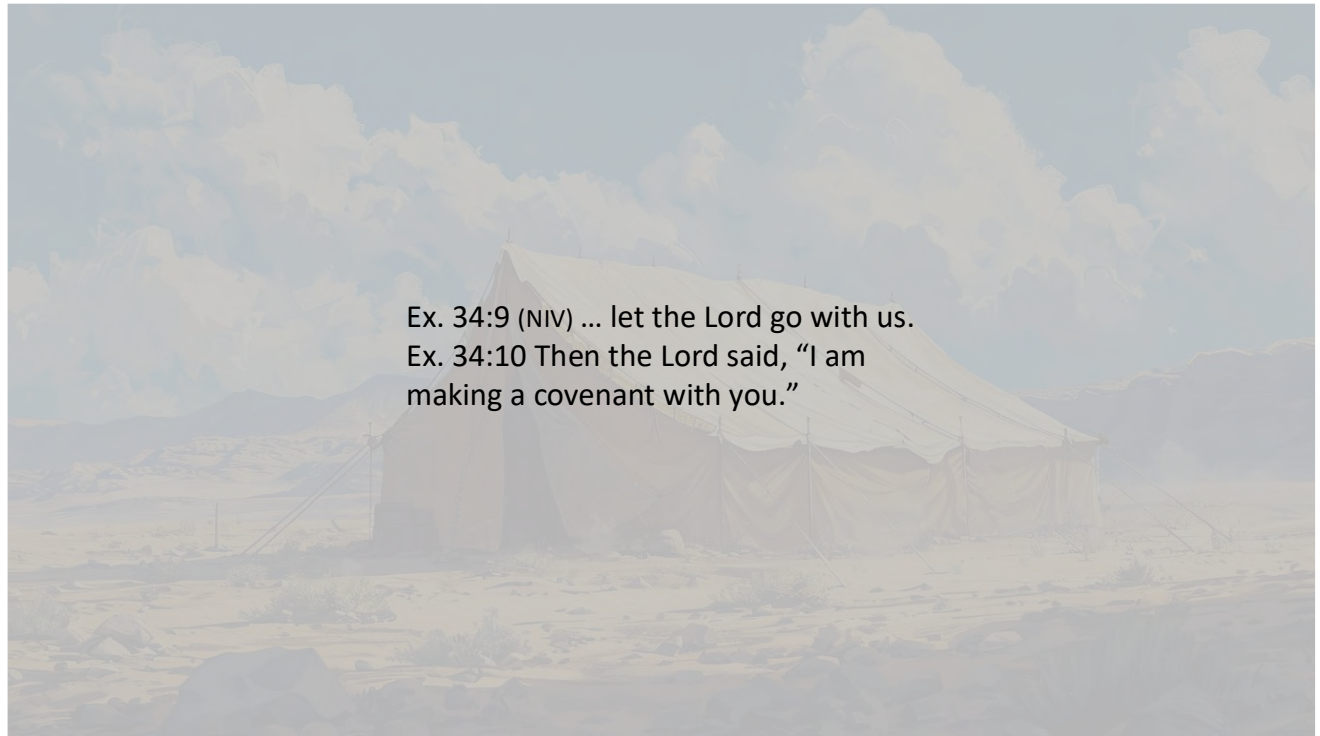
The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord , a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **but** who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children and their children’s children to the third and fourth generation.”

Now remember we are in the O.T. where God is often thought of jealously judging, punitively punishing, and dastardly discriminating. Yet here we find the most complete elucidation and simple, concise description of who God is and why we should trust Him with our lives just as Moses did. And of course, in the N.T. we have the perfect example of Jesus who in His humanity trusted God implicitly just as Adam and Eve could have and should have.

Because in the O.T. names often indicated character just as the name Jacob meant deceiver and it was changed to Israel, so Moses wanted to know God’s “name” His ”character” His “reputation.” The answer wasn’t simple. There is no single word in any human language that encompasses God’s character. So God says you may call me “Lord” but my character is like this and then He enumerates 10 of His qualities. BTW. Notice that missing from this list of God’s characteristics are words like: punisher, vindictive, arbitrary, autocratic, or discriminatory. But then neither are the words creator, truthful or even trustworthy included.

Make no mistake, being loving, faithful and forgiving doesn’t make God a pushover! There is a **“But.”** God does postpone the ultimate destiny of a deserved eternal death, that is non-existence, **but** not until each person has definitely, publically chosen to either rebel or to trust Him. Meanwhile the other natural consequences of sin will affect our lives.

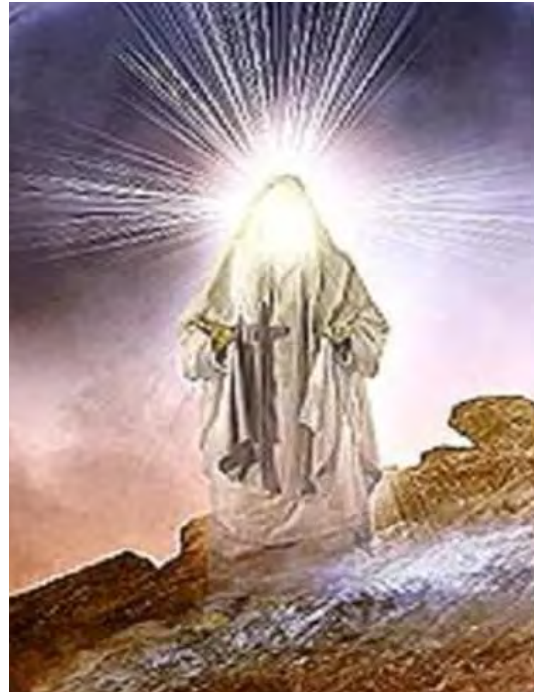
It is an involved answer to a simple question.



This is the ninth and last result of Israel's worship of the Golden Calf. God exhibits His character by re-establishing the broken covenant. This is a huge relief to Moses and the Israelites who were anxiously awaiting God's response.

Can you picture yourself at the foot of the mountain awaiting the outcome of this conversation? Were they going to suffer their just desserts and die in the desert or would God re-establish their covenant? Moses returned with the good news, That God was entirely different than the gods of Egypt and He was anxious to re-establish the covenant. That was the proper time to put on their jewelry and celebrate God's goodness. We just don't know how Israel responded, except for one more recorded incident.

Ex. 34:29-35 (NIV) When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.



Scripture records that when Moses returned his face shown so brightly the Israelites couldn't stand it and asked him to cover his face, which he did. This was incontrovertible evidence that Moses had talked to God and was telling the truth.

Today's lesson teaches us that rebelling against God brings both immediate physical and spiritual consequences. It also affects our eternal future. However, God has delayed the ultimate destiny we deserve — eternal non-existence — and, in His mercy, He offers a way for our minds, that is our characters, to be transformed. Thus, He restores our relationship with Him and gives us eternal life.



2025 3 Q Exodus Lesson 13

The Tabernacle

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read first paragraph,

- The principal task of God's people in the Old Testament (as well as for us today) was to live in close relationship with the Lord; to worship and serve Him; and, also, to present the right picture of God to others (Deut. 4:5–8). *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 104.

This is well said—God's people throughout history are not called to elitism, to cultism, to exclusive salvation. They are not called to secret societies in which there are elite members with secret rites, no. God's people throughout all history are called to surrender their old life of fear and selfishness in trust to Him, be reborn with a new heart and right spirit, live daily in a trust relationship with Him and fulfill His calling, His purpose, His mission for each of us—which is to be lights to the world, to share the truth about God, His kingdom, His design law reality to the world to give others every opportunity to choose to know God and also be saved.

Read second paragraph,

- In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from God because their sin made them afraid of Him. Sinfulness makes humans naturally afraid of God, and this fear twists our view of His character. The good news is that God takes the first step to span this rift and, on His initiative, He repairs the gap and the broken relationship. He calls the sinner back to Himself: “ ‘Where are you?’ ” (Gen. 3:9, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 104.

This paragraph expresses powerful truths—let's unpack them:

- When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not get changed in any way—He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow; nor did God's law get changed; it is an expression of His character and is eternal as it originates in Him and is the protocols built into the operations of reality. To change God's law would be to destroy the universe as God built it.
- When Adam and Eve sinned, they were changed—as the lesson said sin naturally causes fear of God—why? Because what is sin?
 - Transgression of the law—that is old KJV English, but the NKJV and all modern translations translate it as **sin is lawlessness**. This means sin is operating out of harmony with the law, breaking the law, which in this case is the law of love. For the Bible says in Romans 14:23...

- Whatever is not of faith or trust is sin—so sin, functionally is a breakdown of love and trust, to act outside of trust in God, is sin. That is why the righteous or just live by faith, or trust. They are righteous not because every action is behaviorally performed without flaw, nor every belief they hold is perfectly accurate in all factual details, but because they live by faith, by trust, and in that faith or trust are led to grow, mature, develop, improve, remove errors with truth. This is how Job was perfect and how we are to be perfect, in our restored trust and loyalty to our Creator. This is how David, was a man after God's own heart and how God could say to Solomon,
- “As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever...” 1 Kings 9:4–5 NIV84.
- How could God say this about David—because David, while he struggled with sin in his life, he stayed faithful to God, he never gave his heart to other God's, and when his sin was brought before Him, he went to God for God's forgiveness, grace, and healing.
- So how did fear, caused by sin, which is a breakdown of trust, get into Adam and Eve?
- Satan is the Father of lies:
- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust cause fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin—
 - including trying to advance self by taking the fruit, running from God, hiding from God, making one's own covering to make one look righteous, blaming God, teaching more lies like God is the one who was changed, God is angry, God is wrathful, God needs something done to Him to change Him so we can be saved.
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationships, character—terminal condition—this state of being is out of harmony with how God constructed life to operate and without active intervention from God results in death—eternal separation from God and non-existence.

The lesson stated in the second paragraph,

- The good news is that God takes the first step to span this rift and, on His initiative, He repairs the gap and the broken relationship. He calls the sinner back to Himself.

What does this mean?

Yes, God took the initiative to save humanity from sin.

Yes, God calls all humans back to himself.

Yes, God Himself repaired the gap between the species human and Himself.

If you didn't read my blog two weeks ago, which is a response to a publicly posted misinformation paper by Eugene Prewitt that has been circulating for more than a decade, I encourage you to not only read it, but download the pdf and have it in your files to share with any pastor or church leader who brings up the Prewitt paper. But in the opening of that paper, I lay out the landscape of the differences and the following is included there:

The Bible teaches that when Adam sinned, he corrupted his own nature and infected himself with a spirit of fear and selfishness; ever since, every person is born infected with that same corrupting spirit of fear and selfishness (Psalm 51:5; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Jesus became a real human being, descended from Adam through Mary. But the Father to Jesus' humanity is the Holy Spirit. Through the person of Jesus Christ, our humanity was saved when He was tempted in all points like us, including through powerful human emotions that tempted Him to act to save self, but Jesus only and always chose perfect selfless love (Hebrews 2:14; James 1:13–15; Luke 22:39–45; 2 Timothy 1:10). At the cross, Jesus killed, destroyed, purged, the spirit of fear and selfishness and replaced it with His perfect spirit of love and trust. Thus, the human species was saved in and by Jesus. And each of us can partake of that salvation through faith. The book *The Desire of Ages* describes this beautifully:

- Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as **spiritual regeneration**. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a **new heart**. You must receive a **new life** from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, **making all things new**, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission. *The Desire of Ages* p. 171, emphasis mine.

This is what Paul experienced and described when he wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Paul received a new life, the life of Jesus, the spirit of love, and thereby the living law of love became the animating, motivating power in Paul, replacing the spirit of fear and selfishness that he inherited from Adam. As he told Timothy, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). No, the spirit of fear is the life, the spirit, we inherited from Adam, and salvation requires that this spirit be crucified and replaced with the Spirit of Jesus, via the work of the Holy Spirit. This is reality, and this is the good news the early church took to the world.

Thus, in the person of Jesus, God took the initiative to restore the human species into sinless perfection and right relationship with God. And through what Jesus accomplished, every other human being is offered what Jesus described to Nicodemus, what Paul experienced, a new life, to be reborn, through trust in God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—and that is how we are individually restored into a right relationship with God.

But, can God repair a broken relationship with a sinner by Himself? No! God did, through Jesus, restore the species human to right relationship with Himself, and simultaneously provided everything necessary for any individual human to be restored into right relationship with Him, but that restoration **requires** the consent, choice, and cooperation of the individual sinner.

Read the third paragraph,

- Thus, our primary mission is to present the correct character of God and His loving and righteous acts to those around us. When people are attracted to God and are convinced of His unselfish love toward them, they will give their lives to Him and obey what He tells them to do, knowing that it is for their own good. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 104.

This is also well said. Our primary mission is to lift up God, the truth about who God is as revealed in all His revelations to us, first and foremost Jesus, but also through His acts through history, His creation, nature, and the experiences of life. All of which teach God as Creator and His laws as design laws, the protocol upon which reality is built.

This is the mission of God's people today, the message of the 3 angels of Revelation 14—to call people to make a right judgment about God, to stop worshiping Him as an imperial dictator who makes up rules like the king of Babylon and uses external power to punish rule-breaking like Babylon, but worship Him as Creator, the builder of reality, whose laws are design laws that when broken cause pain, suffering, and death and the only path to life is restoration and healing by our Creator God.

The world is rapidly heading to the final events before Christ's return and Satan is going to impersonate Jesus—and when he does he will present as an incredible being of beauty, magnificent, glorious, speaking melodiously, healing diseases, apparently raising the dead—(his fallen angels will impersonate the dead) and these impersonators of the dead will give their testimony that Satan is Jesus.

Satan will quote Scripture, just as he did when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He will talk about love, grace, but also justice. And then, he will describe how God's justice required punishment, the death penalty, but God loved us too much to make us pay that penalty, so He sent Himself, God's Son, to be punished in our place and pay that penalty. He will then plead with compassion to surrender to him, to accept His legal payment for your sins and worship him because he will claim he loves us and doesn't want us to have to be executed for our sins. But he will also state, that law and justice requires that sin be punished and if we won't accept him and the legal payment he made to pay for all our sins, then he will be required to kill us for our sins, after torturing us an appropriate length of time first. And every single person, except the elect of God, will accept him because they will all have accepted the lie that God's law functions like human law and justice is the use of power to punish sin.

Only the elect of God, only those who have come back to worship God as Creator, who have realized God's laws are design laws, the protocols of life, and have in that love and trust been reborn and have the living law of God written upon their hearts and minds will be protected. They are protected by the love and trust operating in them, they recognize the fraud for what it is, because they know you cannot get love and trust by use of might and power, that law and law enforcement through punishment causes distrust, fear, and selfishness, which is sin, and it cannot be eliminated through inflicting external legal punishments, in fact, distrust and rebellion spread.

And sadly, many people who have called themselves Christian, will come to Christ when the true Jesus returns and claim that they were His followers, performing miracles, casting out demons, and doing ministry, but He will sadly tell them to go away because He never knew them.

Understand what that means—Jesus isn't say He doesn't know who they are, He knows the hairs on every single head. He is saying He doesn't know them in the relationship, in connection, in love and trust, not cognitive awareness.

Life eternal is that we might know God and Jesus Christ John 17:3—this isn't knowing about God it is knowing Him personally, in love and trust.

If you studied the life of Abraham Lincoln and got a Ph.D. in Lincolnology, does that mean you know Abraham Lincoln?

This is what Jesus is saying—you may have degrees in theology, you may have spent your lives reading the Bible and studying about God, but that is not the same as knowing God. These people have accepted lies about God, most specifically, they would be like the Pharisees, highly religious Bible believing people who zealously seek to live out the blueprint—but all from a spirit of fear and selfishness based upon the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, with imposed punishments. They have never been reborn with a new heart and right spirit, why? Because they prefer the other god, they prefer the law making, rule-enforcing, power over, punishing god who functions like their unconverted hearts.

SUNDAY

If you haven't seen this video, I recommend it: Why Charlie Kirk kept the Sabbath:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RXIZMzw1lc>

The lesson focuses on the Sabbath—how is the Sabbath involved in the war between Christ and Satan?

I just described a future scenario where Satan impersonates Christ—many Adventists believe that they will be protected because they know the true Bible Sabbath is Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, and they believe that Satan will exalt Sunday and deny the sacredness of the Sabbath. They argue that nowhere in Scripture is there an authorization for the change in the Sabbath—which is true. Thus, they declare, man cannot change God's law, only God can change God's law, therefore, they believe they will be able to tell Satan's counterfeit based on his promotion of Sunday and denial of the Bible Sabbath.

Problems with this approach:

1. It still presents God's law as imposed law, a rule that God made up, and requires infliction of punishment for breaking. So, even when they have the right day of the week, they are still worshipping the wrong god. Satan doesn't care if you worship on the seventh-day Sabbath as long as you are worshipping him.

Did the Jews who crucified Christ have the wrong Sabbath? In fact, why did they want Jesus off the cross by sunset? To keep the Sabbath—but which god were they actually worshiping? If you are not sure, Jesus told them in John 8, when they claimed to be children of and worshipers of Yahweh—that in reality they were of their father the devil.

So merely identifying which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath and worshiping on that day is not enough to prevent one from following Satan.

If one teaches that the seventh-day Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience, a day set apart merely by declaration, by rule, then you have the right day, but you are still worshiping a creature, not the Creator. Why? Because the Creator builds reality and His laws are design protocols that life is built upon, creatures cannot create reality, we make up rules that require enforcement through inflicted punishments.

Those who oppose our ministry take the view that God's laws are imposed and God's government functions like human governments, where justice is the infliction of proper punishments. They have many right doctrines, like the Pharisees in Christ's day did, but they have the wrong understanding of law, believing it functions like human law, and thus they worship the wrong god.

And via the law of worship, by beholding we are changed, 2 Cor 3:18, they become like Satan in character and can kill the Creator while claiming to be Sabbath observers.

2. Second problem with the legal approach to understanding Sabbath is that they are vulnerable to Satan deceiving them in one of two ways:

- One—when he impersonates Christ saying something like, “Christians, thank you for seeking to evangelize the world with my gospel of truth and love. I know you have all been sincere and seeking to do your best. But sadly, through the ages, my true Bible Sabbath was lost sight of and replaced by a Roman sun holiday that celebrates the pagan gods. I know you were innocent in this and I see the secret intents of your hearts, so there is no sin in what you did. But now, that I have returned, I am declaring the truth, my Sabbath, the day over which I am Lord, the day I set apart in Eden when I rested, is the seventh-day of the week, made holy by me in Eden and that day has never changed. All who want to receive my salvation, my grace, my forgiveness for their sins, it is time to be lovers of truth, to leave behind human traditions and return to worshiping me in spirit and in truth and that means worshiping me on my Sabbath day. And Seventh-day Adventists, thank you for following the Bible and giving witness to my holy day. Well done my faithful servants. But, if anyone refuses to worship me on my holy day, if you won't accept the free salvation I offer through my shed blood to paid your sin debt. Then, sadly, I will be required by law and justice to execute you. Please, don't make me do that. I love you, have died for you, and only want to save you.”
- Two—the deceiver says something like this, “Christians, thank you for seeking to evangelize the world with my gospel of truth and love. Sadly, I have observed that within my church there has often been disagreement and argument. I inspired my prophets to with the Bible to give you guidance and settle matters of confusion. But Satan, my enemy, has come into the flock

and sown seeds of confusion and the church suffered long in the Dark Ages with many pagan traditions that infected the flock. I inspired the Reformers to call people back to my heavenly truths. And many people have embraced and followed the truth, returning to the Scriptures. But one of the areas that has remained confused is my weekly Sabbath. I want to particularly thank the Seventh-day Adventists because they have conscientiously sought to restore the holiness and sacredness of my name through rightly pointing out that nowhere in Scripture is there a record of my having changed the holiness of Sabbath to Sunday. Many Christians, throughout history, understood that upon my resurrection, my victory over sin and death, that I did mark Sunday as the memorial of my victory and changed worship to that day, but you Adventists, have rightly noted that nowhere in Scripture is that changed authorized or declared. Well done! You are correct—and now that I am here in person, I am declaring a change in the day to Sunday, a day throughout all eternity future will be my weekly Sabbath, the day in which we will celebrate my victory over sin and death and your salvation.”

For those Adventists who believe God’s law functions like human law, and is subject to change, they will be extremely vulnerable to either of these deceptions or another similar, even more subtly and powerfully done.

But for those who value design law—they know this cannot be done, and the attempt to do so is evidence that it is Satan, not Jesus.

Why can this not be done? And it goes exactly to the question of how one understands God’s law—design laws or imposed rules. Imposed rules can be changed, design laws cannot be changed, even by God, without destroying His current creation.

Yes, God certainly has the ability to change various laws within nature—laws of physics for instance, but understand reality, if He does that, the universe as we know it destroyed and replaced with something else.

- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” Matthew 5:17-18 NIV84.

My paraphrase:

- "And don't think that I have come to destroy what the Old Testament — Torah and Prophets — taught about God and his methods; I have not come to destroy but to fulfill them.¹⁸ Here is the simple truth: Heaven and earth would disappear if even the slightest change were made to God's design protocol for life — what you call his Law. I am not here to destroy the Law, but to accomplish everything it requires.” Matthew 5:18-19 REM

When we return to design law we understand why the Sabbath is eternal and what makes it holy, why any attempt by Satan to change the day is evidence of his impersonation of Christ and the elect will recognize it.

But we only recognize this if we understand the Sabbath through design law, if we have the right day, but understand it through imposed law, we are not protected, in fact we are still worshiping the false view of god.

So what makes the Sabbath holy?

In November 2024, had a lively discussion with a local pastor in Australia regarding God's law and particularly, what makes the Sabbath holy.

What our different views boiled down to was the pastor took the position that the Sabbath is holy because God **declared** it to be holy. It was made holy by God's **executive action** as Sovereign of the Universe at the end of creation week to set it apart by His **declared** word.

What I understand the pastor to be saying is that the Sabbath is holy not because of some inherent aspect of its creation, not something built into the Sabbath by God's actions that objectively sets it apart, but because God used His Sovereign right as Creator and Ruler to make an edict, a ruling, a proclamation, a declared statement.

This is the type of law and authority, methods, mode, used by created beings, the artificial use of position, of office, of power, to set something apart arbitrarily because the ruler said so, not because **it is so**.

For instance, Caesar declaring that purple is a color reserved only for the royal family is an arbitrary rule made up by the one in office, not by something inherent in the color. It is a made-up rule that is declared by the ruling authority and then enforced by external judicial process. This is the law of creatures, imposed rules with externally imposed penalties.

Satan deceives people into worshiping him by getting them to take Bible truths and set them in his law, his methods, his mode of function and thus his character.

- By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2, 3 NIV84.

The pastor's interpretation of this passage is that God's actions are the actions of a ruler imposing a difference by His word or authority.

But notice what the text actually says. In this Bible text, we do not have a *declaration* from God, we have a description of history, of actions, of reality. God rested on this day where He worked on the other days.

God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath by action, conduct, and creation—by reality. The Sabbath was made, created, built into time by the God who controls space and time, whose laws are the basis of the operations of all reality. And the Sabbath was made in the context of a war against God’s rulership. The Sabbath was set apart from the other six days **not** when God used power but when He **stopped** using power, when He **rested**, when He **refused** to enforce law by the use of power and, instead, left all His creatures free to think and decide for themselves!

The Sabbath was created at the end of the creation week of this planet and is invested, made, created, and built by God with the revelation of truth, love, and freedom—when God refused to use external power to punish Lucifer, to force Satan to comply, **when God refused to operate in the way of a creature**. Thus, the Sabbath is holy, made and created as a sign, evidence, revelation, and demonstration of God’s character of love and design-law methods. It exists because God exists and because God is love—and love exists only in freedom.

God declared the reality of the sacredness, holiness, and blessedness of the Sabbath day, for in six days God created but on the seventh day **He rested!** The Sabbath day is special, distinct, set apart **but not by God’s declaration**; it is so by God’s **action** in its creation—for it reveals the glory and holiness of God. **The Sabbath is not holy because God declares it holy; no, He declares it holy because it is holy!**

But, for those still struggling with the declarations of God making it so, rather than revealing what is so, consider the following evidence in the very narrative of creation, when God made an actual declaration:

- The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18 NIV84.

Was it good for man to be alone *until* the Lord said this? Was it only when the Lord said it was not good that it became not good? Or did the Lord say it because there was something missing and He had not quite completed His creative work yet—and it was, in reality, not good to leave it uncompleted? Did God’s declaration make it so, or was it already so, and thus God, who always speaks truth, declared it to be so?

Those who operate upon the human-law model automatically think that God’s verbal statements are the legal edicts that make it so. Whereas those who see God’s law as design law understand His statements are announcements of truth, of the way things actually are.

At the Second Coming, when Jesus separates the “sheep” from the “goats,” His action, His judgment, His proclamation, does NOT make some into sheep and some into goats; His separating them is based on reality, on who they have chosen to become. (Matthew 25:31–33).

God will one day declare:

- He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. Revelation 22:11 NKJV.

This declaration does not cause some to be unjust and filthy and others to be righteous and holy, it is the voice of truth describing what already is.

Thus the Sabbath is a blessing to humanity to call us to recognize God as Creator, and this means design law, the laws built into the operations of reality, and specifically truth presenting in love while leaving us free all embodied in the Sabbath. God will not use power to inflict eternal punishment upon sinners. He will cease using power that He has been using to hold the destructiveness of sin at bay and all who insist on sin will experience what their choice causes, separation from the source of life, and eternal death.

The lesson states there are five crucial points we are to glean from the Bible Sabbath:

1. God as Creator
2. The Messiah will come
3. God will establish His kingdom and the Sabbath is a foretaste
4. Salvation comes from the Lord

And

- 5. God is the ultimate Judge of all people. Those who persistently defy and deny Him will have no future, but He freely gives eternal life to those who follow Him. *Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2025, Exodus*, p. 105.

How do we understand God as judge? Doesn't it all depend on how we understand God's law?

If we understand God's law as imposed, then we understand God acts as judge who determines guilt and innocence, legal pardon, what are just punishments to inflict etc. Thus any Christian model that has a god who functions like a human judge, making legal rulings whose judgments cause or determine the outcome, which require the use of external power to enforce justice through punishment, this is evidence of Satan's infection, the imposed law lie.

If we worship God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws, we realize God's judgments are always reality based, not legal. They are:

- The diagnostic judgments of what is true, what is wrong
- The therapeutic judgments of what is necessary to heal, save, and restore—these therapeutic judgments are manifested in God's actions throughout human history for the fulfillment of the plan of salvation, and individually in our own lives.
 - The Flood was God's therapeutic judgment to keep open the avenue for the Messiah

- God's action with Saul on the Road to Damascus was God's therapeutic judgment in his life to bring him to repentance
- Jesus' work in the heavenly sanctuary is of this nature:
 - First make an accurate judgment of who have trusted Him and opened their heart to Him so that He can work in them to cleanse them from sin; and who are like the Pharisees, made a public claim to be loyal to God, but in truth have closed their hearts to Him and refuse to let Him work in them to restore them to righteousness in accord with His will and good pleasure.
 - Second, in those who have opened their hearts in trust to Him, He works in them, as David prayed, search me and see the wicked way in me, create in me a clean heart and right spirit. All those who have been restored to genuine living faith, trust, in Jesus, He enters into their heart and mind and cleanses them from all fear, selfishness, sin, rebellion, corruption, bad habits, so that in the resurrection, people like Martin Luther who died trusting Jesus, but not yet in this life experiencing victory over his hatred of the Jews and alcohol addiction, or the thief on the cross who had no time to mature, will not arise with hearts that hate, addictions still to be overcome, or desires to steal—they will arise perfected, cleansed, for Christ will have removed from their hearts, minds, characters, motives, every element of residual sinfulness that were still in operation when they fell asleep in Him. This is a therapeutic judgment, like a cancer doctor identifying cancer cells and eradicating them.
- The reality-based judgments of when someone has destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and no further time, evidence, love, mercy, grace, truth, will have any ability to save because they are beyond responding to it—let he who is filthy be filthy still.

MONDAY-THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the Sanctuary. First thing to recognize is that the entire OT Sanctuary is theater, it is object lesson, it is symbolic, it is acted out lessons to teach reality. But there is not one element in that Old System that brought salvation, they were all symbols pointing to Jesus, the reality, who brings salvation.

And while it is intricate in incredible detail, that we have unpacked many times, in fact if you haven't watched our seminary [The Sanctuary and Feast Days](#)—and would like to move past symbols to reality, I encourage you to watch it.

So, while incredible details represented through all the elements, what is the overall message or theme of the OT sanctuary?

Humans are alienated from God by our sin and God has chosen to come down and veil His glory in order to tabernacle, or dwell with, humanity for the purpose of bringing humanity who is alienated from God, back into unity with God.

God's glory in OT was veiled by the tabernacle/temple building on the day Solomon's temple was dedicated; God's glory in the NT was veiled by the temple of Jesus' human body.

The system of sacrifices and feasts taught, through symbols, God's plan to both save the species from sin, and to save individual sinners from sin, and how the righteous participate in God's plan of salvation.

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.
- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):** The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from AD 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!

- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

We are living in the time of the Day of Atonement. The time in which Christ bring His people into at-one-ment with Him. It is the time, when the cleansing of the sanctuary occurs, which is the same as Christ cleansing His bride, the church. It is the time when the people of God are eternally united with Him their Groom and Savior. This, this same time is depicted as a wedding. The wedding of Christ and His church.

- Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**’” Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84, emphasis mine.

There is a wedding, and then there is the wedding supper. The wedding itself is the uniting in loving commitment of heart, mind, and soul of the two spouses. The wedding celebration follows that joining. The wedding is not a “legal” event but a holy covenant of love and trust—of placing our committed and unshakable faith in the other.

Some might be uncomfortable with the idea that the wedding of Christ to His church takes place before the second coming. But consider:

- When do the saints experience their hearts being bonded into unshakable loyal love to Jesus—before or at the second coming?
- When do the saints experience the cleansing of their hearts and minds from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame so that they can stand firm in every trial—before or at the second coming?

Just as wives traditionally take the name of their husbands, we take the new name that Christ gives us:

- I will make those who are victorious pillars in the temple of my God, and they will never leave it. **I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem,** which will come down out of heaven from my God. **I will also write on them my new name.** Revelation 3:12 GNT, emphasis mine.

It is at the wedding that the saints of God are sealed and have God’s name written upon their hearts and minds such that they are settled in their loving devotion to Him; they are faithful to their Groom and will not betray Him. They will not give their love, affection, or selves to another suitor or betray their Groom for the pleasures of this world or even to protect their temporal lives (James 4:4). They are like Job, who, though faced with terrible trials and tribulations, could not be shaken out of his

loyalty and devotion to God and, thus, was described by God as “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” and was commended by God for saying what is right about God (Job 1:8; 42:7 NIV84).

This new name that God writes upon the saints at the wedding is also described as the New Jerusalem; which the lesson references on THURSDAY:

- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the **Holy City, the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband**. ... One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb**.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and **showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God. Revelation 21:1, 2, 9, 10 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Because a marriage is the joining of two intelligent beings in the bonds of love and trust, Revelation could not be describing Jesus being married to inanimate material. The highly symbolic book is not suggesting that Jesus weds a lifeless city; rather, it uses the imagery of a city to depict a people from every corner of the earth who have characters that shine like pure gold, living in glorified immortal bodies, bonded in intimate union with Jesus.

By using the imagery of the New Jerusalem to depict the bride, the Bible gives us another important clue to help us unravel this mystery of Christ cleansing His people and the two becoming one.

The New Jerusalem, which is called the bride, is described structurally as being in the shape of a cube (Revelation 21:16). This is the exact shape of the most holy place in the sanctuary (1 Kings 6:20). And as we compare the New Jerusalem to the most holy place, we discover multiple God-inspired parallels:

- The most holy place was covered in gold; the heavenly city is paved in gold. In Scripture, gold is symbolic of the purity of Christ, the righteousness and holiness of God’s character of love.
- The most holy place was lighted by God’s Shekinah presence; the city is lighted by God’s eternal presence (Revelation 21:21, 22).
- In the most holy place was the covenant box, the place where the covenant was accomplished—the covenant of cleansing, uniting, bonding; in the city are the saints, the living temples in whose hearts the new covenant (marriage covenant) is accomplished.
 - The manna was the first element placed in the covenant box and represents the saints first partaking of the “bread of heaven” (John 6:32–35), Jesus the living Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14; 6:53–58); the truth as it is in Jesus wins them to trust (betrothal/conversion).
 - The law was the second item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints, once betrothed (converted) to Christ, opening their hearts to Him; He writes His living

law of love into their hearts and minds (wedding/new covenant/cleansing) and renews them in righteousness.

- Aaron's rod that budded was the last item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints who were dead in trespass and sin but, having accepted the proposal (converted) and experienced the union (wedding/cleansing), come alive and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness. This symbolically represents both the reborn life bringing forth Christian fruits and also the glorification of those wedded to Christ living eternally fruitful lives in loving union with the Lord.
- The most holy place is where the high priest conducted a special ceremony: the ceremony of atonement; the ceremony of cleansing; the ceremony of washing away sin and purifying the people (bride); the ceremony of bringing the people into "**at-one-ment**" with God, of two becoming one. In other words, it was a wedding ceremony! And this ceremony happened at the end of the annual cycle of feasts, right before the Feast of Tabernacles; i.e., tabernacling or cohabitating with God.

Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment of the Bridegroom and His bride that precedes the second coming. We are living in that time right now!

Just as Paul described in Ephesians chapter five, Jesus cleanses His bride in order to bring His people into at-one-ment with Him. This is the marriage of the Lamb, when Jesus cleanses her from all defilement and clothes her in the white robes of His righteousness—the two become one. This cleansing work is the function of our heavenly High Priest and was acted out symbolically during the Day of Atonement ceremony. When Jesus finishes cleansing His people (bride) from sin, we are then able to stand in His presence without any further "mediating" work by Jesus, because He has restored us to oneness with Himself and the Father.

This cleansing of His temple (people) prior to His second coming is also described by Malachi:

- See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant**, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Malachi 3:1–3 NIV84.

The cleansing of the bride and the cleansing of the sanctuary describe the same event. Jesus is now in heaven working to completely heal the hearts and minds of those who have exercised faith in Him (accepted His proposal) so that when He returns, we are able to stand in His presence and see Him face to face (1 John 3:2). We who are alive on the earth cooperate with Him for the healing and cleansing of our minds, hearts, and characters to make ourselves ready for His return:

- Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and **give him glory!** For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84.

Of course, some might be wondering about the millions of faithful people who have died throughout history prior to this time of atonement. What about them? Are they not already cleansed? Are they not already wedded to Jesus? Some Christian traditions, teaching that the dead are with Jesus the very moment of their death, might ask: Wouldn’t the righteous dead have experienced this cleansing, uniting, at-one-ment with Jesus at the time of their death, when they were taken to heaven? Is there really any need for this end-time cleansing prior to the second coming?

This is where the Bible reveals another beautiful truth. The church—the people of God, the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the most holy place where God dwells—is also described as Mount Zion, and this is the place where the “names” of the righteous are written:

But you have come to **Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.** You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose **names are written in heaven.** Hebrews 12:22, 23 NIV84, emphasis mine.

In the Bible, names represent character, our individuality, our unique personhood. When Jacob, whose name means “deceiver,” was fully converted and, in his union with God, experienced victory over his fear and selfishness, his name was changed to Israel, “one who with God overcomes.” Jacob became a “new man” and, thus, received a new name that was representative of his new transformed heart.

So, during this special time, Jesus is making diagnostic and therapeutic judgments to cleanse His people and purify them so that when He returns we will be able to stand in His unveiled glory, for we shall be like Him.

This is reality—healing and restoring sinners to righteousness. And this reality is obstructed by the imposed law legal framework which teaches a legal judicial process is happening in record books rather than in hearts and minds. God waits, delays, for His people to reject the Roman law infection and return to worshipping Him as Creator, opening their hearts to Him, and cooperating with Him for their cleansing from sin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet
Mission, Health and Women Director
West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division
Email: patrycja.stupp@adwent.pl

October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy
Campus Ministries Coordinator
Newbold College
Email: dpuskas@newbold.ac.uk

PODCAST—Designed4More: Please share our new podcast with others. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net

South Africa: Jacques van den Heever is Director and has many of our resources in print and available in English and Afrikaans. You can contact Jacques at: comeandreason.sa@gmail.com (Additionally, Afrikaans material is available for download on our website under the languages tab).

Materials in Australia: Simon and Maani Harrison Direct Come and Reason in Australia and New Zealand and have a Facebook group in Australia and Come and Reason resources available there: You can email Simon at australia@comeandreason.com



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 1

Recipe for Success

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Joshua 1:7 NIV84

What does this text mean to you? What is God saying to Joshua?

In the context of listening to God and obeying, what did Jesus mean when He said to His disciples:

- But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. John 16:7 NIV84

Why was it good for the disciples for Jesus to leave them and how is it related to obedience?

What happens to their development if Jesus stays? Is there a form of obedience that looks good, in which the person behaves appropriately, does the proper actions, but is actually contrary to what God wants?

Is there a type of obedience that interferes with God's design and His intentions for us?

Consider this commentary:

- A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. The service is looked upon by such a one in the light of drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance.... Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. *That I May Know Him* 120.

But is there another type of obedience that also interferes with God's desire for us, an obedience done with a good heart wanting to obey? What about a person who desires to obey but looks to whomever is in authority to tell them what to do, to direct them? Is that the obedience God wants from us? Does God want more than the obedience of a well trained dog?

Would God be happy with adult worshipers who start each day with, "Father, I give my life to you and want to be obedient. I don't want to let you down. I don't want to deviate from your will, so you tell me Father, should I wear a blue or green shirt today? And should I wear my new shoes or my old

ones? And it might rain today, should I wear a poncho or carry an umbrella? And should I take the southern or northern bypass today on my way into work? For breakfast, should I have oatmeal with raisins or granola with berries?..."

Is this the kind of obedience that God wants?

What about the obedience that stems from fear of punishment? What is wrong with that?

Have you ever seen children, when the teacher is in the classroom or the parent is in the home, well behaved, but as soon as the adult leaves, chaos. Is this what God wants?

Does this give insight as to why Jesus said it was good for Him to leave His disciples? Would they grow and mature as quickly if He was always there telling them every answer? Wouldn't the Spirit of truth and love that brings truth and conviction allow them to think, study, reason, and grow more quickly as they come to understand the difference between right and wrong and choose the right because it is right, not simply because Jesus told them what to do?

Does this have any application for us?

I came across this quotation from the book *Fundamentals of Christian Education* this week, what do you think in regard to obedience and is it describing principles at play that give insight into why it was good for Christ to leave His disciples—and as we think about this, does it give insight into what God wants from Joshua, the Israelites, and us today?

- The training of children must be conducted on a **different principle** from that which governs the training of irrational animals. The brute has only to be accustomed to submit to its master; but the **child must be taught to control himself**. The **will** must be trained to **obey the dictates of reason and conscience**. A **child may be so disciplined as to have, like the beast, no will of its own, his individuality being lost in that of his teacher. Such training is unwise, and its effect disastrous**. Children thus educated will be deficient in firmness and decision. They are not taught to act from principle; **the reasoning powers are not strengthened by exercise**. So far as possible, every child should be trained to self-reliance. By calling into exercise the various faculties, he will learn where he is strongest, and in what he is deficient. A wise instructor will give special attention to the development of the weaker traits, that the child may form a well-balanced, harmonious character. *Fundamentals of Christian Education* 57.2

In some schools and families, children **appear to be well-trained**, while under the immediate discipline, but when the system which has held them to set rules is broken up, they seem to be **incapable of thinking, acting, or deciding for themselves**. Had they been taught to **exercise their own judgment** as fast and as far as practicable, the evil would have been obviated. But they have so long been **controlled** by parents or teachers as to wholly rely upon them. He who seeks to have the **individuality of his scholars merged in his own**, so that reason, judgment, and conscience shall be subject to his control, assumes an unwarranted and fearful responsibility. Those who train their pupils to feel that the **power lies in themselves** to become men and women of honor and usefulness, will be the most permanently successful.

Their work may not appear to the best advantage to careless observers, and their labor may not be valued so highly as that of the instructor who holds absolute control, but the after-life of the pupils will show the results of the better plan of education... *Fundamentals of Christian Education* 57.3

What do you hear? Do you hear design laws being described?

- Law of exertion
- Law of truth
- Law of love
- Law of liberty
- Law of sowing and reaping

These are the design laws of God the author is advocating to be used in teaching others, and contrasts them with the unwise approach of external rules and rule enforcement to get behavioral compliance. That is the approach of imposed law.

This is exactly the difference in what Come and Reason teaches and promotes, the truth of God's kingdom of love built upon design laws—and we are opposed by the imperialists, those who seek to use authority of office, of decree, of rule, of law to control the hearts, minds, and behavior of others.

What kind of obedience do you think God wants? What kind of obedience do you think God wants from Joshua and the Israelites?

SUNDAY

The lesson title for the day is *A new Moses* referring to Joshua. Both Joshua and Moses were types of Jesus—how were they types of Jesus?

- In the context of the sanctuary, Moses represented Jesus in His preincarnate form when Moses was on the mountain and was given instructions for the sanctuary. This represents Jesus planning with God in heaven, before humankind sinned, the plan of salvation. And Moses leaves the mountain and goes to the people and builds the sanctuary. Jesus left heaven and came to Earth to build His sanctuary.
 - “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the **Branch**, and he will **branch out from his place and build the temple** of the LORD. It is **he who will build the temple** of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and **rule on his throne**. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’” Zechariah 6:12–13 NIV84.

If the temple where Jesus ministers is in heaven, why did God say that Jesus would leave heaven, come to Earth to build his temple?

- Come to the Lord, the living stone rejected by people as worthless but chosen by God as valuable. Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5 GNT.

Jesus left heaven to build His temple and He is the cornerstone, and it is built upon the apostles, and each of us are to be living stones fit together as a temple for the Lord.

We also believe Jesus returned to heaven and cleanses His temple before He returns, do you think this cleansing work has anything to do with cleansing people from sin? In other words, the cleansing of the temple and the cleansing of the bride the Bible describes are the same event. If you haven't read our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride](#) I encourage you to do so, or watch the recent [video interview I did on the Sanctuary](#). In the context of the sanctuary, Moses represents Jesus in His phase in planning in heaven the plan of salvation with His Father—Aaron represents Jesus in His high priestly role, the Lamb represents Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Moses also is a type of Jesus in other ways:

- Moses entered into Pharaoh's domain and confronted Pharaoh and overcame his power and delivered the captives and took them to freedom. Jesus came into Satan's domain, this sinful world, and overcame Satan's power to set the captives of sin free.
- Moses went into God's presence and talked to God face to face; Jesus goes into His Father's presence and talks to Him face to face.
- Moses was willing to give his life to save the people; and Jesus gave His life to save humanity from sin.
- Moses was jealous for God's reputation; and Jesus was jealous for the Father's reputation and revealed the character of the Father perfectly.

Joshua is also a type of Jesus:

- Joshua is the name that Jesus had as a human being, and it means Yahweh is salvation. Jesus is literally our salvation.
- Joshua was a servant to Moses before he became leader; and Jesus became a servant, serving God's purpose in the plan of salvation before He became Savior—in other words, it was by His being a servant of God and fulfilling His mission that He became our Savior—as Jesus prayed, “not my will be done by thy will be done.” I think many people don't fully appreciate that Jesus was fulfilling the Father's will, serving the Father, as He completed the plan of salvation and died as our substitutionary Savior.
- Joshua was commander and leader of the people—and Jesus is our Commander and Leader.
- Joshua leads the people into the promised land and Jesus leads His saved into the heavenly promised land.

Read the third paragraph,

- Though dead, Moses still dominates the first chapter. His name is mentioned ten times, Joshua's only four. Moses is called "the servant of the Lord" while Joshua is referred to as "Moses' assistant" (Josh. 1:1, NKJV). It will take a lifetime of faithful service and obedience for Joshua to receive the title "servant of the Lord" (Josh. 24:29, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 7.

There is no question that the Bible calls Moses the servant of the Lord—and Jesus in the parable of the talents, commends the two faithful with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" Matthew 25:21,23.

And in Revelation chapter 7, the angel from heaven comes to the angels at the four corners of the Earth who are holding back the four winds of strife and tells them to hold until the "servants of God are sealed in their forehead."

What do you think about this terminology of being a servant of God?

Do you remember Graham Maxwell's book, *Servants or Friends*? Taken from John 15:15, where Jesus says to His disciples,

- I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. John 15:15 NIV84.

Is there a difference between being God's servant and being His friend? What is the difference?

The servant, as Jesus is using the term in John 15:15, is the one who doesn't understand the master's business yet who does what the master says—and he obeys merely to not get in trouble. He is the one who doesn't understand the master, and he doesn't even care to. He just wants to be obedient, follow the dos and don'ts, and avoid getting into legal trouble. This is the obedience of a well trained dog, or a self-centered person who is focused on their performance, on their rewards, or avoiding punishment. It is the legal mindset of obedience rule-keeping, fear of doing things wrong and looting for the rules or person in authority to tell you what is right. It is the imposed-law mindset.

Whereas the friend is the one who enters into understanding cooperation with the master. The friend also obeys, but he does so from a sense of agreement, loyalty, devotion, love, and trust for and in the master. The friend seeks, as far as possible to understand what the master actually wants, why the master wants it, and will even offer suggestions and enthusiastically seek to bring their creativity and skill to the task. This is design law—understanding how and why things work the way they do and intelligently cooperating because we agree and prefer the methods and ways of the master.

But what struck me recently is that the typical way we think of a servant, the one who does what the master says or what the rules say to avoid getting into trouble or to earn rewards, is the way of the

world, how fallen humanity thinks, the way of the imposed law, rule over by power methods of the kingdoms of this world—and it does NOT represent God’s true servants. People who, like Moses, are called both God’s servant but also God’s friend.

And I had this thought, do you agree? A person cannot be a true and faithful servant of God, one cannot complete the mission for our heavenly master or fulfill His calling, unless they are actually His friend!

In other words, all of God’s trustworthy servants are trustworthy only because they have actually become His friends.

These people actually know God (John 17:3) and, therefore, know His character, design-law methods, and principles and have been won into loyal friendship with Him and, thus, can say of Him what is right (Job 42:7). This is only possible when they have rejected the imposed-law lies and embraced the truth of God’s design laws such that they have stopped worshiping a creature and returned to worshiping the Creator.

And this brings us back to the Revelation 7 passage about God holding back the winds of strife until His servants are sealed in their forehead. In Scripture, God’s true servants are also called His prophets:

- Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets Amos 3:7 NIV84; (see also 1 Kings 14:18; 2 Kings 9:7, 17:23, 21:10; Ezra 9:11; Jeremiah 7:25, 25:4, 26:5, 29:19, 35:15; Ezekiel 38:17; Daniel 9:10; Zechariah 1:6).

God’s trustworthy prophets are not limited to those who foretell the future, as Daniel and John did. Rather, they are God’s spokespersons, the ones who are God’s friends, the ones who know God personally and can say of Him what is right; they are the ones who go to the people with a message from God, a message that only a friend can rightly deliver.

And at this time in history, God is waiting for His people to reject the imposed law lies about Him, return to worshiping Him as Creator so they can be sealed in heart and minds and as His trusting and trustworthy friends, serve Him by giving the testimony of Jesus, the testimony that Jesus gave that He and the Father are one, and that if you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father and that God’s laws are design laws and He is not the source of inflicted torture and death, but the source of life, the Creator, our Savior and Deliverer from sin.

Moses was a friend of God yet was called His servant because only a true friend can provide the service God wants—and that is the service of telling the truth about Him!

True service is taking the message of God’s character of love to the people. This is the work God calls a special end-time group of His servants to fulfill for Him right before His second coming.

MONDAY

The lesson suggests the book of Joshua is divided into four sections:

1. Cross
2. Take
3. Divide
4. Service

The first three, represent God's initiative, directions—cross over, take the land, divide it among the tribe, and then the response of the people to serve Him in obedience.

Read last paragraph,

- Thus, the structure of the book itself conveys its main message: God's initiatives are not accomplished automatically. Instead, they require the faithful response of His people. That is, with all that God has done for us—including all that He has done for us that we cannot do for ourselves—we are then called to do what we can do for ourselves, which is to obey what God commands us to do. This is how it has always been in all of sacred history, and it remains so today. For example, the depiction of God's end-time people in Revelation 14:12 conveys the same idea: faith in what God has done for us, which leads to obedience. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 8.

From what we have already discussed, what kind of obedience does God want?

Is everyone who chooses to obey God, in other words if you ask them why they are doing this or that, they answer, because they are obeying God, actually obey God?

Can a person think they are obeying God when they are not? Isn't the first question, what god are they obeying? Isn't history filled with accounts of people doing all kinds of atrocities in the name of their god?

Could people be thinking and claiming they are worshiping Yahweh and still be God's enemy? What about those Jews who crucified Christ?

And could people think they are worshiping Jesus and call themselves Christians and be His enemy? What about the Dark Ages people who called themselves Christians and burned heretics at the stake?

What then is the key to really being obedient to God? One must actually know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). We must become His friends in order to give proper service in order to actually obey.

God is wanting His people to mature to grow up, to become His understanding friends and this requires we reason and think and understand His design laws, how reality works, why this is good and that is bad, as Hebrews states,

- But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:14 NIV84.

God in Christ, provided the way, the means, whereby any individual human can be saved from sin. But, can God, save a sinner from sin, through all that Jesus has done and is doing, without that sinner's individual participation?

Why or why not?

Does God have the power to reach into any being's heart and mind and make changes? Then why doesn't God do that?

- First, if He did He would not be the God of love, truth, and freedom but of lies, coercion, and selfishness.
- Such an action would violate love and liberty
- Such an action would be evidence Satan's charges against God are right
- But, how reality works, if God were to do that, that very action would destroy the individual God wants to save. To make changes in a person's heart and mind against their will either turns them into a robot, a brainwashed drone, or erases them and their unique personhood and replaces them with a new individuality. The only way to save each individual person is by the freewill choices of that individual to participate in the FREE salvation Jesus has provided.

For us to be saved we must choose for ourselves what we believe, who we trust, what we value, who we will follow—we have to choose what we watch, read, internalize into our hearts. Do we refuse to read the Bible? Do we refuse to believe that God created life and human beings in His image? Do we choose to believe in godless evolution? Do we choose to believe that might makes right?

Do we choose to believe righteousness can be achieved by might and power or do we believe "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord." (Zechariah 4:6).

Do we believe the Father is just like Jesus, and was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself, that God is for us and therefore no one can stand against us, or do we believe that the Father is against us, that His justice requires Him to kill us and that we need Jesus to plead to the Father, pay the Father with the blood of a human sacrifice to prevent the Father from torturing and killing us?

Do we have faith, trust in the Father, or do we have faith in the mechanics, the mechanisms, the legal loopholes we have created with our own human law thinking that propitiates the Father, that pays legal debt?

Do we believe that our salvation is determined by a judicial decision by the heavenly judge, and that decision is made based on made up rules and legal claims—like, there is a judgment in heaven and there are legal record books of all the sins you have committed, and when your name is presented in the judgment God opens the book and He looks to see if in that book 1) a legal stamp of acceptance of the legal pardon of Jesus has been applied to your account, and 2) that every sin ever committed has been confessed and the legal pardon has been placed against those sins, and 3) God then turns away from your life record and turns to Jesus' life record and declares, “even though this person is wicked, sinful, and unrighteous, I declare, because he has claimed Jesus as his legal substitute, and because Jesus paid his legal penalty, that this unrighteous person is now considered by me to be legally righteous. I do not see the truth of who he is, and the rest of you are not allowed to see the truth either, my legal ruling declares that I, and therefore all who are loyal to me, will see him as righteous even though we all know he is not.”

Do you think what I just described sounds right? That is what penal substitution theology teaches and it is a fraud, it mischaracterizes God as the source of death, it makes God out to be dishonest, it obstructs true healing and transformation from people, it keeps people afraid of God, and it is all built in the lie that God's law works like human law.

Or do we believe truth, that God's judgments are always the judgments of reality, of what is actually true. That God never lies, never pretends, never creates legal fictions. When God sees the perfect righteousness of Christ when He examines all of His saved, it is because the perfect righteousness of Christ is actually, in reality, in truth, living within them.

- This is why Paul wrote, “it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). T
- his is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again with a new spirit, a new life, the life of Christ. T
- his is why Peter wrote we are to be partakers of the divine nature.
- This is why Jeremiah and Hebrews says that in the new covenant the law is written in our hearts and minds.
- This is why Paul told Timothy God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and sound mind.
- This is why the symbol of conversion is baptism, we actually die to the old life of fear and selfishness and rise with the new life of love and trust that Jesus restored into humanity.
- This is why Paul told the Corinthians, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV84).

This is reality, we are actually, in truth, in reality, transformed, receive a new life, the sinless life of Christ, the new animating energy of love and trust and that life perfuses us, and as we choose to every day align with and live out His desires, motives, truths, we are transformed and healed.

And this is why the book *Christ's Object Lessons* says the following about why the Father sees the perfect righteousness of His Son when He examines us, and this is using the metaphor of the robe of Christ's righteousness:

- This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity **wrought out a perfect character**, and this character He offers to impart to us. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isaiah 64:6. Everything that we **of ourselves can do is defiled by sin**. [Because everything we do of ourselves is motivated, driven by, animated by the spirit of fear and selfishness we inherited from Adam. And Paul wrote in Romans 14:23 whatever is not of faith, not motivated by a spirit of love and trust is sin, because sin is a breach of trust, it is seeking for self, motivated by distrust.] But the Son of God “was manifested to **take away our sins**...[Not take away God’s punishment for sin, or take away the historical record of sin, but to take away our sin, our sinful fear ridden self-centered spirit that corrupts us and replace it with a new spirit, the spirit of love and trust that animates us and motivates us to love and loyalty to God] By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. **When we submit ourselves to Christ**, [Can God do this for us? Or do we have to choose to surrender, to submit ourselves, our lives to Christ? The penal legal model obstructs this. Understand this clearly, the penal legal model teaches people to submit their sins to God, their crimes to Jesus, so that Jesus can take on the legal responsibility to pay for their crimes and erase those crimes from the legal registry. They are not actually submitting their old life of fear and selfishness, they are operating under the lie of Satan that God’s law functions like human law and seek to protect themselves from legal consequence and claim that an innocent party pay for their crimes. In truth, when we submit ourselves to Christ, we surrender our lives, and say I place my life in your hands, see the wicked way in me, created in me a new heart and right spirit, purge from me everything that is out of harmony with you. Make me, not an accounting book, righteous.] **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.** *Christ’s Object Lessons* p. 311.

Why is it that when the Father examines us He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son? Because as the Bible teaches, it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in us. Or as Paul wrote,

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84.

This is reality, we become righteous through faith, through trust, we receive a new life. This is also described in the book *The Desire of Ages* in commenting on what Jesus told Nicodemus:

- Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as **spiritual regeneration**. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a **new heart**. You must receive a **new life** from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, **making all things new**, it will result in no

saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission. *The Desire of Ages* p. 171, emphasis mine.

This is what Revelation describes is the reality of the saved when Jesus returns in these words:

- They overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb [the sinless life of Jesus, Leviticus 17:11 the life is in the blood. These individuals have been reborn to receive the new life, the spirit of Christ, so that it is no longer their old selfish spirit motivating them, but the life of Christ.] and by the word of their testimony; [which is the same testimony Jesus gave, that Jesus and the Father are one. These individuals are Creator worshipers, they have rejected the lie that God's law functions like human law. They don't teach that God needs a human sacrifice offered to Him to pay Him off and prevent Him from killing us, but teach that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. That God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. That when we see Jesus we see the Father. And they have partaken of Jesus life, who lives in them, therefore, as the text states next:] they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelations 12:11.

These are the righteous, these are the ones who are like Jesus for they have His actual life reproduced in them and they are in reality righteous. And that is why God sees them as righteous, because they are.

And it is only by receiving the life of Christ through trust that we are enabled to obey God, and do what the lesson references when they cite Revelation 14:12:

- This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Revelation 14:12 NIV84.

We can only be faithful to Jesus if we have been reborn with His Spirit. We can only be faithful to Jesus if we tell the truth about Him and His Father.

Sadly, many people I have met think that being faithful to Jesus in the end times will come down to observing the correct and only authorized Sabbath—but the Jews who crucified Christ wanted Him down from the Cross to observe the correct and authorized Sabbath. They were not faithful to Jesus. Why? Because they believed in the imposed legal understanding of God's law. They rejected everything Jesus taught, that God's laws are design laws and God's commandments are expressions of love for God and each other. And love cannot be achieved through law and law enforcement.

Satan is the legalist. Satan is the originator of the lie that God makes up rules and uses His power to punish rule breakers. Understand Satan's methods are the methods of edicts, claims, proclamations, the authority of office to assert one's legal right in order to rule over others for the exploitation of them for the benefit of the ruler, in other words it is law because the one in charge said so.

We see this in the Bible's description of his fall:

- How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise my throne above** the stars of God; **I will sit enthroned** on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will ascend above** the tops of the clouds; **I will make myself** like the Most High.” Isaiah 14:12-14 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Notice the method—it is one of assertion, of proclamation, of arbitrary declaration, rule-making, the authority of office, of artificially created distinction. This is the system of imposed law, made up rules, it is the way Satan’s kingdom and all the kingdoms of this world operate and why Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

And all governments of the world operate on people rising over others, using made up rules, claims, proclamations to rule over, dominate, and ultimately exploit the masses for the benefit of the elites, taxes, armies, workers etc.

But notice the clear distinction in Jesus:

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

Notice—Jesus didn’t claim a position, didn’t assert a position, didn’t use rules to take a position, His position was one of reality. He was in very nature God. This is design law, reality, it is what it is. And He didn’t think that equality with God was something to cling to but voluntarily surrendered it and took upon Himself our actual nature. He didn’t declare, claim, proclaim something, He actually became human. He didn’t declare humanity was righteous with God—He actually, in reality, purified humanity, purged the infection, made the species in reality, the humanity He took upon Himself right with God again.

And we can partake of that reality. And Satan aggressively works to obstruct this truth, this reality, by his lie that God’s law functions like human law and that God only legally declares people to be righteous, while they remain unrighteous.

The entire system of penal legal substitutionary atonement is a satanic lie built upon the lie that God’s law functions like human law and it interferes with the plan of salvation and the cleansing work Jesus is doing in heaven today.

And it leads to other problems. Because of the way human systems work, with some people rising up and ruling over, and then following what the leaders says. Humans are conditioned to believe this is how things work best and the church devolves into a system of elites ruling over, priests, elders, pastors, conference leaders become theological rulers who make rules and interpret the Bible and

decide orthodoxy and the members are to follow the edicts, interpretations, decisions of the leaders or be disciplined, called heretics and purged from the church.

But this is untrue and not what the Bible teaches. Every leader in the church is a sinner and saved by grace and while we are given different gifts none stand above another in God's plan of salvation. While some are gifted with teaching and preaching others are gifted with musical skill, others with finance skill, others with administrative skill, others with medical skill, and we want people with skill to lead in those departments of the organization. But when it comes to salvation, no person can lead your soul. Every person must be persuaded in their own mind. Romans 14:5.

Thus at Come and Reason Ministries, I do not stand above any other person; and every person is invited, encouraged, admonished to think and reason for themselves to ask questions, to study. And my greatest growth happens when my ideas are challenged. I may not agree with you but that doesn't mean I don't appreciate it.

Our pastors and church leaders are to be respected and we value their organizational leadership, but they are not infallible, and they are not the source of truth and we would do serious error to surrender our thinking to any of them.

TUESDAY

The title for the lesson is Heirs of Promises—what promises and for what purpose?

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and **heirs according to the promise**. Galatians 3:26-29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Are these heirs the heirs of the same promise that we read about in the lesson?

What is the promise to which we are heirs?

Was it the promise of Genesis 3:15? What about the promise made to Abraham about the land? What land and who inherits it?

Would these words of Jesus indicate anything about the land that is part of the promise and who the inheritors are?

- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5 NIV84

Is this a different promise or the same promise Paul is referencing for those who are in Jesus? What about to Abraham—was this also the ultimate promise?

There were two promises made to Abraham, with two lands, two laws, two agreements, two starting points, two ending points, which corresponds to the two covenants.

One was local and temporary the other universal and eternal.

Two Covenants

Grace	Law
Eternal/Universal	Temporary/Provisional/Regional
Design law	Imposed law
Law written on the heart	Law written on stone ¹
Entire world	Palestine
All humanity	Jews
Started with Adam's fall	Started with Abraham's call
Purpose: Eliminate sin from universe	Protect Written Word/Avenue Living Word
Applies to all the universe	Applies to Jewish nation in Bible times
Never ends/completes at end of 1,000 years.	Ended at Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection.

What makes one an inheritor of the promise? Faith or trust in Jesus.

So the Hebrews are entering the regional promised land for the purpose of fulfilling the local covenant to be the avenue for the Messiah, be God's witnesses to the world about Him and the plan of salvation, and be the protectors of the Written Word.

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Today, in fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by Christ, Christians face similar challenges to those of Joshua; that is, they are required to wage war against their own sinful tendencies, against the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the hosts of wickedness. Like Joshua, they also have the assuring promise of Christ's presence: " 'I am with you always, even to the end of the age' " (Matt. 28:20, NKJV). As the supporting presence of the Lord was enough to expel the fears of Joshua, so it should be sufficient to

¹ This does *not* mean that Ten Commandments were done away with or are no longer binding, but that in the new covenant the complete aspect of the law of love (love for God and man), which are codified by the Ten Commandments, are no longer externally written upon stone but are internally written upon the heart (Hebrews 8:10).

banish our doubts and anxieties today. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 10.

What kind of war are we in?

What are the weapons we are to use?

What is evil and how are we to fight against it?

Can God eliminate evil from His universe by the use of might and power?

Why do you think so many in the church teach He can?

Where does sin and evil operate? How can God eliminate sin and evil from hearts and minds?

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read Romans 3:31:

- Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. Romans 3:31 NIV84

Then read the fifth paragraph,

- To pit faith in the atoning and sacrificial death of Jesus in our behalf against obedience to God's law is to set up a false and dangerous dichotomy. Law and grace always go together. Only a superficial understanding of the role of the law can lead to perceiving "law" and "grace" as opposites. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 11.

Does it make a difference in how we understand law? If we understand God's law to be imposed, what do we believe Paul meant and how do we hear the paragraph?

If design law, how do we explain it?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

September 24-27, 2025, Nashville TN: Dr. Jennings will speak at the conference American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. On September 24 he will present a talk on Drug-free Treatments for Depression and on September 26 he will present a talk on dementia prevention. For more information visit the AACC event website at <https://worldconference.net/>

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet
Mission, Health and Women Director
West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division
Email: patrycja.stupp@adwent.pl

October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy
Campus Ministries Coordinator
Newbold College
Email: dpuskas@newbold.ac.uk

2025 Q4 Joshua Lesson 2

Surprised by Grace

by Eve Knight

SABBATH

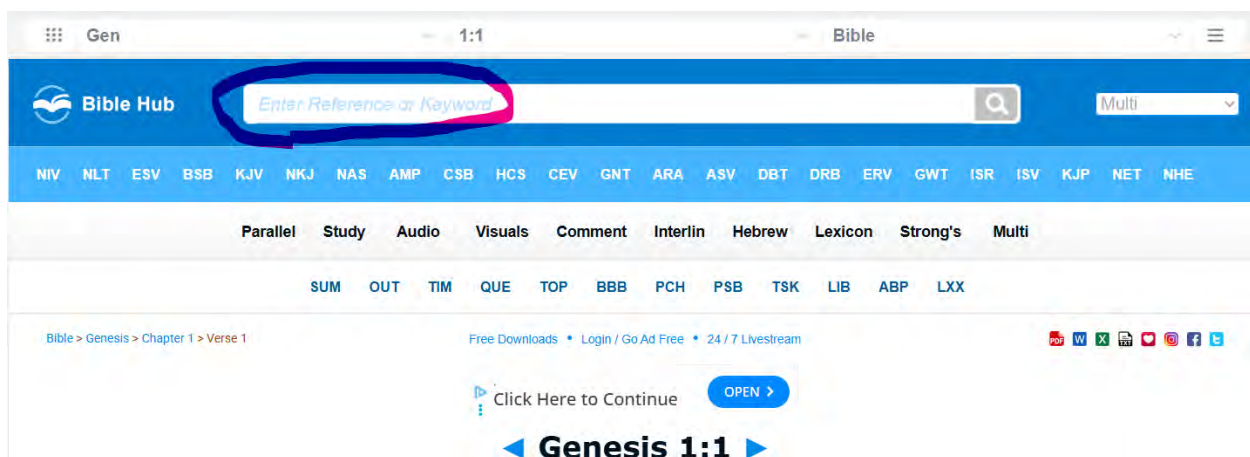
At the end of Sabbath's lesson, it says,

This week, we will explore two of the most fascinating stories of the book of Joshua and discover their relevance to our faith today. God's grace has infinite possibilities to surprise us.

I agree that indeed, God's grace can surprise us. But what is it? It's a word we use a lot, but what is God's grace? Do you know what the most common definition is? Usually, I hear the answer, "unmerited favor." What do you think of that definition? Does that make it sound like grace is just an attitude of God towards people? Is it a biblical definition? How do we find out what the biblical definition is? We let the Bible define it. And how do we do that? Well, a good start is to look at the original language, and we do that by using a lexicon. The one I use most frequently is found at biblehub.com. When you arrive at that site, you see something like this:



I went ahead and highlighted where you would click for the Lexicon. Once you click on that, you would see a screen like this, and it defaults to Genesis 1:1.



You can see where I circled, would be where you would put in a reference or a key word. In this case, since we're looking at the word grace, that's what I typed into that search box. If I already had a list of places where the word was found, I could start with a specific text. On the results screen, I clicked on the top option that said, "[Strong's Greek: 5485. χάρις \(charis\) -- grace, kindness.](#)" The next screen gives me the ways the word is translated, provides some explanation and definition, and also on the right under "Englishman's Concordance," provides the beginning of a list of texts where the word is used.

◀ 5485. charis ▶

Lexical Summary

charis: Grace, favor, kindness, blessing

Original Word: χάρις

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: charis

Pronunciation: khar'-ece

Phonetic Spelling: (khar'-ece)

KJV: acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace(-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank(-s, -worthy)

NASB: grace, favor, thanks, credit, gracious work, thank, gracious

Word Origin: [from G5463 (χαίρω - rejoice)]

Englishman's Concordance

Luke 1:30 N-AFS

GRK: εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τοῦ

NAS: for you have found *favor* with God.

KJV: for thou hast found *favour* with God.

INT: you have found indeed *favor* with

Luke 2:40 N-NFS

GRK: σοφία καὶ χάρις θεοῦ ἦν

NAS: in wisdom; *and the grace* of God

KJV: with wisdom: and *the grace* of God was

INT: with wisdom and *[the] grace* of God was

If you scroll to the bottom of that list, you'll see this:

Strong's Greek 5485 157 Occurrences

That tells us the word is used 157 times in the New Testament, and that is a clickable link that will take you to a complete list of all of those occurrences, along with a portion of the text to show a little bit of the context.

Today, before we get into the lesson, we're going to actually proceed through this word study. Now, to be clear, we don't have time to go through all 157 verses. So, I've narrowed it down to a more manageable number of texts to go through. If you want to do a complete study, you can follow the steps I just went through (and which will all be in the notes), and go through all 157.

We'll start by challenging what I call the "common" definition that we talked about earlier. Let's look at Luke 2:40 (NIV):

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Who is the child in this verse? Jesus. What does "the grace of God was on him" suggest about the *nature* of grace? If grace were only "unmerited favor," would this verse make sense? Why/why not?

Of all the people on earth, Jesus was the One that would “merit” something, right? So right there, the “common” definition has a problem. Let’s go to another verse:

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52 (NIV)

Note that in this verse, our word, *charis* is translated as favor. What does this verse tell us about grace? It’s something you can grow in, right? It’s not static. Jesus grew in grace, much the same as He grew in wisdom and height. Let’s look at another few verses:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ...

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. John 1:14, 16-17 (NASB)

How does John tie grace to the person/presence of Jesus? First, that Jesus was full of grace. So again, the idea that this is something “unmerited” doesn’t fit. Then from that fullness of Jesus, we also receive grace. What does it mean that “grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ?” Let’s look at the verse a little more closely using the lexicon.

This is part of what we see when I type in our reference (John 1:17), and look at the word “realized” in the lexicon:

were realized	ἐγένετο (egeneto)	1096: to come into being, to happen, to become

If we click on the blue 1096 (this is the “Strong’s Number for the Greek word), then we see a more complete definition. In the extra information, we also find a section called, “Helps Word-Studies”, and there we find this:

M. Vincent, "[1096](#) (*gínomai*) means *to come into being/manifestation* implying *motion, movement, or growth*" (at 2 Pet 1:4). Thus it is used for *God's* actions as emerging from eternity and becoming (showing themselves) in time (physical space).

So, could it be that what this verse is telling us is that grace and truth became more evident, were actually shown through Jesus? At the last part of the verse, “Grace upon grace”—does that sound like supply, sequence, layering, or growth? Why?

Let’s remember that, and look at another verse:

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Eph. 6:24 (NIV)

Who is Paul blessing here, and what does that imply about *receiving* grace? He's asking for grace only for those "who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love." So, according to this, grace isn't for everyone, only for those who love Jesus. Does that surprise you? Why? As we keep going with our study, maybe we can understand why grace is only given to the group that loves Jesus.

For our next verse, I'm including some of the context as well.

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks as well, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were added to the Lord. Acts 11: 20-24 (NASB)

What do you notice about our word in this passage? Barnabas could see the grace of God at work. There is something noticeable—even visible—about grace. What do you think caused Barnabas to be able to see this so clearly? Perhaps because he also had received grace?

Let's look at another verse:

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Acts 4:33-35 (NIV)

What does this verse tell us about where grace is at work? It's something that works inside the believer. In this account, how does grace affect their behavior? It caused them to be others-centered, and they all looked out for each other.

Let's keep going:

When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. Acts 13:43

What do we learn about grace from this verse? That believers can continue in grace. If that's true, what else would also be true? That believers can also **not** continue in grace. Does it seem like we're definitely moving away from grace being an attitude of God? If it was merely an attitude, it seems like it wouldn't change, would it? We wouldn't be able to continue or not continue in it. So, for example, God is forgiving...He is always forgiving. There's nothing that we do that affects that attitude of His

towards us. But clearly something *can* affect grace. Interesting. In fact, this becomes more clear in our next verse:

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by the Law; you have fallen from grace. Galatians 5:4 (NASB)

What is happening in this verse? What does it tell us about grace? Here we're told at least one thing that causes people to lose or "fall from" grace. Those who seek to be justified by the law. What are those people focusing on? Is there something wrong with the law? Of course not...but these people are using their "law-keeping" as their means of saying that they are righteous. What lens are they likely looking through? So, could we say that it's entirely possible that the "fall from grace" happens because they are interpreting things through an imposed law viewpoint? Why would that posture disconnect us from grace in practice? Let's keep this in mind as we continue.

But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are. Acts 15:11 (NASB) (note: "we" refers to Jews, "they" refers to Gentiles)

What does "saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" emphasize about *source*? How does this level the ground between groups of believers? That we are saved/healed through—or on account of, or for the sake of—the grace of Jesus. And this is available to all believers equally; it puts all believers on the same footing. Does this verse bring any other verse to mind?

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

What does this well-known verse tell us about grace? What's the relationship between grace (cause) and faith (conduit)? First, we're saved/healed by grace, and faith is how we receive it. Does this help us understand why grace is only for believers? We also learn that grace is a gift. We do not work to receive it, God gives it. What's another way to say that we don't have to work for this gift? It's free. This has a different feeling to it than the word, "unmerited," doesn't it? One word is more about God (freely giving), and the other feels a little more about us (we don't deserve it). So, it is a free gift that saves/heals us through faith...faith in what? Faith in the Giver.

Let's look at another verse:

And now I entrust you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32 (NASB)

What does "the word of His grace" do? Grace builds us up, and gives us the inheritance...what inheritance is that? The same one that all who are "sanctified" (made holy/purified) receive, the same one that was promised to Abraham, the ultimate fulfilment of which awaits us in heaven. Does this verse tell us how it does this? It certainly implies something: "among all those who are sanctified." What does that tell us? We can hang onto that question and keep going.

But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. Romans 3:24 (GNT)

What do we learn from this verse? First, we are reminded that grace is the “free gift of God.” How does being “set right” connect to healing and restored trust? What are we talking about when we say “put right”? We’re put back into harmony with God’s design, we are won back to trust. What is the end result? Freedom. Let’s look at another verse.

For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17 (NASB)

What does this text say about how much grace is available to us? What does it cause? What does the contrast in this verse reveal to us about grace? Through the sin of Adam, death reigned in humanity. Through Christ, however, life reigns. Notice that again, grace is not just a static attitude. It is active, abundant, and causes a change from one heart motivation (selfishness & death) to another (love & life). Let’s keep going.

But by God's grace I am what I am, and the grace that he gave me was not without effect. On the contrary, I have worked harder than any of the other apostles, although it was not really my own doing, but God's grace working with me. 1 Cor. 15:10 (GNT)

What does this verse tell us about grace? Note that Paul is saying God’s grace has made him what he is, and that it has a clear effect. Even his work that he has done, he attributes to the work of grace with him. And what work was he doing? He actually tells us that in our next couple verses:

But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given to me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:15-16 (NASB)

So, what is the grace given to Paul from God? To be a minister of Jesus to the Gentiles. Now that seems a different use of the word, doesn’t it? How do we reconcile this with what we’ve already learned so far? God’s grace not only was for a task, but also provides what he needs to do that task. Paul affirms this idea in our next verse:

But when He who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles... Galatians 1:15-16 (NASB)

What does it mean for God to “reveal his Son *in me*” in the context of grace? What is the action of grace in this verse? It was God’s grace that called Paul to ministry and also reveals “His Son” in Paul so that Paul can preach to the gentiles. What do you find most surprising about this? And what does this mean for us?

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
Romans 12:6-9 (NKJV)

What do these verses teach us about grace? We are given different gifts “according to the grace that is given to us.” Grace provides the gifts. What gifts are we talking about? They’re usually called spiritual gifts, right? These verses do not provide a complete list of gifts, but it’s important to ask, what is our responsibility toward these grace-given gifts? We need to *use* these gifts, and specifically, we are to use them to benefit others. What happens to gifts we don’t use? The Law of Exertion...if we don’t use them, we lose them. Is it entirely up to us to do the work? No. As our next verse explains,

And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;...

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NASB)

How does grace provide “all sufficiency” for “every good deed”? So, like it did with Paul, grace doesn’t just call us, it also provides what we need. How does it do that?

I was made a servant of the gospel by God's special gift [grace], which he gave me through the working of his power. Ephesians 3:7 (GNT)

How does grace come? God gives it “through the working of His power.” Let’s look at another, well-known verse:

But his answer was: “My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak.” I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (GNT)

What does this verse tell us about grace? That it is closely connected to God’s power! This is definitely not how we are used to thinking about grace, is it? How does weakness create room for grace? God specifically tells Paul that it’s ok for him to be weak, so that God’s grace (His power) can fill in the gap. Let’s see if we can’t understand more fully what grace does.

I always give thanks to my God for you because of the grace he has given you through Christ Jesus. For in union with Christ you have become rich in all things, including all speech and all knowledge. The message about Christ has become so firmly established in you that you have not failed to receive a single blessing, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be faultless on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is to be trusted, the God who called you to have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 (GNT)

What does this tell us about how grace works in us? It appears that it works to bring us into union with Christ, right? It provides richness (can also be translated “fullness”), and it guides us in speech and

knowledge. It settles us into the truth of who God is (as shown by Christ) and blesses us. It keeps us strong to the end and helps us have fellowship with Jesus. There's a lot there, right? Possibly more than we are used to thinking about, when it comes to grace. But grace isn't about just working in us, is it? It's intended for more.

Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given. ... It was he who "gave gifts to people"; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature.

We'll pause this passage here for a moment. What does this tell us about the purpose of the gifts (grace) given to us? It prepares us for service, helps us build up the body of Christ, brings us into unity of faith, grows our knowledge of Christ, and moves us towards maturity. Let's keep going in the passage:

Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love. Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 (GNT)

What do you see grace doing in the rest of this passage? Notice that once grace helps us, we then help others. We are no longer immature, easily swayed, and instead, take on God's methods, speaking the truth in love, and building each other up. How does this happen?

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was revealed, he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for. Titus 3:4-7 (GNT)

What connections do you see made to grace in this verse? How central is the Spirit to grace? What is this verse teaching us about grace? That it is connected to the Holy Spirit! Notice what it actually says here: God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by his grace we might be put right with God..." The "new birth," "new life," putting us right with God, is the work of the Holy Spirit and is connected to this gift of grace.

Note in our next two verses that again, there is more to grace than the work it does in us:

For all things are for your sakes, **so that grace, having spread [multiplied through the many] to more and more people**, will cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 4:15 (NASB)

..which has come to you, just as in all the world also **it is bearing fruit and increasing** [spread abroad], even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard it and **understood [came to fully know] the grace of God in truth**;... Colossians 1:6 NASB

What action is grace taking in these verses? The work isn't just in us, it spreads through us. All by grace. From these passages, how would you finish this sentence: 'Grace is...?'

For now, I have settled on this: "Grace is God's gift of His presence and power, working in us through His Spirit." With this definition in mind, is it easier to understand how and why it's possible to "fall from grace"? What is essential for us to even receive grace? Our invitation, willingly receiving the gift, and our cooperation with the work! If we refuse His working in our hearts, we're literally closing the door to the Holy Spirit, and grace can no longer work in us.

Notice how much more we've discovered about God's grace and how His gift of grace can work to heal, restore, strengthen, and grow us. Now, perhaps, we can understand why the gospel writers refer to it so frequently. To see just a few (all from NASB):

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 1:2

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 1 Corinthians 16:23

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love. Ephesians 6:24

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, for His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:2-3

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NASB)

With what we now know and understand, why do you think grace—in general—is so misunderstood? If we think it's just an attitude of God, then it's just information. It's not something that has any real power. In fact, worded as "unmerited favor" it tends to make us feel undeserving. Could it be that the enemy has worked to make us think this way so it doesn't occur to us to ask for the gift? Remember, gift is one of the ways our Greek word for grace could be translated. Grace is a gift. It's a gift of power available to every single one of us. Perhaps it's time for us to start asking for that gift a little more earnestly.

As we continue into this week's lesson, let's keep this understanding of grace in mind, as the author seems to have a different definition of grace.

In the second to last paragraph on Sabbath's lesson, it says,

“One would think that God's promise of giving the land to the Israelites did not require any effort from them. Yet, the assurance of divine support does not override human responsibility. Israel stands at the border of Canaan for a second time. Expectations run high, but the last time Israel was at the border and had the same task, it resulted in an abysmal failure.”

What was God's original plan for the Israelites that the lesson points out they missed?

Moreover, the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God. Deuteronomy 7:20-21 (NIV)

Originally, God was planning to push their enemies out. The Israelites wouldn't have had to do much more than follow His lead. So why are they expected to do more the second time around?

When they were at the first preparing to enter Canaan, the undertaking was attended with far less difficulty than now. God had promised His people that if they would obey His voice He would go before them and fight for them; and He would also send hornets to drive out the inhabitants of the land. The fears of the nations had not been generally aroused, and little preparation had been made to oppose their progress. But when the Lord now bade Israel go forward, they must advance against alert and powerful foes, and must contend with large and well-trained armies that had been preparing to resist their approach. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 436

Notice that this significantly “harder” task is a direct consequence of the earlier failure to trust God. Yet, they *are* given a second chance to conquer the land promised them. Where they failed an earlier, easier test, they are now faced with a harder trial. Yet they were still reassured of God's presence.

When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory. Deuteronomy 20:1-4 (NIV)

God's promise to them was His presence with them. That is the actual “grace” we can see at work in this story. Have you ever had a hard time remembering God's promises when facing a trial? What happens in areas where we fail? Consider these words:

In their contest with Og and Sihon the people were brought to the same test beneath which their fathers had so signally failed. But the trial was now far more severe than when God had commanded Israel to go forward. The difficulties in their way had greatly increased since they

refused to advance when bidden to do so in the name of the Lord. It is thus that God still tests His people. And if they fail to endure the trial, He brings them again to the same point, and the second time the trial will come closer, and be more severe than the preceding. This is continued until they bear the test, or, if they are still rebellious, God withdraws His light from them and leaves them in darkness. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 437

As God works by bringing the same test and trials to us where we've failed before, what end result is He hoping for? He wants us to claim His promise and overcome. Could this work be part of the continued work of grace?

SUNDAY

In Sunday's lesson, it says,

God is a God of second chances (and more!). The Bible calls the second chance (and more!) 'grace.' Grace is simply receiving what we don't deserve.

I think we've already established that God's grace is far more than that. The lesson goes on to say,

Think about the experience of the Israelites when they were given a second chance to enter Canaan and about the grace extended to Peter after he denied his Lord. What should these incidents teach us about how we should extend grace to those who need it?

In reality, is grace something we can extend to others? No. I can't push the presence of God's power in me to somebody else. I think what the lesson probably means here is mercy, or maybe even love. Because grace itself has been so misinterpreted, we think it's just an attitude of ours towards others as well. However, if grace is truly working in us, how will we treat others? What is the difference between extending mercy to others and receiving grace so we can act wisely and lovingly?

MONDAY

On Monday's lesson, it talks about Rahab's decision to acknowledge God as the one true God, and to place herself on the side of His people. How do you think she arrived at that decision?

Clearly, she had heard the stories of how God moved on behalf of His people. Regardless of the 40 years of wandering, it was still clear He was with them. She examined the evidence, she possibly even looked around at her own culture, and realized that it was time for a change.

The lesson goes on, however, to say,

Her moral choice recognizes that, in light of Yahweh's judgment, there were only two possibilities: to continue in rebellion against Him and be annihilated, or to choose to surrender in faith. By choosing the God of the Israelites, Rahab became an example of what could have

been the destiny of all the inhabitants of Jericho had they turned to Israel's God for mercy. What does this story teach us about how God must have our ultimate allegiance?

What does the author reveal about how he sees the story? That he views it through an imposed law lens. What does it feel like the lesson is suggesting here? That we must claim God or He'll kill us? It's also claiming that the people only had two choices. Is that true? Couldn't they just have left? Walked away? Based on God's viewpoint, were any of the people in that city annihilated? No, they are simply sleeping. If we read this through design-law (God's restorative purposes), what options open up that fear-based readings miss?

The story of Rahab is encouraging. It reminds us that God accepts all those who come to Him. It is a mistake, however, to try to mold the story of the conquering of Jericho into something to push people to choose God out of fear. I believe that we need to represent Him better, more truthfully, than that.

TUESDAY

On Tuesday's lesson, we read:

Rahab's deal is very clear: life for life and kindness for kindness. The word *chesed* ([Josh. 2:12](#)), "loving-kindness," has a richness of meaning that is difficult to express in one word in other languages. It refers primarily to covenantal loyalty, but it also carries the notion of faithfulness, mercy, benevolence, and kindness.

What exactly was the deal that Rahab made with the Israelites? That she and any who were in her house would be spared. Notice that she was the one who made the decision to honor God. Yet her whole family—at least, anyone that she convinced to stay with her—was also spared. Does this mean that they all chose God? We aren't told that, so we don't know for sure. For all we know, only Rahab later joined the Israelites, and the rest of her family may have moved on. If they stayed, though, they too would have joined the Israelites. What we are told is that Rahab's descendants "have lived in Israel to this day." Joshua 6:25b (GNT) What does it tell us about God that He so willingly accepts those who choose Him?

WEDNESDAY

On Wednesday's lesson, we are looking at the story of the Gibeonites. These were the people who decided to fool Israel into a treaty with them. They put together a group, made it look like they had traveled a long distance, and approached the Israelites to ask for a treaty as if they were from a far-off place.

Did the Gibeonites have other choices? Could they have approached the Israelites honestly? In the story, why were the Israelites fooled? They didn't consult God...they made the decision on their own. Yet, in spite of that, the treaty was still honored. But what was the result of the deception?

But it would have fared better with the Gibeonites had they dealt honestly with Israel. While their submission to Jehovah secured the preservation of their lives, their deception brought them only disgrace and servitude. God had made provision that all who would renounce heathenism, and connect themselves with Israel, should share the blessings of the covenant. ... But they had adopted the garb of poverty for the purpose of deception, and it was fastened upon them as a badge of perpetual servitude. Thus through all their generations their servile condition would testify to God's hatred of falsehood.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 122.

In the second paragraph on Wednesday, we read:

The word translated as “craftily” or “cunningly” can be used with a positive meaning, denoting prudence and wisdom (Prov. 1:4; Prov. 8:5, 12), or negatively, implying criminal intent (Exod. 21:14, 1 Sam. 23:22, Ps. 83:3). In the case of the Gibeonites, behind their treacherous action lies a less-destructive intent of self-preservation.

Question...is self-preservation truly a “less-destructive intent”? What does self-preservation often lead to? Where does it stem from? The selfish heart, right? It's evidence of worldly methods and motives instead of being in harmony with God. Which means there is no way it can be classified as “less destructive.” All actions that are out of harmony with God's design carry consequences that are destructive.

At the end of Wednesday's lesson, we read:

The fundamental duty of a theocratic leader, and of any Christian leader, is to seek God's will (1 Chron. 28:9, 2 Chron. 15:2, 2 Chron. 18:4, 2 Chron. 20:4). By neglecting it, the Israelites were compelled either to violate the fundamental conditions of conquering the land or to break an oath made in the name of the Lord, which was equally binding. How often have you found yourself struggling between what appears to be two conflicting biblical values?

Question: Do biblical values conflict with each other? No, they don't. What could make someone think that there is a conflict? Usually looking at it from the wrong law lens...if we are looking at imposed-rules, instead of design-law principles, it's often easy to get confused. We should be very careful when reading stories like this to avoid trying to claim that biblical values can conflict, as that usually means that we're looking at the situation with the wrong lens.

Were the Israelites actually struggling between two conflicting biblical values? No. They brought the trouble on themselves by not consulting with God in the first place. Yet when they went to Him with it after their mistake, He provided them with the answer and made the Gibeonites servants, as we read earlier. In other words, even though they made a mistake, God stepped in and helped them with the solution. What lesson can we learn from this part of the story? Even if we make a mistake, it's important to run straight to God with it?

THURSDAY

In the last paragraph on Thursday's lesson, we read,

The subterfuge of the Gibeonites has to be perceived as an appeal to God's mercy, to His kind and just character.

Were the Gibeonites actually appealing to God? No. They were simply trying to trick the Israelites. Did God still treat them kindly? Absolutely. Not only that, but God provided them with work that would put them at the center of the worship system for Israel. God took what they did do (which was to acknowledge Him) and placed them in a position where they could learn more about Him, and grow to worship Him in truth instead of from a place of fear. This is the beauty of God's character, that He loved them enough to accept them where they were, and then put them where they could grow and become more mature. The lesson says it well in the last paragraph on Thursday:

God honored the recognition of His supremacy by the Gibeonites, as well as their desire for peace rather than rebellion, and their willingness to give up idolatry and to worship the only true God.

FRIDAY

On Friday's lesson, we read a beautiful description of God's love and character:

And her [Rahab's] conversion was not an isolated case of God's mercy toward idolaters who acknowledged His divine authority. In the midst of the land a numerous people—the Gibeonites—renounced their heathenism and united with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the covenant.

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 369, 370.

Is this how we often present God? Shouldn't it be?

One of the questions on Friday's lesson says,

Discuss the whole question of “second chances” (and more) and how we are to extend them to others. At the same time, how can we also be careful not to abuse this concept? Think, for example, about a woman in an abusive relationship, in which she is counseled to keep going

back (“grace”), only in some cases for the abuse to continue? How do we find the right balance here?

What is wrong with this question? First, it has the completely wrong definition of grace. This is one reason why it is so important to be able to learn and study for ourselves, so we can have discernment. Notice how the wrong definition leads to a “rule” about constantly giving people “another chance.” What does this idea leave out? Design law, and principles of living out true, Godly love. In the case of an abused woman, is it a loving action to go back to the abusive spouse. No! If she goes back, not only is she damaging herself, but she’s also providing the opportunity for her spouse to continue to abuse her, which damages him as well as risking her health and safety. What is the actual, loving response? To remove herself from the equation, letting him know that she cannot accept his harmful behavior, cares about him enough to give him space to work on his own issues without providing the opportunity for him to harm both of them with his choices. If he chooses to find help, heal, and grow to be more mature, great. If not, that is his choice to make, but she will no longer participate in letting him damage himself.

True grace, as we defined it earlier, is “God’s gift of His presence and power, working in us through His Spirit.” We will certainly act differently when we invite God in, and allow His grace to heal, transform, and mature us into the kind of people who represent Him well because we act in harmony with His character and in harmony with His design. That is the kind of person I want to be, and by His grace, we all can be. In Chapter 9 of *Christ’s Object Lessons*, regarding the story of the Hidden Pearl, Ellen White says,

These scenes [revival at Pentecost] are to be repeated, and with greater power. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the former rain, but the latter rain will **be more abundant. The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Christ is again to be revealed in His fulness by the Holy Spirit’s power.** Men will discern the value of the precious pearl, and with the apostle Paul they will say, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Philippians 3:7, 8. (COL, p. 121)

I believe it is time to ask for the true gift of God’s grace, so that we can reflect His love to those around us and spread the news of God’s true character with the world.



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 3 Memorials of Grace

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the first three paragraphs,

- The police officer signaled. John had to pull over. The officer asked for his driver's license, and, at that moment, it dawned on John that he had left his wallet, with his driver's license, in the office. John explained what happened, and the officer asked about his job. John responded that he was a professor. As the officer gave John a ticket, he told him not to think of it as a fine.

"It's tuition," he said. "When people want to learn something, they pay tuition. This is your tuition to learn not to forget your license when driving. Have a good day, professor!"

As human beings, we are prone to forget things that are not constantly in our sight. We forget to return phone calls, respond to emails, water the plants, send birthday wishes, and so forth. The list could go on. Forgetting about our spiritual needs, however, could have more severe consequences than simply receiving a fine, especially because we are dealing with what is, literally, our eternal destiny. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 22.

Did you smile when you first read the officers witty reply?

But what do you think of the overall message here?

Do you find justice in what the officer did?

What kind of law is the officer applying?

In comparing the professor's forgetting his license with how we may spiritual things, what are they suggesting?

Are they suggesting that if we forget to observe the Sabbath for instance, that we will have a ticket issued in our record in the heavenly court, and if we don't get the blood of Jesus applied to that oversight in our legal record, then the heavenly judge will have to find us guilty and kill us?

Are they suggesting our salvation is dependent upon our memory?

I have had more than one person in my life tell me that they worry about the judgment because they are afraid that there might be some sin that they have forgotten to confess and therefore the legal payment of Jesus was not legally applied to that sin on their sin registry in the heavenly legal court

system, and therefore, in the judgment God will still be required to punish them for that one sin they forgot to confess.

I haven't shared this story in many years, but this is from my book *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*, the chapter on the seven myths of forgiveness.

During last week's AACC World conference in Nashville, we had people from all over the country come up and tell us how much this book has helped them and their patients.

- John was a member of a conservative Christian denomination who believed that, in order to be saved, he must repent of each specific and individual act of sin. His belief caused him great insecurity in his Christian walk. He constantly worried that he might forget to confess something that would prevent his salvation.

Finally he became so troubled that he suffered a heart attack and was rushed to a hospital emergency room, where his heart stopped four times. Each time, the medical staff defibrillated his heart, and each time it started again. Later he recounted that between each defibrillation he woke up thinking, *I hope there isn't some sin I forgot to confess that will keep me out of the kingdom*. John believed that God doesn't forgive until we ask.

Consider a first-grade boy who sees one of his classmates with a pen that lights up when squeezed. Coveting the pen, he steals it. As he grows up, he continues to steal things along the way until one day, as an adult, the authorities arrest and punish him.

After being caught, he repents and experiences a true change of heart. From that point onward he is honest in all his dealings. He goes out of his way to avoid even a hint of dishonesty. If he encountered a gray area on his taxes, he always chose to pay extra rather than do anything that might get construed as cheating. Accepting Christ as his Savior, he lived in harmony with God the rest of his life. But he never remembered about the pen in first grade. Do you think that when he comes up in the judgment God would meet him with the following verdict?

"You have been a true and trusted friend, like David of old, a man after my own heart. You have been honest and faithful and have been healed in the inner man. Your heart is right and you love and practice methods in harmony with mine, but you never asked to be forgiven for stealing the pen in first grade. I'm sorry, but you can't enter heaven."

We can't imagine God being so arbitrary. The issue isn't whether we remember every mistake we ever made. Instead, the issue concerns the condition of our heart and mind. Have we been healed? Has God restored His image within us?

-- *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*, p. 112-113.

It isn't about forgetting—it is about choosing to surrender our old fear-driven life to Jesus and receive a new life, be reborn with a new spirit of love and trust, and then choosing to prioritize God and His kingdom, so we establish routines with God, not out of rule-keeping, but just like with our family,

because we love Him. This is not a matter of forgetting, but saying in our heart that we value God more than the things of this world. But if we value things of this world more than God, regardless of what religious behaviors we engage in, that has serious consequences on our spiritual health.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The term translated “sanctify” (Josh 3:5) or “consecrate” (ESV) refers to a purification process similar to what the priests followed before beginning their service in the sanctuary (Exod. 28:41, Exod. 29:1) and what the people of Israel carried out prior to God’s revelation at Sinai (Exod. 19:10, 14). This consecration involved the laying aside of sin and the removal of all ritual impurities. The same command appears in Numbers 11:18, relating to an impending miracle of God. Such a preparation also was required before battles were fought in a war (Deut. 23:14). Before God can fight for Israel in battle, they must show their allegiance to Him and trust in Him as their Commander. -- *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 23.

What is being sanctified, consecrated, purified? The lesson points to the ritual purification, the ceremonial cleansing—like our baptism ceremony today.

Did such ceremony, ritual, including water baptism, actually purify, sanctify, or consecrate anything?

What is the purpose of such ritual? It is object lesson, metaphor, symbolism to teach reality—what is the reality it is to teach? The cleansing, sanctifying, purifying, consecrating of people, of hearts and minds, of the spirit temple!

Does the language of sanctify or consecrate in relation to the sanctuary service bring any other texts or doctrines to mind?

What about Daniel 8:14 and the cleansing of the sanctuary?

Here is the NIV for Daniel 8:14:

- “It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.” Daniel 8:14 NIV84.

This doctrine has been soundly criticized by many, one criticism that has probably been the most effective, is the criticism that the 2300 days are not prophetic days and should not be interpreted as 2300 years, and instead apply to Antiochus IV’s desecration of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabees and the defeat of his forces and the rededication of the temple at that time. And I have heard this for years, but never really paid much attention to this criticism, until recently one of

our class members challenged me to do so. And I really appreciate that challenge, and have dug in on this.

To be clear, there are multiple lines of argument that suggest this possibility, thoughtful people have not just conjured this up or invented it from nothing, but have concluded this from, I believe their honest searching for truth. But that doesn't mean they are correct.

In fact, I do not believe their view is correct, and I thought it might be helpful to review the reasons why I reject the Antiochus interpretation and conclude that the 1844 date is valid for this prophecy.

I also believe that had the SDA church accepted the message given to it in 1888 and embraced the truth that God's laws are design laws, they would not have created the opening for this other interpretation. What I am saying is that, I believe the error is not in the date, but setting the cleansing of the sanctuary message into a legal fiction, attempting to explain this salvation work through human imposed law lens has opened the door for this criticism.

So, the reasons why I think Daniel 8:14 applies to 1844 and also what it is referencing.

The Story Arch of Scripture

The story arch of Scripture is God's creation of a sinless humanity in governance of a sinless planet in a universe in which Lucifer has already rebelled and a war of ideas, methods, principles focusing on God's trustworthiness was raging. When Adam and Eve believed the lies about God and broke trust with Him, they were changed from beings motivated by love, truth, trust, loyalty, to beings motivated by fear and selfishness.

This break with God would have resulted in death immediately (as God is the source of life) if God did not intervene (intercede) and suspend those consequences for a time to allow His plan of salvation to be accomplished (Romans 3:25). Right there in Eden, as recorded in Genesis 3:15, the Messiah was promised to destroy sin and Satan and provide salvation (Hebrew 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Adam and Eve's sin did not change God or God's law but changed them. They were no longer motivated by the spirit of love and trust, but fear and selfishness. Their condition became terminal, dead in trespass and sin. They did not have a *legal* problem but a *lethal* problem.

They needed salvation, a remedy, a cure, a new life, a new sinless spirit, a new animating energy, which they could not conjure, create, work for, discover, obey themselves into, find through ritual, ceremony, or in any other means provide for themselves. Thus Jesus, the "Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" (Revelation 13:8), became a real human being, descended from Adam, through David (Romans 1:3), and was tempted in all points like us, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, in His humanity, destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and replaced it with His perfect sinless life, spirit, animating life-giving power resonate with perfect truth, love, and trust.

Upon His resurrection He ascended back into His Father's presence *in His humanity!* Jesus returned to heaven with His love-gift to His Father, the redeemed, cleansed, restored, perfected, sinless humanity that He purged and purified through His sinless life and voluntary sacrificial death. Thus He returned to His Father's presence immediately, just as He told Mary and John, and took up His station, not only as the Son of God, but as the Son of man, as the second Adam.

His victory, in His person, set the species human right with God (justified the race) but it also provides what is necessary for every individual human sinner to be saved from sin. But individual sinners must participate, partake, receive, what Jesus provides and this is done through faith, through restored trust.

When we are won to trust and open our hearts the Holy Spirit takes the sinless life of Christ and shares it with us. We become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), we are reborn with a new Spirit (John 3:3), a new animating motivating energy or life, the life of Jesus and then it is no longer our sinful fear-ridden selves living, but Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). And this work is metaphorically acted out and described in the sanctuary system.

Understanding this story arch of Scripture, man's fall and God's intervention through Jesus to save, we understand that in Daniel God foretells His plan to save, heal, cleanse and reconcile His people to Himself. Before we can be fully in God's presence again, we must not only experience God's forgiveness, we must be cleansed, purified, freed from the corruption from the control of fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, that sin causes. This is why the Bible describes the church being washed, purified, cleansed, before Christ returns. He does this work to present Himself with a pure bride who is ready to stand in His presence. The cleansing of the bride/church and the cleansing of the sanctuary are the same event.

Antiochus IV's desecration of the temple does not fit in this story arch. It has no place in the plan of salvation, and serves no purpose for God to foretell through prophecy. In fact, how the Antiochus event does fit in the Bible story arch is as another counterfeit to God's truth:

Satan's Counterfeit

Satan has counterfeited God's truth all through history and he has a counterfeit interpretation of Daniel 8:14, which is the Antiochus interpretation

- Cain had a counterfeit offering to what God requires
- Magicians in Egypt counterfeiting the miracles of God
- Various false prophets throughout history
- Baal worship—Baal, son of El, god of weather, fought the great serpent, fought Mot, god of death, died, rose again to bring life to the land—but Baal required sacrifice, payment, and appeasement. It is a legal religion.
- Jeroboam setting up alternate worship centers in Bethel and Dan to Jerusalem
- The mystery religions at the time of Jesus, with dying rising saviors, baptisms in blood, various communion services.

- The legal counterfeit to true Christianity when Constantine converted.
- Satan seeks to counterfeit all of God's truths, and he inspired Antiochus to do what he did and sets up a counterfeit to the true message of Daniel.

1844 Fits Daniel's Pattern

The 2300 years ending in 1844 with Jesus starting the cleansing work fits with the theme of Daniel's other prophecies.

Daniel's prophecies have a recurring pattern—they prophecy the story arch of the Bible all the way down to Jesus setting up His kingdom.

- The multi-metal man ends with the rock destroying the kingdoms of this world and Jesus setting up His kingdom.
- The lion, bear, leopard, grotesque beast, ends with the destruction of the beast and Son of man coming in the clouds
- The ram and goat cover the same story arch, and the interpretation given by the angel to Daniel tells us that the prophecy "concerns the time of the end" Daniel 8:17. And this little horn power will be destroyed but not by human power, Daniel 8:25.
- Understanding that story arch of Daniel 8:14 is not about the Jewish building desecrated by Antiochus, but about the true temple desecrated and cleansed by Christ before His return.

Harmonizes with Other Prophecies of the Same Event

The cleansing of the sanctuary before Christ's return is such an important element in the plan of salvation that the Bible describes it in multiple places and Daniel 8:14 fits perfectly with these other revelations:

- Daniel 7:13 Jesus coming to receive His kingdom and opening the books
- Malachi 3, Jesus coming to His temple to cleanse it
- The parable of the wedding feast
- The day of atonement object lesson of the OT sanctuary,
- The cleansing of the bride of Christ

Evening and Mornings

Some struggle with the 1844 date because the text of Daniel 8:14 uses the language of evenings and mornings rather than days. The modern translations read,

"It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated." Daniel 8:14 NIV84.

The objection asserts that this language does not represent 2300 days, but 2300 evenings and mornings, so 1150 days. However, this requires one to forget God's own description of a day in Genesis one: "there was evening, and there was morning—the first day" (vs. 5 NIV84). The conclusion therefore, that the 2300 evenings and mornings do not represent actual days requires a new, non-biblical, interpretation. So interpreting this as days is consistent with the Bible itself.

Cleansed or Justified?

Another objection is that the word translated in the KJV as "cleansed" is more accurately translated as justified or made right or put right. This is correct, the SDA Bible commentary affirms this, and it is not a problem at all when one returns to design law. In fact, the understanding of justified or put right makes the application to 1844 even more accurate.

Humanity, by Adam's sin, became corrupted with fear and selfishness and no longer in rightness of function, trust, love, truth, with God. In Jesus, humanity was put right, set right, justified, restored to perfect unity and oneness with God by Jesus' purging the infection of fear and selfishness and restoring sinless perfection within humanity, which is reality-based cleansing, purifying, renewing of the spirit temple—the reality of which the building was pointing (John 2:19).

But some object that such a cleansing, purifying, rightifying work is required for sinners before the second coming of Christ. I think this is because of the infection of Roman law and the legalization of Christianity—the teaching that sin and salvation is a legal problem and sins are legal crimes that require external legal enforcement through inflicted punishment and salvation therefore, is legal adjustment in books, rather than cleansing of hearts and minds.

Because imperial/imposed-law requires punishment for wrongdoing, the church of the Dark Ages taught that sin must be punished. This led to the doctrine of purgatory, where after death, conscious souls have their sins purged through punishment. In Roman Catholic theology, entrance into heaven requires the "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven," for which indulgences may be given which remove "either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin," such as an "unhealthy attachment" to sin.¹ Those who die in grace, but who have not yet fulfilled the temporal punishment required due to their sin can do so in purgatory.

One of the major doctrines that the great reformer Martin Luther rejected was the teaching that conscious souls are punished in purgatory. He disagreed with this doctrine in two ways:

- First, he did not believe in a conscious soul that could experience punishment, and instead taught that the saints sleep peacefully: "It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The celebration of the Christian Mystery." The Holy See. The Catholic Church. Retrieved 14 March 2017.

bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace.”²

- Second, Luther put forth a new theory designed to free people from both the fear of purgatory and the exploitation of indulgences to buy loved ones their freedom from further punishment in purgatory. He expanded Anselm’s satisfaction theory of atonement by adding inflicted punishment. Luther taught the idea that all sin by all humans from all time were placed on Christ at the cross and punished by God at the cross. Thus, for the saints, there were no unpunished sins remaining to be punished, thus there was no need for purgatory.³

Unfortunately, the same root lie underpins both purgatory and Luther’s solution—that God’s law functions like human law and that breaking the law (an act of sin) requires punishment. And the legalistic Adventist pioneers who rejected the 1888 message about God’s laws being design laws, clung to that lie and made the same error Luther did—placing the sanctuary doctrine in a false legal setting and teaching the same distortion as purgatory—that all sins require punishment, either they get punished in Jesus, or God will punish people the appropriate time they deserve after the 1000 years. And the sanctuary doctrine is falsely taught as legal accounting and determining how much punishment each person deserves for their sins. The Catholics have the sins being punished in purgatory in order to purge the soul and save the sinner, the legalistic Adventists have the sins are punished after the 1000 years simply to torture for legal justice sake before execution.

Returning to design law we rightly realize that the cleansing, justifying, putting right is not a legal accounting, but an actual healing of hearts and minds, putting people right with God again. As Abraham experienced. He was born with a natural state of enmity to God, his heart was naturally driven by fear and selfishness, but Abraham experienced a change from distrust to trust. And only AFTER Abraham’s heart has been changed, set right, put right with God, did God recognize, account, and declare that Abraham was justified or righteous because his heart, was in fact, reborn with a new spirit of love and trust and he was set right.

So, the 1844 date fits with the unfolding of time, and the work that needs to be done prior to Christ’s second coming to cleanse the true sanctuary, the one built by Christ with Him being the chief cornerstone. And it fits with history as a real event that is required for this cleansing occurred.

² Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5–6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther’s Works, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis: CPH), 4:313.

³ Paul Althaus, Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 7th ed. (1994), 179, 191-195.

A Real Event Happened in 1844

Something really happened in 1844—it is a historical fulfillment of the prophecy. What happened in 1844? Attention was drawn to Jesus as our heavenly High Priest, His soon return, the preparatory work before His return, and the message of the 3 angels began to be preached. All of this is evidence of the cleanse the sanctuary before the second coming. And this is consistent with how reality works—if one returns to design law, it fits exactly with what must happen before Christ returns and how it happens. How is this evidence?

After Christ's ascension into heaven Paul wrote:

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**" 2Thessalonians 2:4, emphasis mine.

This man of sin did not ride up into heaven and throw Jesus off His throne and proclaim himself to be God in the heavenly courts—no, he did this by replacing the truth about God in the hearts and minds of people with a false version of God. He did this by getting people to believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, and therefore they worship a god who is like Satan in character, the one who is the source and wielder of death. Thus he set himself up in the spirit temple proclaiming himself to be God. This man of sin is the little horn that Daniel tells us wars against the saints:

I beheld, and the same horn made **war** with the saints, and **prevailed against them; until** the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints** of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21,22 KJV, emphasis mine

But this is not a physical war, it is a war of lies versus truth centering on the character of God:

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

And the lie that God's law functions like human law became orthodoxy with Rome and the man of sin was winning, until the saints were given judgment to discern the difference and make a right judgment about God. As Paul wrote:

Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail **when you are judged.**" Romans 3:4 ESV

Thus the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 is God looking down the corridors of time and informing Daniel that the little horn power, the man of sin, will war against the saints and prevail until judgment is given to

the saints, until they gain the ability to discern the truth and judge God to be the Creator and not an imperial dictator, until the hour of God's judgment comes (Revelation 14:7). The saints must understand reality and have the lies that hold them captive removed. And this ability to make a right judgment about God and have their spirit temples cleansed will not occur for 2300 years, because it requires the recovery of the evidence, the Bible must be translated into the language of the people. But when that prophecy comes to completion the message will go forward that the hour of God's judgment has come—the hour for people to make a right judgment about God.

God told Daniel that 490 years will be cut off from that 2300-year period for the Jews to complete their mission and the Messiah to come and complete His mission and do away with the sacrificial system. But it will be 2300 years before the temple where the little horn, man of sin, sets himself up in will be cleansed. Because of how reality works, the cleansing of the spirit temple requires truth be recovered and understood, lies rejected, trust established and hearts renewed. God cannot cleanse hearts and minds by might and power, only by truth and love (Zechariah 4:6; Romans 2:4). Malachi's prophecy describes the same event as Daniel 8:14 and makes clear what is being cleansed are the saved:

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking **will come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a **refiner's fire or a launderer's soap**. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. Malachi 3:1-3, emphasis mine

This cleansing of the Levites, is the cleansing, justifying, reconsecrating, rightifying of the sanctuary because as the Bible teaches:

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood." 1Peter 2:5, emphasis mine.

Him who overcomes I will make a **pillar in the temple** of my God. **Never again will he leave it.** I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. Revelation 3:12, emphasis mine.

The cleansing of hearts and minds only happens through the application of the truth in love, it requires the individual to choose to agree, to believe, to trust. Thus, Jesus could not cleanse the sanctuary from the lies about God and restore trust as long as people believe the lie that God's law functions like human law and that God is the source of inflicted pain and death, because that view keeps Satan enthroned in the temple.

So to me Daniel 8:14 and the 1844 date fit perfectly—a real event happened, the Millerite movement which called people to prepare for Christ's return, which led to a real event, the great disappointment, which led to restudying and re-examining the Scripture, to uncover and understand the truth of Great Controversy over the character and government of God, which brought forth the truth about God's law

being design law, which empowers us with judgment, so we can make a right judgment about Him and give the final message of mercy to the world that will cleanse His sanctuary.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- The authors of the Bible knew and testified to the fact that the God who created the world was never limited or constrained by His creation. Nothing is impossible (Heb. “too wonderful”) for Him to accomplish (Jer. 32:17). His name and His nature are wonderful (Judg. 13:18), and He is beyond our comprehension. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 24.

Is this an absolute truth or limited truth?

If God is not constrained or limited by His creation—then why is their sin in the universe? Aren’t Satan, the third of the angels who rebelled, and human beings part of His creation? And has God’s will been constrained and limited by Satan and sinners—or are we saying, as some have done but we DO NOT, that it was God’s will for Satan to sin, for Adam and Eve to sin?

And if God cannot be limited by His creation, are we saying that God does not want every person to be saved? Or does He, and therefore, when everyone is not saved, why are they not saved if God wants them saved? Isn’t it because they have limited God’s power and will in their lives?

So, the statement in the lesson is true only in regard to inanimate non-sapient nature. Inanimate non-sapient nature cannot limit God in anyway, but given the reality of how love functions, the reality of God’s nature and character, that God is love and truth, and love requires freedom, that God’s will and power to heal and save is restrained and limited by the choices of intelligent beings to believe lies, prefer selfishness, and reject Him.

Didn’t we just read how in 1888 church leaders resisted and obstructed God’s will and desire?

Now, are we saying God doesn’t have the power to make changes in the hearts and minds of creatures if He wanted to? No, we are not limiting God’s power, we are understanding reality, how love works and why the Bible says that it is “not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord” (Zech 4:6) that God wins. Because if God were to use power to reach inside a person to change their heart and mind against their will, without their preferring and choosing it, then God would erase them, destroy their individuality and make either a robot, or replace them with another individual. Yes God has the power to make such a change, but He cannot use power in that way and achieve what He wants, the salvation of every unique individual. Thus, our choices can limit His will.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about remembering God's actions, interventions, blessings, deliverances in our lives. Why is this important?

The last paragraph in Wednesday's lesson quotes EGW,

- "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

Thoughts about this? Do you find this to be true? Does recalling and remember God's leading in the past strengthens your faith, your confidence, and gives you courage to face new problems and obstacles and if we forget we will have more fear and anxiety?

What have you found helps you to remember God's leading in the past?

Read last paragraph,

- The potential question of future generations is significant because it is formulated in a personal way: "What are these stones to you?" Each new generation must internalize and understand the meaning of these stones for themselves personally. The faith in a miracle-making God can be kept alive only if each generation rediscovers the significance of the mighty acts of Yahweh for themselves. Such a faith will make a major difference between living out faithfully Bible-based traditions and traditionalism, the dead religion, deprived of its original value and fervor, of the living generation. In the end, we need to make our Bible-based faith our own. No one, especially our ancestors, can believe for us. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 25.

What do you think about this paragraph? I am really troubled by it, it seems so superficial.

The lesson said,

- The faith in a miracle-making God can be kept alive only if each generation rediscovers the significance of the mighty acts of Yahweh for themselves. Such a faith will make a major difference between living out faithfully Bible-based traditions and traditionalism, the dead religion, deprived of its original value and fervor, of the living generation. In the end, we need to make our Bible-based faith our own.

So belief in a miracle working God, having Bible-based traditions, and Bible based faith....hmmm....Jesus said,

- "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord,

Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:21-23 NIV84.

These people are doing miracles, so they believe in a miracle-working God, and the God they believe in is Jesus, so they are Christians, and they are prophesying in His name, so they are believing in the Bible and doing ministry—but they are actually workers of iniquity—how is that?

First, miracles can be counterfeited. Satan can do various miracles, Satan can quote the Bible... and we believe Satan is going to impersonate Jesus and allow himself to be worshiped as Christ. So, are the instructions from the lesson helpful in preparing people to have saving faith, or could people apply those instructions and be one of the workers of iniquity that Jesus described?

What makes the difference? The true worshipers of God actually know Him, which means they know He is the Creator, and His laws are design laws and they are His friends and they know that love, loyalty, trust, devotion, friendship cannot be achieved through law and law enforcement, through punishment and thus they reject the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God’s law functions like human law. But these workers of iniquity will be just like the religious leaders who crucified Christ, they all believed in the Bible, the Sabbath, health reform, tithing, and the sanctuary system—but they set it all in the imposed law fear based punishing god concept and rejected the Creator and killed Him.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Psalm 114 also ties the two events together, not because the author did not see a chronological difference between them but because of the theological significance that the two crossings share. Thus, both events are seen as contributing to a change in Israel’s status, once from slavery to freedom, then from nomadic landlessness to nationhood. In these psalms, the examples of the two crossings illustrate the change in status of the author from oppression, poverty, helplessness, and humiliation to safety, well-being, salvation, and dignity. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 27.

Do you recognize any object lesson application to us?

Once we come to Christ, we die to self, we go through the watery grave of baptism and arise to a new life, animated by the Spirit of Christ and are no longer part of this world, we are wanderers here in a wilderness world of sin, this world is not our home, we are longing for our promised land.

- All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would

have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:13-16 NIV84.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Generally, we perceive forgetfulness as a normal trait of all human beings. However, forgetfulness in the spiritual sense can lead to serious consequences. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 26.

Has the SDA church forgotten anything that it needs to remember, particularly from the 1888 GC? Consider this eyewitness testimony to what transpired there:

- “When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.** [God, through Moses, was leading the people to the promised land and Korah led a rebellion that resulted in the people being lost in the wilderness for the next 40 years] I have placed you in your proper position, which **those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; but I will be with you; [And those who rejected the truth that God’s law is design law, and insist that God’s law functions like human law, led the church into the wilderness and we have failed to lead people to Creator worship. And the leaders today who insist on the penal legal fraud also reject EGWs testimony on these issues. They shipped her to Australia then, and they deny her testimony that God is not to be regarded as an executioner of the sentence against sin, nor the one who punishes the sinner for their sin, but the sinners choices causes their own punishment by cutting themselves off from God who is the source of life. The legal leaders still reject her testimony.] My grace and power shall sustain you. It is not you they are despising, **but the messengers and the message I send to My people.** [We see this today and saw this at the GC meeting in St. Louis. We saw it in the interview on AMC, where those who hold to the lie that God’s law functions like human law reject the message of God’s character and methods of love, reject the truth that His laws are the laws of life, reject the special message given to this church that calls people back to Creator worship.] They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. **Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment**; [How does Satan does this? Connect this with what we discussed about the cleansing of the sanctuary. The little horn wages war against the saints by teaching God’s law functions like human law, and when believed the man of sin sets himself up in their spirit temple proclaiming himself to be god. And he wins until judgment is given to the saints, until the saints choose truth and have their spirit temples, their hearts and minds, cleansed by the truth and are able to make a right judgment about God. But these people prefer the imposed law lie and thus their judgment is perverted. And the sad reality is, just like the Jewish nation 2000 years ago, just like our church in 1888, many of these people with perverted judgment (and you can diagnose this by asking them how they

understand God's law functions), are in leadership positions in the church. And their judgment cannot be trusted. Even when they act with a sincere heart, they act the role of Saul of Tarsus before Damascus road. Because they are not actually converted. Note the next words of the quote] and unless every soul **shall repent** of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, **they will walk in darkness**. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they **repent and be converted**, that I should heal them. They have obscured their spiritual eyesight. They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power... Manuscript Release vol. 3 p 191. [This is the latter rain. These individuals who reject the design law truth, who cling to imposed law, with imposed legal punishments, with a god who requires legal blood payments do not want the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and in fact interfere with it. Consider what the same author also wrote about the 1888 GC]

- **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions**, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan **succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them**. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted**, and by the action of **our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world**. *Selected Messages Vol. 1* p. 234.

Do we have a lot to unlearn? Yes, there is a need for repentance, to reject the lie that God's law is imposed like Rome's to repent of all the lies we have told about God, that He is the source of pain, suffering, and death, that He needs to be appeased or paid by the blood of a human sacrifice. God will not pour His Spirit upon people to empower them to tell lies about Him. If we want His Spirit to be poured out, we must choose to embrace the truth about Him as Creator and reject the lies that present Him as dictator, and that requires to we return to design law.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Jennings Speaking:

October 10-11, 2025 Bydgoszcz, Poland: Dr. Jennings will be the keynote speaker for the Impact Congress presented by the West Polish Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For more information contact:

Patrycja Niewolik-Stüpp

Dyrektor Sekretariatów: Misji, Zdrowia oraz Kobiet

Mission, Health and Women Director

West Polish Conference | Trans-European Division

Email: patrycja.stupp@adwent.pl

October 16-18, 2025, Newbold College England: Dr. Jennings will be they keynote speaker for the college's week of spiritual emphasis. For more information contact:

Danilo Puskas

Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy

Campus Ministries Coordinator

Newbold College

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2025 Q4 Joshua Lesson 4

The Conflict Behind All Conflicts

by Lori Atkins

INTRODUCTION

Our lesson this week honestly would have been a good lesson, but we are probably not going to get to it.

As Tim mentioned last week, a bunch of us just got back from the AACC – the American Association of Christian Counselors – world conference in Nashville, and it was as invigorating and inspiring and exhausting as ever and I loved being there. Some days it felt like I had personally spoken to all ~7,500 attendees myself...and as usual we were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic reception, the positive feedback, the shock and awe at our willingness and ability to give, give, give, and the immense appreciation for this ministry, for this message and picture of God, and for our (YOUR) generosity...so thank you from the bottom of my heart, I won't be able to adequately convey the gratitude and the impact and the temporal and eternal differences your support of this ministry is making in sooooo many people's lives.

Tim had a big pre-conference session focused on non-pharmaceutical treatments for depression, teaming up with Honey Lake Clinic on that one. Then he did an Aging Brain workshop that had 200 or so folks registered, but there were over 300 people stuffed in the room standing along the walls and even sitting in the aisles. He also participated in several interviews and podcast events, and last but not least, he was given a very prestigious award; The 2025 Frank Minirth Award for Excellence in Christian Psychiatry and Behavioral Health by the American Association of Christian Counselors. This award recognizes Dr. Jennings' dedication to providing Christ-centered care in the field of psychiatry and behavioral health. Also, a prominent Bible study platform expressed some interest in discussing possibly adding some of our digital materials to their software which could then expand our reach and exposure to a large audience of their subscribers...so please keep that in your prayers for God's will to be done with that potential opportunity.

SABBATH

So let me tell you why and what I believe should take priority over the lesson quarterly this week and you can let me know if you agree.

I had an encounter at the AACC conference that affected me deeply, kind of shook me, sobered me, inspired me, and changed me, which is something remarkable when you are literally talking and interacting with hundreds of strangers and spending just a few seconds maybe minutes with each one.

As platinum AACC sponsors, we had booths in two locations – our smaller 10-foot booth sits right outside the main ballroom where plenary sessions are held and it gets tons of traffic, because it's where every attendee has to pass going to and from classes, meetings, etc.

Our larger 20-foot booth was downstairs in the giant exhibit hall with over 200 other booths, and it's where folks come to browse/shop/collect goodies during non-class/meeting hours.

So, I was helping to man the larger exhibit hall booth during the "off" hours when class/meetings were in session, which meant there were hardly any folks wandering the exhibit hall. There were only two of us manning the booth and this is the down time when we typically re-stock the materials on the table, break down empty boxes, catch up on messages, and such. I saw a couple of guys out of the corner of my eye looking at magazines on the far end of the tables. When I looked up again, the two young boys, who were obviously brothers, had moved down and were standing in front of me holding this magazine – I found out later they are both home schooled and junior/senior high school ages. They looked a little nervous when I greeted them, but the older one said, "I'm going to take this back to my room and read it tonight, but can you get tell me real quick and concise...what is 'The Lie'?" Well, I took a deep breath and immediately, simultaneously, these thoughts flashed through my mind:

Oh, man...I realllllly wish you could speak to the author

Lord, help me

I'm soooo glad you didn't you didn't bring me one of beasts of Revelation magazines!

Spoiler alert...after I answered his question about what the lie is, he then asked me what happens to the wicked in the end...and finished with well then why did Jesus have to die, so he successfully covered the doctrinal differences trifecta in one easy encounter.

Have you ever been asked these questions?

Would you have known how to answer and what would you have said?

How many of you, like me, have thought I KNOW this stuff, I have heard it on repeat in class, I have read and studied it for myself, yet when I'm asked questions about these healing remedy concepts – especially tough, pointed questions, I freeze up and feel like I fail to explain things like I want to or in a clear, concise way so that folks who are unfamiliar with our ministry can understand or at least rouses some intrigue/curiosity?

Does anyone else here struggle with that? I know some of you do because we've talked about it, and we used to have a monthly get together to discuss just such topics and I enjoyed it and believe most folks found the time spent to be valuable. I know that gathering has been on an extended hiatus, but once we get through the holidays our plan is to start meeting again on the third weekend of the month for potluck, fellowship, and afternoon study – either at my house or here at the building or somewhere else, we will figure out the time and place and start our third Saturday festivities back up again.

So, what would you say?

How would you answer the curious young man asking "What is The Lie"?

I gave him the most clear, concise answer I could and said I believe the lie that has infected the vast majority of Christianity (as well as all other major religions) is that God's laws and government function just like human laws and governments.

Do you think that explanation can stand on its own?

Had you ever heard anything remotely resembling this concept prior to finding this class?

I didn't...I don't remember hearing *anything* about God's law other than it was carved on tablets of stone and breaking any of them was no bueno. So even though we've clearly and accurately defined what the lie is, some follow-up explanation is needed. I started by contrasting the two types of laws.

What are some simple ways to explain/define/describe imposed law along with some examples?

I have to tell you, I firmly believe that some of the most valuable and effective insights I have learned in this class are the brilliant analogies and metaphors that help make complex theological (or physiological or psychological) concepts easy to understand and digestible and can provide ah-ha/lightbulb moments to any and all knowledge levels.

The most effective ways I've found are to either define US laws in layman's terms, specifically how the US government creates/enacts laws and the School House Rock cartoon "I'm Just a Bill" provides the perfect script:

I'm just a bill, Yes, I'm only a bill
And I'm sitting here on Capitol Hill.
Well, it's a long, long journey To the capital city.
It's a long, long wait While I'm sitting in committee,
But I know I'll be a law someday
At least I hope and pray that I will,
But today I am still just a bill.

I'm just a bill, Yes, I'm only a bill,
And if they vote for me on Capitol Hill,
Well, then I'm off to the White House
Where I'll wait in a line
With a lot of other bills
For the President to sign.
And if he signs me, then I'll be a law.
How I hope and pray that he will,
But today I am still just a bill.

...or ask an engaging question to the listener like...when you hear the word law, what comes to mind first – something passed by congress and signed by the president or the law of gravity/laws of physics?

This can give you an idea of the person's default frame of reference.

So hit me with some descriptions, attributes, and examples of imposed law.

- Enacted purposely, externally
- Require monitoring/auditing/policing for violations
- No inherent consequences for violations – they require arbitrary (inconsistent) penalties/punishment to be meted out by some external authority
- Speed limits, taxes, jaywalking, etc.

Okay, now let's compare those with design laws...what are some good contrasting examples of design law?

- Law of gravity (no gravity police required)
- Laws of physics
- Laws of health
- Law of respiration – in order to live you must breathe
- Law of liberty, giving, restoration, worship, exertion

Our laws are made-up rules that require the infliction of punishment. But God is the Creator, the Builder of reality, and His laws are the protocols upon which reality is constructed to operate. God's laws are the functional principles upon which all things exist and which sustain all things. Life, health, and happiness are possible only when we are in harmony with the laws our Creator built life to function upon. These include the laws of physics, gravity, health, and the moral laws—the laws that govern the healthy operations of our hearts, minds, and relationships. Life exists, thrives, and grows only when it is in harmony with these protocols. Just as pouring water into an engine that is designed to run on gasoline breaks the design parameters by placing the engine out of harmony with the laws of physics and, therefore, causes it to stop functioning, so also breaking God's laws for life causes us to suffer, break down, and die.

God's laws, how things work, the protocols of life, originate in His character of love.

When God spoke the universe into existence, He designed it to operate in harmony with Himself. And God is love (1 John 4:16). Thus, the greatest of all God's laws is the law of love (Matthew 22:37–39). God's law of love is not restricted to compassion or emotional tenderness; it is a design principle upon which life is constructed to function. It is a living law. It is the principle of giving, of othercenteredness; it is “not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13:5); it is other-centered, beneficent, selfless: This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters! (1 John 3:16 GNT).

Obviously, no Christian wants to believe that they believe a lie and that they are taking to the world a false gospel that harms people. But Jesus Himself told us that this would, indeed, be the state of some who call themselves Christian:

- Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform

many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:21–23).

These “Christians” are active in doing what they think is “gospel work,” but our Savior calls them “evildoers.” Why? Because they don’t know the real Jesus, His character of love, His methods, and how His kingdom truly functions. Paul warned that those claiming faith in God would be in this very state at the end of time:

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them” (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

Paul is not describing the godless, the atheist, or the agnostic. He is describing those with “a form of godliness,” which can be referring only to people who self-identify as Christians— those who claim God-likeness. He tells us that just before the second coming of Jesus, there will be a form of Christian religion that is powerless to change hearts, minds, and characters to be like Jesus.

And, sadly, that is exactly what we find today. Multiple studies document that within Christian homes, the rates of spousal and child abuse, alcohol and drug addiction, pornography use, and teen pregnancy are no different than those in non-Christian homes. Truly a form of godliness with no power!

But how can this be? Shouldn’t those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior, who call themselves Christian, abuse their families far less than people who have not accepted Jesus?

Why is this happening within the church? Because there is a counterfeit Christianity, one that is built upon a single lie. And just as a counterfeit dollar bill has no buying power, counterfeit Christianity has no saving, healing, transforming power—a form of godliness without power!

How does God’s law actually function? How one answers this question determines how one understands God and His character, methods, and government. It determines whether we are worshiping the Creator who built reality—or whether we are worshiping a creature, a being we call God but whose abilities, methods, character, and government are nothing more than what a creature can establish (are you, like me, increasingly astonished at how foundational our view of how God’s law functions truly is?)

I had to use the thesaurus to try to help describe its importance with words like critical, vital, crucial, indispensable, requisite...we call it a law lens because it colors/affects/powers/shapes **everything**, both the obviously spiritual and the seemingly non-spiritual.

And lest you’re not paying attention, it’s becoming more and more clear that it is all spiritual. I was kind of struck during Tim’s last interview with Advent Media Connect, the one that was more like an ambush, when he told the folks with penal theologies that he wouldn’t/couldn’t argue with them or try

to change their minds, because penal substitution, retributive justice, and punishment of rule breakers is the only logical rational conclusion for anyone who believes God's law is imposed and functions like human/Roman law.

Unless/until they changed their foundational beliefs on the nature of God's laws and how they function, then embracing a different theology wasn't even possible).

This is Satan's goal, to replace the truth about God in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings with a counterfeit god, whether Satan himself or any idol of worship who possesses and practices the methods of Satan (what might an idol of worship who possess and practices the methods of Satan look like? A denomination or church that preaches "every sin must meet its punishment" from the pulpit? What about an organization with a long history and focus on religious liberty that closes their places of worship and coerces its members, employees, students to take an experimental treatment with no long term safety data?)

If we conclude that God's law functions no differently than human law—with made-up rules— then we automatically conclude that God, in order to be just, must use His power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. Our understanding of who God is, His character, His methods, His principles, His government, His trustworthiness, the sin problem, and God's solution for it (the plan of salvation) is corrupted.

By getting people to believe that God's law functions like human law, Satan argues, There is nothing wrong with sin—it doesn't actually cause anyone harm; the problem is with God, who will use His power to kill you because you sin by breaking His made-up rules. God is the actual source of harm. If we could only do something to God, propitiate His anger and wrath, pay Him with something, then we could live forever in sin because sin doesn't harm. God harms you for it. If we believe that God's law functions like human law, then we teach that sin is a legal problem, one of breaking rules, and that justice requires the infliction of punishment by the rule-giver. In this legal way of seeing things, God is presented as the source of death, which He is required "by law" to inflict upon rule-breakers as punishment for sin.

This human-law view makes God the one from whom we must be protected—His wrath must be propitiated, His anger assuaged, His "just" punishment taken—if not by the sinner, then by something or someone else.

It is also falsely taught that if God doesn't use His power to inflict punishment for sin, then there is no justice. This imposed-law system misrepresents God's justice to be the appropriate infliction of punishment, which results in the lie that someone must be punished for our sin-crimes, and that Jesus came to take our place in order to be punished by God for those sins.

The lie that God's law functions like human law leads to the lie that God cannot freely pardon, cannot forgive sin outright, because the law demands sin be punished through the external infliction of pain and death. But this type of justice is a worldly, earthly, sinful, corrupt, human-devised justice.

This type of justice is artificial, counterfeit, fake, made-up, arbitrary, mythical, unreal, and it is all based on the lie that God's law functions no differently than human law. This type of law and justice does not represent the law and justice of God.

So, after my brief exposition explaining the fundamental differences between imposed laws and design laws, any guesses what the young man's next question was?

Well, if there's no punishment for sin, does everyone get saved?
What happens to the wicked at the end?

My answer was: Raised in the third resurrection with the same character, thoughts, actions...gather implements of war...ignore the open gates of the new Jerusalem...His presence of unveiled truth and love causes them immense pain, agony, torture, anguish and because they are so settled into the lie about who and what God is that they would rather surrender their lives and their eternal existence than to be in His presence...and He grants them their choice, lets them go to reap what they have sown, and separates them from Himself the source of life.

Last but not least, how do you answer when someone asks you why did Jesus have to die?

I typically answer that question with a question, why did Jesus have to live?
Why did he come here in the first place?
What was his mission?

What do the scriptures tell us about why he was here?

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

Okay, what is the devil's work? To misrepresent God, initially by lies (war in heaven), but then by co-opting mankind, who was created in God's image, to reveal God's character (in Eden), and to then replace God's law of love with Satan's law of selfishness (fear/survival of the fittest) in the heart of man. Christ took our infirmity, our sinful condition upon Himself in order to heal, fix, and resolve the sin problem. He did this by perfectly restoring God's character of love back into the species human. Remember, Christ was a unique being/birth in all of history – born of a sinful mother but His father was the Holy Spirit...therefore, these two principles – self-sacrificing love and fear/selfishness/survival warred it out in the person of Jesus Christ.

In His human brain, Christ lived God's law of love perfectly, purging the death-causing principle from his humanity and revealing the true character of God that Adam was created to reveal. Thus, He destroyed the devil's work, and in so doing became the second Adam and will reign for all eternity as the head of the human species.

By His death Christ destroys him who holds the power of death, that is the devil. – Heb 2:14

What is the devil's power of death? I know you know this one!

This is life eternal that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. – John 17:3

If eternal life is knowing God, then eternal death is NOT knowing God.

What then is Satan's power of death? The lies he tells about God that keep us from knowing Him.

What destroys lies about God? The truth about God as revealed by Jesus, thus it is the Good News about God, as revealed by Christ, that destroys the devil's power of death. This is why He says in John 17:4,

I have finished the work you gave me to do...I have made you known.

The third reason Jesus had to live and die:

Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. – 2 Tim 1:10

How did Jesus' death destroy death?

The law of love is the law of life, the law upon which all life in the universe was designed to operate.

Death comes as the natural result of breaking the law of love, just like death comes as the natural result of breaking the law of respiration by tying a plastic bag over your head. Christ destroyed death by perfectly restoring the law of love, the basis for life, into mankind and overcoming the inherent infection of fear and selfishness (survival of the fittest).

He did this when, in His humanity, He chose to surrender His life in love rather than use His power to save Himself. Thus, in Christ, love overcame the infection of selfishness.

“The law of the Lord is Perfect Reviving the Soul” i.e. the kingdom of Love, emanating from the God of Love is Life and destroys death.



2025 Q4 Joshua Lesson 5

God Fights For You

by Stanley Baldwin

First a little background. The author of our 13 lessons is Barna Magyarosi. Presently he is the executive secretary of the Inter-European Division and chair of the division's Biblical Research Committee. He has been a pastor, Conference department director, theology teacher and president of Adventus University, Romania. Pretty impressive resume.

No disrespect to Magyarosi, but resumes do not get you into heaven! Neither do resumes authenticate anyone's interpretation of Scripture.

I think this lesson for today is especially one of those cases in which each of us needs to carefully, prayerfully, decide for ourself just what lesson God is teaching us in the story of Joshua and just who it is we will trust with our life now and into eternity. And our conclusions may or may not agree with what the author or editor suggests!

Magyarosi reveals what his overall goal is for this quarter: "We will discover together that, though the book of Joshua was written more than 3 millennia ago, **the world in which we live today is not so different from that of Joshua's in its spiritual challenges.** ... The example of Joshua will certainly inspire us to claim God's promises in our lives and to grow spiritually through His power, as Joshua did." page 3

Discerning and applying the lessons God had for the Israelites to ourselves today is a very worthwhile goal, and I hope each of us will understand and apply to our own lives the lessons that Israel should have learned under the leadership of Joshua but didn't! That said, let's look at today's lesson.

SABBATH

One thing that is significant about today's lesson is that it is a continuation of last week's lesson. Last week Lori did a wonderful job of using a recent personal experience to highlight the lesson entitled "The Conflict Behind All Conflicts," which of course, refers to the Great Controversy in heaven between Christ and Satan which is affecting our Earthly lives today.

Lesson 4 includes this statement:

"This week and next, we are going to explore the difficult question of divinely commanded wars in the book of Joshua and elsewhere." page 30

And lesson 5 for this week is entitled: “God Fights for You”.

So, what is your reaction to the title for today’s lesson, “God Fights for You? What picture of God does this bring to mind?

Let me state right here that this lesson is backwards, upside-down, wrong, 180 degrees from reality in describing who God is, what He is like, what His character is like and what we should learn from the story of Joshua. I’m not usually so boldly negative about a lesson but the more I studied and reflected on this lesson the more upset I became about the inaccurate interpretation of God’s character based on the stories of Israel’s exodus from Egypt and settling in Canaan.

The author says in the beginning of today’s lesson, lesson 5, ,

This week, we continue to explore the complexity of divinely sanctioned wars.” Then he adds two conclusions for today’s lesson: “the **final vision of peace** offered by the Old Testament prophet, **and** the **spiritual implications** of such wars. page 38

That brings up some questions: Does the end (peace) justify the means (war)?

Does war bring peace or capitulation?

Then why, did God use Israel’s army to destroy the Canaanite people, even though they deserved it?

To start this lesson I’d like to compare the Memory Verses for lessons 4 and 5.

First, the Memory verse for lesson 4: After the fall of Ai, 5 city “kings” or what we might call ”county mayors,” banded together to fight against Israel, they lost. Joshua prayed that the sun would stand still until Israel had destroyed the fleeing army. And God did! This part of the story concludes with verse 14, which was last week’s Memory Verse.

There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for **the Lord fought for Israel.** Joshua 10:14. ESV

Now Lesson 5

Again, from the same chapter in Joshua, just 24 verses later we have today’s memory verse:

And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because **the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.** Joshua 10:42 ESV

These 5 “kings” fled the battlefield and hid in a cave. Their location was reported to Joshua who had the cave entrance blocked, imprisoning them. After the mopping up was over Joshua opened the cave and killed the 5 “kings.” Then Israel went on to conquer the rest of Southern Canaan.

I think that this word “fight” in the English language has 3 main concepts

1. An armed, or physical, conflict, as in the Russia/Ukraine war or as in a boxing match;
2. It is often a political expression meaning a serious vocal argument supporting a particular concept; or
3. A personal, internal, spiritual conflict over deciding what is ultimately right or wrong.

I know, dictionaries list many various uses of the word “fight” but to me they all seem to fit into one of these 3 very general categories.

So, how is the Lord God “fighting” for Israel? Is it a literal fistcuffs with the Canaanites? Let’s see what the Bible says in two texts!

Joshua 10:11 God used “great hailstones.”

Habakkuk 3:11-13 is so apt that I want to look at it more closely.

11 **Sun and moon stood still** in the heavens
at the glint of your flying arrows,
at the lightning of your flashing spear,
12 In **wrath** you strode through the earth
and in **anger** you threshed the nations.
13 You came out to deliver your people,
to **save your anointed one**.
You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness,
you stripped him from head to foot.
Habakkuk 3:11-13 (NIV)

Sun and Moon standing still is obviously referring to the miracle in the battle with the 5 kings in our lesson today.

In the next verse, God is spoken of as being wrathful and angry with the 5 kings and their subjects. Those are just human words trying to explain in human terms about God granting the wish of those living in Canaan who had rejected God’s kingdom of love and life support and accepting Satan’s lies. In doing so they effectively unplugged themselves from the source of life and protecting care and left themselves open to the machinations of Satan!

Was it God’s original plan that Joshua himself should kill those 5 kings, or that Israel should kill the Canaanites?

Doesn't the 6th commandment say not to kill anyone?

Wouldn’t killing another human be damaging to the character?

Was God's original plan then that God or Israel was going to kill them? NO! Satan has the power of death. (Heb. 2:14)

God limits Satan's use of this power, (Job 1 and 2) but when people reject God, they reject His protection and Satan is free to kill. All that Israel knew about moving into already inhabited land was war, and fighting, so, God took them where they were and baby step by baby step began their education in the art of love.

I want to share an EGW quote that God's judgment is simply granting our wish and removing His protection which we often describe as God's wrath and anger, but it isn't!

I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them [today's sinners], but [rather] in this way: they place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then, if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course independent of the Spirit of God after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them. It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land bringing calamity and distress, sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey. Storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short, and if he is not restrained we shall see more terrible manifestations of his power than we have ever dreamed of. 4LtMs, Lt 14, 1883, par. 8

There is no question that the inhabitants of Canaan had unquestionably made their choice for Satan and rejected God. Their degrading worship practices, witchcraft and "might makes right" philosophy proved beyond question that they had irrevocably rejected God, they had "unplugged" themselves from the source of life and their ultimate destiny was death.

In fact, God specifically names the peoples who had made this irredeemable decision:

This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that He will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. Judges 3:10

NO, God's original plan was **not** for Israel to become "killers." God was Israel's protector and He would remove His sustaining, life giving power from the inhabitants of Canaan as needed.

I want you to notice the words of Jesus who is the Creator and sustainer of life (see Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:1-3) and NOT a killer. (Heb. 2:14 says that the devil is the one who "holds the power of death.")

In answer to Pilot Jesus said:

My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place. John 18:36

Two kingdoms. And two vastly different, basic philosophies on which they operate. One kingdom is strictly based on love and the other is based on fear. A “fight” based on love is vastly different than a “fight” based on fear.

We are born into Satan’s kingdom, ruled by lies and fear, and that is all we know. Jesus came to introduce us to God’s Kingdom ruled by love, which is a concept totally outside our comprehension.

Our language has no words to accurately portray the functioning of a kingdom of love. As a result, God uses our earthly language to try to convey a heavenly concept that is totally foreign to us. Our words like “fight,” “war,” “death,” “vengeance,” “punishment,” “wrath” etc. are used to try to picture a kingdom, a lifestyle, outside our natural inclinations.

God does not use threats, fear, coercion, or lies to force us to join His kingdom. That is what Satan does to keep us in his kingdom. God uses evidence, truth, with an invitation to join His kingdom while leaving us free to choose. When anyone joins God’s Kingdom they are spiritual babes with a lot of growing to become mature, adult Christians.

I like to think of spiritual growth as being similar to learning math. We begin with the basics—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Most people grasp these concepts without much trouble. Then we move on to algebra and geometry, which can be more challenging. Eventually, we reach calculus, which many—if not most—find confusing or even incomprehensible. Only a few go on to become masters of advanced calculus, and they often use a specialized vocabulary to explain their concepts. And so it is spiritually.

Unfortunately, prophets have to use the language of earth to describe the realities of heaven. Translators have to be as inspired as the original prophet to accurately reflect God’s message in a language different from the original prophet.

Maybe I can illustrate this growth from Paul’s letters to his protégé, Timothy. We find Paul’s advice to a young man:

Fight the good fight of the faith. 1 Timothy 6:12 (NIV)

we find an old man’s reflection on his life. In both of these passages the “fight” is NOT physical but spiritual. It is a life-long process of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in changing the character from being self-centered to being others-centered.

I have fought the the good fight, I have finished the race, ... there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which **the Lord, the righteous Judge**, will award to me...
2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

And what does Paul mean when he calls Jesus the “righteous Judge?”

If we can agree that God being JUDGE just means that He makes an accurate diagnosis of our ultimate decision, then we won't have to spend time on Monday's lesson!

Just as Matthew 25:31-46 says, God the Judge just separates the already sheep from the already goats. And in the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:31-43 Jesus added another very important concept, God waits for the weeds to mature so that there will be no question about which is which when the weeds are finally disposed of. Remember, after the millennium the wicked outside the New Jerusalem ALL choose to remain outside even though the 12 gates of the city are left wide open! (Rev. 21:25. "On no day will its gates ever be shut.")

We need to look at Israel's entrance into Canaan through "heavenly eyes."

Just a side note about this map before we get into Israel's conquering of Canaan. South, at the bottom of the map are the Edomites who were the descendants of Esau and in Num. 20:14-21 Israel was told to go around not through them.



Just to the North of them were the Moabites who were Lot's descendants by his oldest daughter, and further to the North are the Ammonites who were Lot's descendants by his youngest daughter. (Both Moab and Ammon were born of incest which wasn't prohibited until roughly 500 years later under Moses.)

Let's get back to Israel as they stand on the border of the promised land. This time, on the Eastern bank of the Jordan river Israel obeyed God's command to enter the Promised land and they followed Joshua and the priests through the Jordan river and conquered Jericho without a fight, though they did go into the city and killed all those who survived the walls falling.

After their signal victory in Jericho, Israel confidently sent only a small army to Ai, only to be soundly defeated. Because of Achan's disobedience God had let Israel attack Ai in their own strength and they lost—big time! Later, after Israel rooted out sin from their midst, Israel goes on to defeat all the “kings” in Southern Canaan. Joshua chronicles that successful campaign:

So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. **He left no survivors.** He totally destroyed all who breathed, **just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.** ...All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, **because the Lord, the God of Israel fought for Israel.** Joshua 10:41,42

Then Joshua adds, “This was what the Lord God of Israel had commanded.”

Evidently the hearts of the Israelites were not fully mature spiritually yet as they stood on the bank of the Jordan river ready to enter Canaan for It is just 3 chapters later in Joshua 13 we find the story of the death of Balaam. And remember, It was because of Balaam's recommendation that Israel had been enticed into idol worship by the Moabites not long before Moses died (Num. 22) and about 39 years after their parents had worshipped the golden calf!

Was this physical war of conquest God's original plan “A” for the Israelites? OR was this just a baby step in Israel's growth in learning to trust God?

Here are some interesting verses which seem to point to a dispossession not an elimination policy toward the Canaanites.

I will send hornets before you to drive (them) out.” But I will not drive them out in a single year ... Little by little I will drive them out before you. Ex. 23:28-30

The Lord your God will send hornets among them. Deut. 7:20

I sent the hornet before you which drove them out ... **it was not by your sword or by your bow.** Joshua 24:12.

God's original plan was not for an army to destroy the inhabitants but for a righteous people to displace them. The Canaanites foul, disgusting, worship services were diabolical, but God still gave them the freedom to choose between the God of Israel and the gods of Canaan.

There was still an opportunity for the Canaanites to respond positively to God's invitation as did Rahab, just as the Israelites were free to choose loyalty to Baal, as did Achan, and both were free to suffer the natural consequences.

God's original plan "A" was for Adam and Eve to both reject Lucifer's lies and then and there, the question of the government of the universe would have been settled once and for all.

That didn't happen so evidently God instituted another plan. However, even before sin, God had a contingency plan. God, In the being of Jesus, volunteered out of love for His creation to become human, the second Adam, providing for humanity the opportunity to choose for themselves entry into God's Kingdom rather than staying in Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of our birth.

I can speculate, with a sanctified imagination, that if the children of Adam had fully embraced God's promise and lived a committed life there would have been no flood, little or no OT, and the NT would have been vastly different even though Jesus would still have died at the instigation of Satan. Exactly how, no one knows!

But here in the book of Joshua, after approximately 1,500 years of sin and Satan's rulership of the earth, we have the story of God working through the Israelites, the progenitors of the Messiah. They were the only people, evidently, who recognized the Creator God, the true God, but unfortunately the only culture or society they knew was their pagan experience in Egypt for 400 years. The concept of love, forgiveness, and free choice had become foreign to them. All they were familiar with were the Egyptian gods who were to be appeased, bribed, hoodwinked or manipulated in various ways, because they were capricious and authoritarian, caring only for themselves. They were definitely not to be trusted! What about us?

Here in the USA, we live in a country founded on many of the concepts from God's Kingdom. That is not true for most of the rest of the world! Socialism, Communism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and paganism are the underlying principles of most other cultures. But even in our society we idolize worldly successful people who have money, power or a leadership position, contrary to the principle of love, the cornerstone of God's Kingdom.

What it comes comes down to is that any human, whatever their background or successes, when they choose to join God's Kingdom, they are spiritual babes, just like the Israelites were. The Israelites and any one of us has a lifetime of spiritual growth ahead of us.

It seems to me, and you are free to agree or disagree, that the O.T. from Abraham on is the story of how God was trying to establish and lead the nation of Israel by small spiritual steps into the kingdom of love. After the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah, God's focus was no longer on a nation but on the individual to join and represent His Spiritual Kingdom. Thus, the story of Israel is illustrative of what we as individuals face.

The result of focusing on the individual (instead of a nation) was not to establish an organized denomination nor a legal, governmentally recognized entity. These individuals are part of an

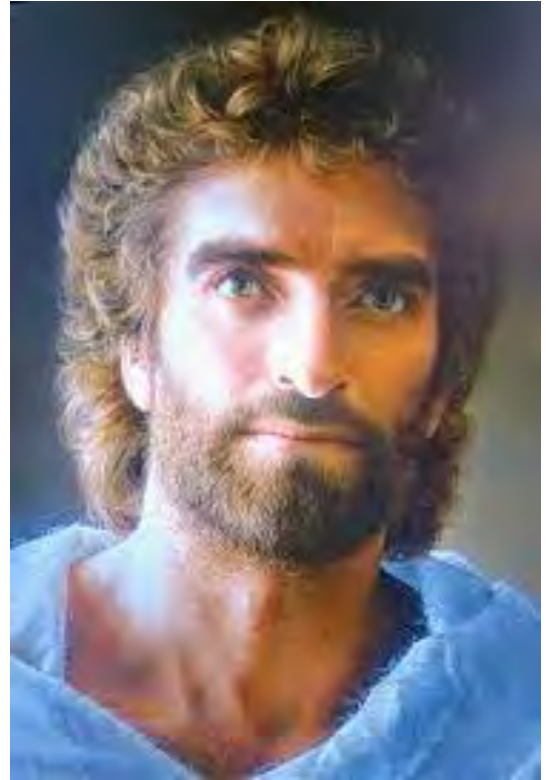
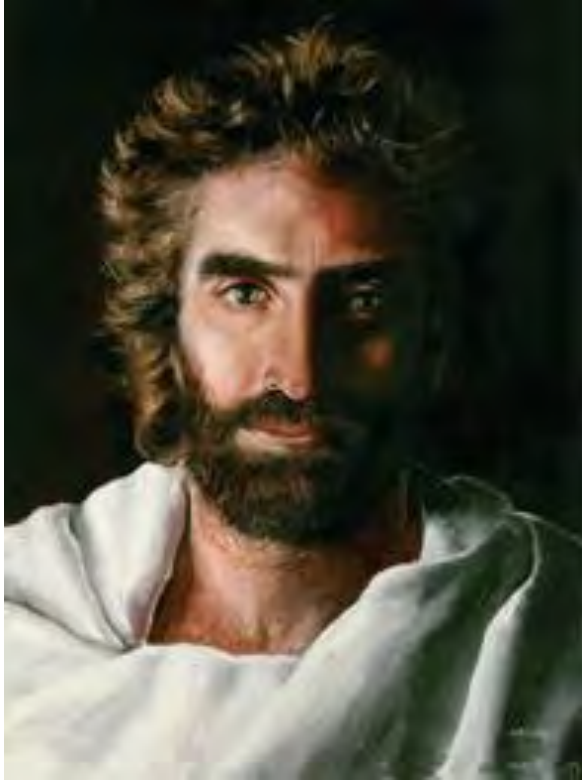
“invisible church” the “remnant church.” This “invisible” church has no human membership rolls, no statistics, no records of tithes paid or receipts for tax deductions, no organizational hierarchy with presidents, chairmen, popes or Elders. Just individuals, lead by the Holy Spirit to use their talents for the benefit of others, irrespective of their race, language, gender, education, physical challenges, or worldly power or position.

If this is true then we do not have to physically “fight” to conquer nations, cultures, or peoples but we are “fighting” internal habits, preferences, and desires in order to allow the Holy Spirit to change us individually into what we were originally created to be. And then the Holy Spirit, as in the Early Church, will inspire us to share our joy and happiness by inviting others into the same type of life.

WEDNESDAY

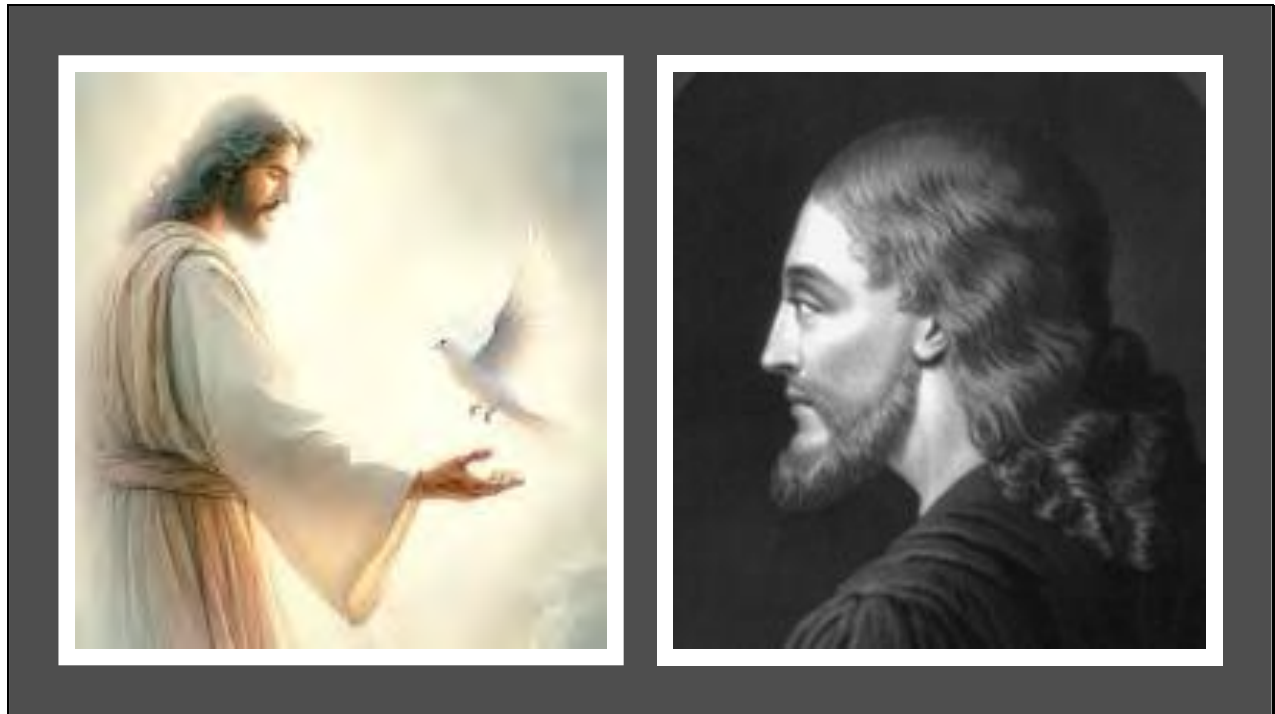
Wednesday’s lesson has a fantastic title: *Free Choice*. However, the lesson’s commentary is not so fantastic. It implies that God was using Israel to punish the Canaanites in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham. A sad picture of an imperial god punishing those who disobey him.

Free Choice is a bedrock condition of love. We are free to choose the rulership of God or Satan, the rulership of love or lies, the rulership ending in eternal life or eternal non-existence. Put in those stark terms it is easy to decide between the 2 kingdoms; but to put that decision into daily practice is not easy. It is a daily, individual “fight.” Satan will contest our decision for God every step of the way enticing us to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, which is very alluring! It is very easy to just give in, just quit the fight. And without the aid of the Holy Spirit it would be irresistible.



Akaine Kramarik had visions of Christ beginning when she was 4 years old even though she was being raised in an atheistic family. She was painting pictures at 6. This first picture here is her painting of Jesus which she named the Prince of Peace. She was 8 years old when she painted this picture. Her original picture of Jesus was stolen and so at 20 she repainted Jesus from her visions of Him. I love these pictures. Jesus just seems more loving and approachable than in most pictures, truly the Prince of Peace.

Here are two more pictures of Jesus out of the thousands that are out there. I like the first one because of the dove which to me indicates God's desire for peace and reconciliation with His creation. Of course, atonement is done through the Holy Spirit and His symbol is the dove. The second picture is incidentally the picture that Ellen White thought looked the most like Jesus whom she saw in her visions.



Isa. 9:6, a very well-known verse, it lists 5 names for the coming Messiah the last of which is Prince of Peace. He has always been the Prince of Peace and will always be the Prince of Peace. Every story in the OT and New Testament, every explanation, every description of Jesus Christ must reflect this facet of His character.

The Prince of Peace offers to every human eternal peace in His Kingdom to come and atonement or reconciliation or peace with God now. Satan can only offer the pleasures of sin for a short time (Heb. 11:25). Meanwhile, Satan is free to cause problems for Christians now—NOT JESUS—and note that Satan can only provide non-existence later.

Often, I hear of God developing my character now by testing or tempting me. I don't think so. James 1:14 says, "but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." We are born with the native instinct to reject God's protection and accept the lies of the Tempter, Satan. However, the Holy Spirit is near and willing to help when asked. He will begin changing our character which will bring us peace with God now, even amidst the problems and turmoil that we have brought upon ourselves. Oh yes, God does discipline, that is to teach us, but it comes only out of our choices when we accept or reject His protection and His desires in our life.

Is the spiritual implication of Israel's wars that God uses warfare, fear, force, and intimidation in our lives and that we should do the same in our evangelism **OR** are these wars of Israel symbolic of the individual struggle we have in choosing to conquer sin in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit?



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 6 The Enemy Within

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The lesson's focus is on Achan's sin and how God withheld His blessing from Israel until his sin was identified and he and those associated with him were removed from the camp.

Remember, Israel is not only a historical people who did real historical things, but the recorded events also serve as object lessons in the plan of salvation.

Who do the Israelites represent in the plan of salvation? The people of God, those who are called to represent God and take the gospel to the world.

And who does Achan represent? People within the church who are not serving God but themselves and their actions interfere with the work and plans of God.

Can you think of any places in the Bible where Jesus taught that there were enemies within the church?

In the parable of the field recorded in Matthew chapter 13, Jesus describes how, after sowing good seed, the **owner's servants** found his field infested with weeds.

When asked how this could happen, the owner replied that an enemy had done it. When asked if the workers should pull up the weeds, the owner answered,

- “No, ... because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” Matthew 13: 29, 30 NIV84.

The field represents the church. The good seed producing fruitful plants represents those converted to Christ—members of the church who produce fruits of righteousness because they have been reborn in heart by the Holy Spirit to have the selfless life of Christ in them.

The weeds represent the agents of Satan who are also members of the church, but these members have not been reborn in heart. These are members who attest to the doctrines, the fundamental beliefs, but do so motivated by their old, fallen, corrupt, fear-based, selfish heart. In other words, they still live and operate from the spirit of fear inherited from Adam.

These church members who are unconverted in heart are also represented by the five foolish virgins in the parable of Matthew 25. Like the wise virgins, the foolish virgins have lamps, representing the Bible, but they do not have any oil in them. The foolish virgins are the church members who don't have the indwelling Holy Spirit animating them with the life of Jesus; they do not have the motivating spirit of love and trust. While they attest to the right doctrines, just like the Pharisees who crucified Christ, they promote those doctrines from the motivation of fear and selfishness.

These are the enemies in the camp—so what is the difference between the two groups?

The difference is not how they appear on the outside, but what motivates them on the inside. This is why Jesus said to the religious leaders in His day,

- Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Matthew 23:27, 28 NIV84.

These religious leaders, members of God's authorized church, had the right doctrines, rituals, ceremonies, and Bible, but they had the wrong spirit.

The saved are those who have been reborn with a new spirit to love God and others more than self. They have the Holy Spirit living within them, empowering them with the Spirit of Christ. They no longer live *controlled* by the spirit of fear but of power and love and sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

But the agents of Satan are motivated by and act upon the spirit of fear; therefore, they interfere with the work of Christ but think they are following Him.

And what does the spirit of fear cause or result in? A legal religious theology, one of imposed laws and law enforcement to control behavior—externals, the white washing of the tombs; when the reality of God's kingdom is that salvation is about actual recreation, regeneration, and renewal of heart and mind by receiving a new life—the life of Christ—rebirth, becoming alive in Christ, healing what is on the inside. That is why the Bible says, man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.

Within the church, the wheat and the weeds grow together, representing the truly converted and the unconverted. Superficially, behaviorally, externally, these two groups appear identical:

- Both groups have publicly professed their faith in Jesus, declaring their acceptance of Him as their Savior.
- Both groups have undergone water baptism (or whatever other ceremony their organization requires).
- Both groups claim to believe the same doctrines, pay tithe, give offerings, attend church, dress appropriately, care for their bodies (spirit temple), observe Sabbath, and work to share the gospel—some as laymen, others as church employees, pastors, conference leaders, etc.
- Both groups participate in communion.

- Both groups study the Bible and claim it as their basis of faith.
- And both long for Jesus' soon return.

But they are *not* the same.

And they are *not* longing for the same savior.

Only the wise, only the wheat, only those who have been born again and are animated by the Spirit of Christ are saved, are on God's team, are able to advance the gospel and are longing for our Savior who when all power was given to Him used it to wash feet, and refused to use power to stop wicked people from injustice, refused to use power to protect Himself. Why? Because our Savior is the Creator whose laws are design laws and deviations from those laws cause pain, suffering and death. Thus our Savior uses power to destroy sin, not sinners, to save, heal, redeem, restore, not to torture, punish, and kill.

But the foolish, those with the Bible (lamp) but without the Spirit of Jesus (oil), work against Christ, interfere with the plan of salvation, and take a false gospel to the world—**not necessarily false doctrines but a false gospel**, because they set the doctrines in the false setting of a spirit of fear and selfishness, which always uses imposed law and some form of legal salvation, which results in them looking for a savior who will use external power to inflict punishment upon people to enforce his laws under the claim of justice—just like every kingdom of this world.

The false gospel focuses on behavior, law-breaking, and law-enforcement. It seeks to get rewards for oneself and punishment for one's enemies. It would call fire down on people who don't accept its "truth" as the disciples wanted to do when the Samaritans didn't accept Jesus and Jesus told them they had the wrong spirit. This dark gospel would use the power of the state to enforce religious laws (Saul of Tarsus, Dark Ages church). It is the dark gospel of the god of darkness, who is the source of death—the one who holds the power of death that Jesus came to destroy (Hebrews 2:14).

The church on Earth at the time of Jesus' second coming will be filled with both wheat and tares. Externally, they look the same; internally, they are not. The wise are animated and motivated by the Spirit of love and trust, having been reborn with the Spirit of Christ, while the foolish practice the same religion, use the same Bible, teach the same doctrines, but they have no oil; they are devoid of the Holy Spirit, they have not been reborn; therefore, all they are doing they do from their natural spirit of fear and selfishness, which results in a legal religion that operates upon the systems of this world, and they teach a god who functions like they do, a god who operates with imposed rules and external enforcement to punish sin-crimes.

What makes the false gospel and the agents of Satan so hard to identify is that the false gospel uses the same words as the true gospel, and it is often promoted with the exact same doctrines, the same fundamental beliefs, as the true gospel.

The key to identifying the false gospel is the false imposed law under which it attempts to advance, which is motivated by the spirit of fear with which we have all been born.

The spirit of fear inherited from Adam causes the mind to turn toward self, toward survival, toward doing what is necessary to protect and save self. Adam and Eve ran and hid from God, sewed fig-leaved garments, and cast blame away from self onto others.

The spirit of fear and selfishness leads not to self-sacrifice to bless others, but toward any means of making oneself feel safe. Inevitably, the fear-based systems of this world always end up using external power to dominate and control others, and it is always done through made-up laws and law-enforcement.

These made-up laws may not be through a formal government, or written code; they may be gang rules, cult leader edicts, cultural taboos, or religious regulations—but they are all made-up rules that require external enforcement. Their intention is to force conformity so that those in charge can feel good about themselves, can feel safe, and so that the unrighteous can hide from their own conscience, their own fear, insecurity, guilt, and shame.

The false legal theologies replace trust in Jesus, a trust that results in surrender of one's life to be reborn, with trust in legal payments, appeasements, and various legal mechanisms to protect them from legal punishment. Thus, they feel secure in claiming Jesus as their legal substitute but remain unconverted, fearful, trapped in this legal system with a god who is the source of inflicted death.

This false legal theology is such a diabolical twist because these fear-based individuals long to be free from fear while the very doctrine they cling to in order make themselves feel safe, and which they claim saves them, in reality perpetuates their fear (fear of punishment, fear of sins not being erased from the books, fear of standing before God without an intercessor, fear of forgetting to confess a sin, etc.) and undermines trust in God, teaching others He is the source of pain, suffering, and death that He inflicts as so-called justice. Thus, they cling to their spirit of fear, hiding behind the legal mechanisms of their false legal religion. They are not reborn, renewed, and they don't actually know Jesus.

Such individuals will find security, a sense of safety, in being members of the “right” church, participating in the “right” ceremonies, believing the “right” doctrines, and practicing the “right” religious activities (Sabbath, tithing, etc.).

Anything that threatens their legal understanding inflames fear, anxiety, and distress, which typically results in a hostile response to defend their belief—to eliminate the threat to their security. As Jesus said,

- This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:19, 20 NIV84.

The weeds in the church actively work to shut out the advancing light. The religious leaders in Christ's day opposed the Savior and the apostles; the church leaders in the Dark Ages opposed the Reformers;

likewise, the church leaders today who cling to the lie that God's law functions like human law and insist on a legal religion with a god who is the source of death also oppose the advancing light.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it was the church leaders who, at the 1888 General Conference, rejected the advancing light that God's law is design law. And today it is those who cling to this same lie who continue to obstruct the final message of mercy that is to go to the world.

EGW, who was at the 1888 meetings, wrote about those leaders:

- On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, because their spirit was the same. Afterward, when they had evidence heaped upon evidence, some were convicted, but those who were not softened and subdued by the Holy Spirit's working, **put their own interpretation** upon every manifestation of the grace of God, and they have lost much. They pronounced in their heart and soul and words that this **manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fanaticism and delusion**. They stood like a rock, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back by **their hard and wicked hearts**, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working. Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ.** EGW 1888 materials p. 1478.2
- But the work that **all heaven was waiting to do** (1888 Minneapolis) as soon as men prepared the way (Jones and Waggoner), **was not done. For the leaders closed and bolted the door against the Holy Spirit**" EGW Letter 123 (1902) Battle Creek Letters pp 55, 56
- "When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.** I have placed you in your proper position, which **those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. It is not you they are despising, **but the messengers and the message I send to My people.** They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. **Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment**; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, **they will walk in darkness.** I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and **be converted**, that I should heal them. **They have obscured their spiritual eyesight. They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power**; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word. Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily practiced. They have not set their hearts to seek Me. **They walk in the sparks of their own kindling**, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: "Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." **These words from God I have not dared to disregard.**"—EGW Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. To "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie," Nov. 5, 1892; 3MR 191.2.

The special message to lighten the world for Christ's return is the message that calls people back to Creator worship—this message is the message that rejects the Romanization of Christianity. What is that? The Romanization of Christianity is the lie that God's law functions like Roman law, and God functions like Caesar, made up rules, legally enforced through imposed punishments. The message that came to the church in 1888 was the message that God's laws are the laws the Creator built into the operations of reality, design law, and they do not function like the laws of creatures.

Jones, Waggoner, and White all taught that the Ten Commandments were added and not eternal, added by God's grace because of human sin and they are a codification of God's *eternal* design law of love. But the church leadership rejected this light and instead has clung to Romanism, the lie that God's law functions like human law and that justice is God using His power to inflict punishment. Thus the leadership of the SDA church sided with the unconverted, those who had their lamps, their Bibles, but did not have the Spirit of Christ, were not reborn. They did not have the oil of the Holy Spirit, and thus they were motivated by the spirit of fear which always leads to a legal religion of imposed law and law enforcement.

Some of those 1888 leaders, later repented and were reborn, but the church leadership, by and large, became like the Sanhedrin in Christ's day. There has always been in leadership a few like Nicodemus, but can we say today that the majority in leadership have embraced and taught God's design law and made this the central message in our publications, schools, and churches? Notice EGW's comments about church leadership after 1888:

- “I am in great travail of soul for our people. We are living amid the perils of the last days. A superficial faith results in a superficial experience... **All should see the necessity of understanding the truth for themselves individually.** We must each understand the doctrines that have been studied out carefully and prayerfully. **It has been revealed to me that there is among our people a great lack of knowledge in regard to the rise and progress of the third angel's message.** There is great need to search the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation, and learn the texts thoroughly, that we may know what is written.

The light given me has been very forcible that many would go out from us, giving need to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. The Lord desires that every soul who claims to believe the truth shall have an **intelligent knowledge of what is truth.** False prophets will arise, and will deceive many. Everything is to be shaken that can be shaken. Then does it not become every one to **understand the reasons** of our faith? In place of having so many sermons, there should be a more close searching of the Word of God, opening the Scriptures text by text, and **searching for the strong evidences** that sustain the **fundamental doctrines** that have brought us where we now are, upon the platform of eternal truth...

I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable. Study in Patriarchs and Prophets the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. This rebellion was extended, including more than two men. It was led by two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation, men of renown. Call rebellion by its right name, and apostasy by its right name, and then consider that the

experience of the ancient people of God with all its objectionable features was faithfully chronicled to pass into history. The Scripture declares, "These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." [1 Corinthians 10:11.] **And if men and women who have the knowledge of the truth are so far separated from their great Leader, that they will take the great leader of apostasy, and name him Christ our Righteousness, it is because they have not sunk the shaft deep into the mines of truth.** They are not able to distinguish the precious ore from the base material.

Read the cautions so abundantly given in the Word of God in regard to false prophets that will come in with their heresies, and, if possible, will deceive the very elect. With these warnings, **why is it that the church do not distinguish the false from the genuine?** The church thus misled need to humble themselves before God, and sincerely repent, because they were so easily led astray. **They could not distinguish the voice of the true Shepherd from that of a stranger...**

Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ. If men are so easily misled, how will they stand when Satan shall personate Christ, and work miracles? Who will be unmoved by his misrepresentations, professing to be Christ when it is only Satan assuming the person of Christ, and apparently working the works of Christ? **What will hold God's people from giving their allegiance to false christs?** "Go not ye after them." [Luke 21:8.] -- 12LtMs, Lt 1, 1897

- "The church is in the Laodicean state. **The presence of God is not in her midst.**" (Ms 156, 1898 – Notebook Leaflets from Elms haven Library, Vol.1, Need of Self- Sacrificing Effort, p. 99; Last Day Events, p. 49.
- "It has been some years **since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God.**" - Manuscript Releases 17, p. 216, 1898; Last Day Events, p. 50.
- "**It is working upon wrong principles** that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. **Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy.** The voice of the Conference ought to be the voice of God, **but it is not**, because some in connection with it are **not men of faith and prayer**, they are **not men of elevated principle...**

These things have kept my soul in great distress. At times I rise above it a little, and yet I know that **the wound is not cured; because if it were, the matter would not be continually presented to me.** A thing that is healed, is healed. **I was referred to the case of Achan.** The entire congregation of Israel was affected by Achan's sin. Because of it God could not help them, and when they went out to battle they were beaten by their enemies. Joshua prostrated himself before the Lord, and asked, What does it mean that the children of Israel flee before their enemies? God told him that there was an accursed thing in the camp, that spoil had been taken from the enemies of Israel. He told him that there was robbery and dissembling in the

camp, and that His blessing could not rest on the people till these things were cleansed from them.

These sins have been practiced in the work that has been done here. That God could bear with those who acted a part in this work as long as He has done, is a marvel to me.” 16LtMs, Ms 37, 1901, par. 20

- "I have but very little confidence that the **Lord is giving these men in positions of responsibility, spiritual eyesight and heavenly discernment.** I am thrown into perplexity over their course; and I desire now to attend to my special work, to have **no part in any of their councils,** and to attend no camp meetings, nigh or afar off. My mind shall not be dragged into confusion by the tendency **they manifest to work directly contrary to the light that God has given me.** I am done. I will preserve my God-given intelligence. My voice has been heard in the different conferences, and at camp meetings. I must now make a change... I shall therefore leave, leave them to receive word from the Bible... This is the light given me and I shall not depart from it." (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 4, 5)

How can we identify the true message and messengers from the false?

The true messengers are those who teach the truth about God as Creator, His character is as Jesus revealed, His laws are the laws only the Creator can establish and maintain, the laws that reality is built to operate upon. They teach that God is the source of life and that sin causes death, and that God, through Christ, destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Heb 2:14) and destroys death and brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim 1:10). And they practice God's methods in how they live and treat others, they present the truth in love and leave others free, they don't use the power of the state to try and coerce consciences.

The false are those who use the same language as the true, but they redefine God's law to function like human law, in so doing they teach that God is the source of death, that God uses the power of death to inflict punishment upon those who won't submit to Him. In so doing, they dethrone God from His rightful place in the seat of worship and adoration in the hearts of people and enthrone Satan, the god of this world, as the one being worshiped. And they will be willing to use the power of the state to enforce justice, including coercing consciences if the cause is a righteous one—like saving lives or saving souls.

And this all stems from believing the lie introduced into Christianity by Rome that God's law functions like human law. And the message for this time in history is to call people out of that fallen system of imperialism, in Bible symbolism called Babylon, and back to Creator worship. Coming out of Babylon is not a coming out of a geographic region, nor is it about leaving a specific denomination—this is a calling out of a mindset of fear and selfishness inflamed and promoted by the lie about God's law and a call back to Creator worship and the embracing of design law.

Read second paragraph,

- During the appropriation of the Promised Land, the Israelites had to learn the difficult lesson that their most dangerous enemy was not outside their camp but within their own rank and file. The greatest challenge that stood before them was neither the fortified walls of the Canaanite cities nor their advanced military technology but the obstinate will of individuals within their own camp to ignore the instructions of the Lord. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 46.

Do you see the object lesson parallel and application to our church today? We have been delayed in entering the heavenly promised land because of the obstinate will and refusal to accept the truth about God's law by the enemies in our own midst.

The membership of the church must stop looking to leadership to do their thinking for them, in the same way the disciples who were fishermen, tax collector, physician, could not look to the Sanhedrin to do their thinking for them. Jesus told them it was for their good that He leave them so the Holy Spirit would come and the Spirit would lead them into all truth. And how does the Holy Spirit do this? By working in their hearts and minds as they humbly study for themselves.

Today, the members of the church must stop looking to others to tell them the answers. They must get out their Bibles and humbly, prayerfully, study for themselves seeking to know the truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We must be ready to break with leadership if leadership refuses the advancing light.

Consider this historical quote, do you agree?

- As the light and life of men was **rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities** in the days of Christ, **so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation**. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the **religious leaders would not tolerate the light**, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. **In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of God**, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. **Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God**. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching **obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience**. *The Desire of Ages*, emphasis mine p. 232.

Does this apply to every church other than the SDA church, or could it apply to Adventist people as well?

My personal view and approach is that there is no other organized group on Earth in the position of the SDA organization—the SDA church sits where the Jewish nation sat 2000 years ago. Both groups positioned by God with His blessing for the purpose of taking a message to the world to prepare

people for the advent of the Messiah, the Jews for the first advent, the Adventists for the second advent.

But the Jews were not given exclusive rights to salvation. In that day, one did not have to become a Jew to be saved, look at all the non-Jews who came to Christ and were blessed and commended by Him as having more faith than the Jews. Likewise, one does not have to become an SDA to be saved.

In Christ's day, the official organizational leaders were the ones most aggressive in opposing Christ; and Jesus and His disciples did not spend any time trying to reform the Sanhedrin or get their sanction for the message He brought.

Likewise, I believe the SDA church was blessed with the message for this time, the special message to return to worshipping God as Creator and His laws as design laws, and that message is beautifully recorded in the writings of EGW. However, the official leadership has rejected it and taken forward a Roman penal legal theology which has corrupted the message.

I see value in modeling myself after Christ and the apostles and taking the message to the people while leaving institutional leaders to run their institutions.

I see no need to leave the SDA organization, there isn't another one that I believe has this special insight or understanding.

SUNDAY

Read last paragraph,

- The covenant between Yahweh and Israel involved the people at both individual and corporate levels. In the light of the covenant, Israel is treated as an indivisible unity of the chosen nation of God; therefore, the sin of one, or even some, of its members incurs guilt upon the whole covenantal community. As the Lord said, “ ‘Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them’ ” (Josh. 7:11, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 47.

Does this make sense or is it confusing?

Does it sound fair that the righteous in the camp would be held accountable for the secret sins of the wicked in the camp?

What is going on?

It is all about how one understands the covenant—and there are two covenants.

There is the eternal covenant of grace in which the Godhead covenanted among themselves for Jesus to become incarnate, take upon Himself the terminal sin-condition that Adam brought upon the race and destroy that condition and replace it with His sinless perfection while simultaneously exposing Satan as a liar and source of sin and death and revealing the truth about God and thereby providing the way and means of salvation to all who, through Him, choose to trust God. In other words, the Godhead agreed among themselves for Jesus to become the second Adam and redeem, save, deliver humanity from sin and death and restore the human species to unity with God, restore humanity to sinless perfection and eternal life. And in so doing make possible salvation for all who trust Him. This is the eternal covenant of grace established and accomplished by God.

But God made a temporary and provisional covenant with Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob and that was not one of salvation, but one of mission—the mission to be the repository of the Bible, object lesson of the sanctuary and ceremonial system, and the branch of the human family through whom Messiah would be born. This covenant was mission oriented.

Understanding these two covenants gives insight into what is happening with Achan. Achan's sin could not cause any other person's salvation to be lost, because salvation is based on the eternal covenant of grace and is participated in through individual faith/trust in God. However, Achan's sin could interfere with team mission success. The Israelites as a group were functioning like a team working toward a goal, and any team member can interfere with the goals of the team. Just as our own SDA leadership in 1888 and since as interfered with our team mission, not with individual salvation for any person.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Instead of unveiling the identity of the transgressor, God sets up a procedure that reveals both His justice and grace. After explaining the reason for Israel's defeat and calling for the sanctification of the people (Josh. 7:13), He allows a time span between the announcement of the procedure and its application, which gives Achan time to think, repent, and confess his sin. Similarly, his family (if they knew what had happened) has the opportunity to decide whether they want to be involved in the cover-up or refuse to be accomplices, like the sons of Korah, who avoided destruction by refusing to side with their father (compare with Num. 16:23–33, Num. 26:11). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 48.

Can we see that the procedure God implemented was a procedure of grace, a procedure that took time with slow progression and narrowing down of the focus slowly leading to the guilty party?

Rather than instantly identifying the guilty party, God directed this procedure to give time for the Holy Spirit to convict hearts and minds of Achan and his family and give them time to repent and confess. However, despite this, Achan and his family, like Pharaoh, chose to harden their hearts against the advancing truth.

So, we can see God's grace, implementing this procedure as a means of trying to bring the guilty party to repentance, but leaving the guilty party free to reject truth and love, instead choose and harden themselves in rebellion.

But what of the idea of justice? What kind of justice is represented in the stoning of Achan?

Did Achan die the second death or the first death? The first death.

Is the first death the death that is the punishment for sin? No, so is this the punishment for sin death?

Even while Achan is being stoned, was it still possible, if Achan would have chosen, for him to repent and receive salvation, like the thief on the cross did? Yes, so this death is not the death that is the wages of sin.

It is the first death, temporal death, the punishment of imposed law, that are used to govern human communities and human governments filled with unrighteous, sinful, selfish people like Achan. This does not represent God's heavenly kingdom, law, or government.

The Bible describes two different deaths, one is the wages of sin—that is eternal death and it is the result of sin and Satan is the one who wields this power and Christ destroys both death and Satan, the source and wielder of death. As the Bible says,

- “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” James 1:15 NKJV.
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction.**” Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.**” Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**” 1 Corinthians 15:24–26 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But those who believe the lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring imposed punishments, falsely believe justice is God using power to impose death, and teach that God is the source and wielder of death, thus denying the Bible. They do this because of stories like Achan, or stories like the Flood, Sodom, first born of Egypt and more where God used power to put people into the grave. But all those deaths are first death, sleep death, the type of death that all the righteous die, the death from which there is a resurrection. They are not the death that is punishment from sin.

And those who believe the lie about God's law, will misapply Scripture, not only using the examples of God putting people to sleep in first death and apply it to the final end of sin and sinners, but will quote texts like these in support of the lie:

- “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.” Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84.
- “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.” 1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84.

These texts seem to indicate God is the source of death—yet one can only draw that conclusion if they split the texts in half. If one requires all the Bible to harmonize, includes the texts we already read about the sin bringing death and Jesus destroying death, and then read these very texts in their entirety, the truth becomes plain.

There are two deaths, first death, from which there is a resurrection, and second death which is wages of sin death from which there is not resurrection.

These texts apply, by the texts themselves, to the first death, God is saying that He has created this artificial state of suspended animation, known as first death or sleep death, in which the person stops operating, but are not destroyed. He puts to first death/sleep and brings to life, wakes up. He brings first death/sleep and raises from the grave, awakens.

This is why Jesus said,

- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me **will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** Do you believe this? John 11:25, 26 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But the second death is the death God does not bring. It is the death that sin brings and it is eternal.

So God's justice is seen in Achan's story in protecting the avenue for the Messiah so Jesus can come and redeem humanity and provide the means whereby all who trust Him can be saved.

But, those who suggest God's justice is God using power to cause eternal death as punishment for sin are part of the enemies in the camp and interfering with the work of God.

Read bottom question,

- How does the realization that God knows all that you do, even your hidden things, impact how you live? How should it impact how you live? *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 48.

Does the law lens one holds make a difference to the answer a person gives to this question?

Consider a person who has been heroin and sharing dirty needles, and they get infection of their heart, endocarditis. I use this example because this person is breaking both kinds of laws—made up imposed laws, it is illegal to use heroin; and they are also breaking God’s design laws, the laws of health.

Now, does this person want to be taken before a magistrate, have their sinful deeds presented to the judge and be judged and sentenced? Or would they prefer to have an advocate, a defense attorney, plead their case to the judge and seek some means to have their crimes paid for or pardoned?

But, would this person, who is suffering from endocarditis and sick of heart, want to go to the doctor, and of course have the doctor informed of all their bad deeds that contributed to their sick condition. But the doctor goes much farther than the magistrate, he orders ultrasounds, MRIs, and examines the deep and secret recesses within the person seeking to identify and find every possible thing that is wrong. Why? For the purpose of punishing? No, for the purpose of healing and saving. This is the truth of who our Creator God is and king David knew this and that is why he prayed, search me and see the wicked way in me create in me a clean heart and renew your right spirit within me.

When we present God through the lie of Roman imposed law, we teach people to run and hide from God and create false theologies that function to hide people from God, erase deeds from books, pay legal penalties, and teach people that God is the source of death.

But when we return to design law we remove the barriers to reconciliation with God. We teach people the truth that it is their own sin-sick condition that is killing them and that God seeks only to save and heal them if they will simply trust Him.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the sin of covetousness. The lesson rightly connects coveting with unbelief, in other words, with not trusting God.

But the lesson describes it this way in the second paragraph,

- In his confession, Achan admits that he saw (ra'ah) in the plunder a beautiful mantle of Shinar, 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold. He then coveted (khamad) and took (laqakh) them. Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, the choice of Achan reveals that the sin of covetousness is the sin of unbelief. It suspects God of not wanting the best for His creatures and of hiding some exquisite pleasures from them, which belong to the realm of divinity only. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 49.

The lesson, in this paragraph, beautifully exposes the penal legal theology as fraudulent and false. It beautifully points out that sin is not a deed to be punished but a condition of heart that needs curing. They beautifully point out that sin is not the action but that break down of trust and love in the heart

and that the acts of sin are the fruits, symptoms, external evidences, manifestations of sin but not the sin itself, as Paul wrote in Romans 14:23,

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84.

I am so proud of the lesson for getting this right! Well done!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- As we have learned, God had given the pagan nations an opportunity to know about Him and to turn from their evil ways (see Lesson 5). They, however, had refused and were ultimately facing the judgment of God. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 51.

What kind of judgments of God were these? Are these judicial judgments, punishments for sin? Or something else?

What is the punishment for sin? Eternal death—did these nations and their people get punished with eternal death at that time? No, so this is not punishment for sin. Then what type of judgment is this?

Do coaches of teams ever make judgments? What kinds of judgments do coaches make?

- Who is selected to be on the team
- Who is best to play what position
- When to run this play or that play
- When to call time out
- When to require a player to do extra training
- When to bench a player
- When to kick a player off the team

Are the coach's judgments legal judgments? What are they based upon?

Does God make these types of judgments? Are these the types of judgments we see happening in the Old Testament?

Consider this quotation from a commentary on the Old Testament called *Patriarchs and Prophets*, what kind of judgment is this author describing:

- "How great is the long-suffering of God toward the wicked! The idolatrous Philistines and backsliding Israel had alike enjoyed the gifts of His providence. Ten thousand unnoticed mercies were silently falling in the pathway of ungrateful, rebellious men. Every blessing spoke to them of the Giver, but they were indifferent to His love. The forbearance of God was

very great toward the children of men; **but when they stubbornly persisted in their impenitence, He removed from them His protecting hand.** They refused to listen to the voice of God in His created works, and in the warnings, counsels, and reproofs of His word, and thus **He was forced to speak to them through judgments."** *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 587, emphasis mine.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Poland Report: Thanks to Patrycja Stupp, her husband Alo, and her entire team. The people we met were all kind, loving, genuine. We held community programs on Depression and Alzheimer's Dementia prevention; then held church programs on God's Design for the Mind; The God Shaped Brain; Healthy Love versus Love Addiction; Seven Levels of Moral Decision-Making; Resolving Guilt; and The Message of the 3 Angels. The programs were well attended and very positively received. Our book *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*, has been translated into Polish—a big thanks to Mirra Huber who was integral in this. And a copy was given by the Western Polish Conference of SDAs to every pastor in their conference. The design law view was very positively received and many had already been listening online and told how this view is freeing and helpful in their walk with God. Keep Poland and our friends there in your prayers that doors may open for this message to go forward.

England Report: We were blessed to speak at Newbold College as keynote speaker for the week of spiritual emphasis and presented God's Design for the Mind; The God Shaped Brain; Healthy Love versus Love Addiction. These programs also were well received. Many of the faculty, students, and community members told us that they had been following us online or read our materials and that these resources have been a blessing in their relationship with God and healing in their lives. I also recorded two presentations for their online learning program—one on depression the other on the seven levels of moral decision making. **Special thanks** to Billie Jordan and her husband Michael Dragoyvich who downloaded from our website our printable pdf files for *The Final Message of Mercy: The Three Angels* and *The Lie that Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ* magazines and had them printed and brought them to my talks and gave these away to the attendees. And Billie and Michael are now working with us to establish a Come and Reason Ministries distribution hub in England like we have in South Africa and Australia. If you are in England and would like to connect with them, we have established an email for them uk@comeandreason.com



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 7

Ultimate Loyalty: Worship in a War Zone

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

What do you think of the title? Does it have any application to all of humanity, to you and me today? Is not the entire world in a war zone, a spiritual war between good and evil?

One of my favorite verses:

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

We live in a war zone battling for hearts and minds and Satan seeks to destroy the hearts, minds, souls of people not merely their bodies. Remember what Jesus said,

- Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Matthew 10:28 NIV84

While no one wants to suffer physically, or die physically, should our ultimate concern be over mortal life?

And while we want to do everything to oppose evil, abuse, destruction, physical wars and killing—we at the same time don't want to fall into the trap that the ends justify the means, that we prioritize this world over loyalty to God, that we prioritize temporary mortal life over eternal life.

The apostolic church did not go down the path that the religious Jews did, that of perpetually going to physical war with Rome. They instead went to spiritual war and fought against lies fear, selfishness, with truth, love, and freedom. And they fought focused on the eternal, built upon trust established in truth, with lives that were reborn

by the indwelling Holy Spirit, they lived with integrity, praying for and forgiving their persecutors, dying as martyrs in the arenas of Rome and they were effective in cutting through the fear and selfishness reaching the captives of Satan and through their witness people were freed from fear and selfishness and reborn into the kingdom of heaven.

What is our role as Christians today to fight evil? What methods do we employ? When do we use physical force if ever? When do we surrender and pray for our persecutors?

Physical force to restrain and discipline, to put people in time out, to provide opportunity for people to sit, detox their brains, reflect—it would be beneficial to also provide people with spiritual food, which prison ministries do, to give them opportunity to heal, mature, be reborn.

But might and power cannot instill love, trust, loyalty, friendship, devotion and using might and power to punish people who do not love or trust you will only solidify that person in rebellion against you. It is one of Satan's most cruel lies that Christianity has been duped into teaching, that God wants out love but if we don't love Him then He will use His infinite divine power to torture us and kill us.

SUNDAY

Read Joshua 5:1-7:

- Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites. At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth. Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt. All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not. The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua

circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. Joshua 5:1-7 NIV84.

Remember these stories record not only real historical people who did real historical things, but they also serve as an object lesson for us.

- The Hebrew slaves in Egypt who left in the Exodus were born into slavery, and they represent human beings who since Adam's fall have been born slaves to sin on this earth (Psalm 51:5).
- Pharaoh who does not know God represents Satan the cruel slave master
- Moses represents Jesus who went into enemy territory, confronts the slave master, destroys his power, and frees the slaves.
- The pillar of fire and cloud represents God who leads the people, and is representative of the Holy Spirit with the two streams of fire empowering and leading the church
- Going through the Red Sea represents baptism, dying to the old life of fear and selfishness, being washed by the Holy Spirit and reborn with a spirit of love and trust.
- Pharaoh and his army being destroyed in the sea, when God let's go and stops using power to hold back the waters, represents the final end of Satan and his forces when God no longer restrains or holds back His power, when He stops veiling His life-giving glory and lets it wash over the earth again. Pharaoh and his army put themselves in the position where the waters drowned them. Satan and his army put themselves in the position where they reap natural consequences of sin when God no longer uses His power to shield them from it. As Paul wrote in Galatians, "Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction" Galatians 6:8.
- As the Hebrews cross the Jordan to conquer the promised land, they circumcise the uncircumcised members before they can be successful—why? What does this represent? What is the object lesson?
- A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Romans 2:28-29 NIV84.

What is circumcision of the heart and is it important in our current day warfare? Must we, our generation, experience this before we can succeed in this final end time warfare with Satanic forces on our way to our promised land?

Circumcision of the heart is the cutting away from our hearts, our affections, anything that is foundationally, functionally, operationally existing and interfering with our connection to God.

God is the source of life—anything that gets between us and God disrupts that connection and interferes with God's presence in our lives, interferes with His love, interferes with our ability to hear His voice, interferes with our ability to live in harmony with His designs for life.

As a metaphor, consider the fuel line on your car, anything that plugs up or gets in that line reduces the flow of fuel and eventually will cause the car to stop functioning. Or consider a fetus and the umbilical cord, anything that interferes with the umbilical cord, kinking it, reducing its connection and the flow of blood will undermine the health, growth, vitality of the fetus, ultimately if obstructed sufficiently enough causing death of the fetus.

We are all created beings who do not have life original, unborrowed, underived, we are not immortal beings who can live independently from God. We are creatures whose life originates in God and is sustained by God. Anything that interferes with that connection reduces God's presence in our lives, causes us to get sicker, weaker, decaying, and eventually when cut completely we will die, not just physically, but eternally.

Because of Adam's sin, we are born with our spirits, the animating life energy, the breath of life breathed into Adam, contaminated with fear and selfishness. We come into the world seeking to find things to comfort ourselves, to get for self, to make self feel better. We come into the world afraid and distrusting and we form all kinds of attachments, coping skills, belief systems, to make ourselves feel safe, secure, good—and every single one of those things that stands between our souls and God, everything that we prioritized above God, must be cut away and put in its proper place so our life is founded on God and God alone. We are to first love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and then love others as ourselves.

If we don't do this, then when what we value above God—not cognitively, we would never say we value something above God, but functionally—is threatened we are vulnerable to be overcome by fear and justify the methods of Satan to protect ourselves or others.

Ultimately, this circumcision of heart is only possible when we are reborn with a new life, a new Spirit, the life/Spirit of Jesus.

Read third paragraph,

- Our covenant with God should always be an answer of gratitude for what He has already accomplished for us, never an act of trying to obtain some benefit by legalistic conformity to His requirements. (This same concept, no doubt, was crucial to Paul's struggles with those who insisted that Gentile male converts be circumcised, as seen most clearly in his letter to the Galatians.) *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 57.

Do you agree? This so well said, and we of course agree, but can gratitude be instilled through imposed law and law enforcement? Not at all, only by design law is this achieved. When a child has parental rules imposed and discipline applied, the gratitude comes when they grow up enough to look back and recognize that the parents and their rules were never against them, the parental rules were not the basis of reality, they were artificial guardrails added in love to protect the ignorant and immature child from injuring themselves when breaking the design laws reality is built upon. But if the child never learns this and leaves the home thinking there is no reason for the rules, only authority to force compliance, typically gratitude is not generated, instead rebellion is.

And that is what penal legal theologies do, they teach that the ultimate problem with sin is not design law natural consequences that cause death, and God, in love, added artificial rules/laws to protect us until we grow up, but instead the penal legal system of theology teaches the lie that sin doesn't harm the sinner, God harms the sinner for breaking His rules, that God must use His power to torture and kill lest there is no justice, and this lie leads to rebellion against God, either in outright denial and rejection of God, or in rebelling against His character, methods, and government through surrender, conformity, and mindless following which destroys the image of God in people.

Is gratitude the same as love? No, but I think the legal model does have a way that could instill gratitude but still obstruct love.

For instance, if we were in legal trouble and God is required by law to use His power to kill us, but instead Jesus came and took our legal guilt upon Himself and God executed Him in our place and God, now offers us legal pardon because our penalty was legally

paid by Jesus, and if we accept it God won't torture and kill us, but if we refuse to accept Jesus's legal payment, then God will still be legally bound to torture and kill us in order to uphold his law, government, and justice—if this were true, would you be grateful that God provided Jesus to pay your penalty?

It would be like the child of an abusive parent who had a sibling who sibling that would step in and take the beating for them, they would have gratitude to the sibling taking the beating, but certainly wouldn't love and trust the parent.

So for some, the legal model may indeed inspire gratitude, but it really does not lead to genuine love and trust of the Father, that is why those who cling to it teach theologies that function to hide them and protect them from the Father, and many continue to live in fear—fear of a sin not being confessed, fear of the judgment, fear of being in God's presence without an intercessor, fear of committing a sin and getting hit by a truck and dying before one had time to confess and get it legally pardoned; and some create theologies to protect them from this fear, such as once saved always saved, the root to this teaching is fear of the Father while trusting in the legal payment made by Jesus.

So the legal model can lead to gratitude, and there is a place in our development for this thinking. Children, need rules, with external enforcement from parents, but only until they grow up, and when they grow up they don't need rules to brush their teeth or not play in the street, because they understand reality, design law, and choose to live in harmony with God's design laws. But in my experience, if people don't leave the legal way of thinking behind and mature to worship God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then instead of growing in love, they grow in fear and doubt, and become more hard-hearted, controlling of others, become intolerant—just like the legalistic Pharisees who crucified Christ.

What leads to genuine love is truth, the truth of who God is, the truth of how much God sacrificed and accomplished for us, the truth of why God had to do this, why Christ's death was necessary, the truth of the freedom we have in God's kingdom, the truth that God is the source of life and not the source of death, the truth that sin severs our connection with God and causes death. The truth that we are all born terminal and Jesus came and voluntarily took this terminal condition upon Himself and suffered the agony, torture, of heart and mind that sin causes, beyond any we could experience, that this suffering was not naturally His own but He took this position for the purpose of eliminating sin, of purging the infection of fear and selfishness, of destroying the carnal nature, of eradicating from humanity the spirit of fear and selfishness and replacing it

with His sinless holy spirit, the spirit of perfect love and trust. And thus we, when we are won to trust by the truth, open our hearts and become partakers of the divine nature, it is no longer our old fear-based self-centered spirit animating us, but the spirit of Christ living in us and we live to love God and others. We are reborn with a new life, a new breath of life, the life of Christ that He gives us freely and it is only possible because Jesus joined His divinity with our humanity and became a real human being descended from Adam.

Jesus took upon Himself the very life that was given to Adam and passed down to all of us, the life that Adam corrupted with fear and selfishness, but Jesus' humanity was also animated, brought to life, by the Holy Spirit who came upon Mary and impregnated her with Jesus. And Jesus then lived a sinless life and at Gethsemane and the Cross destroyed, purged, killed, the life inherited from Adam and rose again in a humanity animated only by His Holy Spirit of perfect love and trust. And He offers that life to us, we can receive that life through faith. This is not a legal adjustment in books, it is a reality, a real-world, internal power that indwells you through the quantum links that God built into all reality. We live new lives, the life of Christ.

This is love, this is gratitude on an entire different level. This is transformation, this is freedom from fear, guilt, shame. This is the gospel, the true message to go to the world. This is righteousness by faith, we become the righteousness of God.

The lesson calls our attention to Matthew 6:33, the context is Jesus telling people not to worry about what they will eat, drink, wear for the Father knows you need this, and then in verses 33 and 34 says:

- But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:33-34 NIV84.

What does this text mean to you?

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first?

Is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness the same thing as:

- claiming the blood of Jesus as your legal payment for your sins?

- joining the right denomination?
- doing various forms of church ministry?

What is seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

What do you think of this historical quote, does it provide any insights applicable to our seeking God's kingdom first?

- Christ calls upon the members of His church to cherish the true, genuine hope of the gospel. He points them upward, distinctly assuring them that the riches that endure are above, not below. Their hope is in heaven, not on the earth. **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,”** He says; “and all these things”—**all that is essential for your good**—“shall be added unto you.” *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 218, emphasis mine.

With many, **the things of this world obscure the glorious view** of the eternal weight of glory that awaits the saints of the Most High. They **cannot distinguish the true, the real, the enduring substance, from the false, the counterfeit, the passing shadow**. Christ urges them to remove from before their eyes that which is obscuring their view of eternal realities. He insists upon the removal of that which is causing them to **mistake phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms**. God entreats His people to give the strength of body, mind, and soul to the service that He expects them to perform. **He calls upon them to be able to say for themselves** that the gains and advantages of this life are not worthy to be compared with the riches that are reserved for the diligent, rational seeker for eternal life. *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 218, emphasis mine.

What is being described? Is this accurate or missing the point of Jesus' message?

What does it mean that Jesus calls upon people to be able to say for themselves that the gains of this life are not worthy to compare to heaven?

This is the principle of freedom, of liberty, that God's government operates upon and Paul wrote about in Romans 14:5:

- One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. Romans 14:5 NKJV.

This is how we are saved, healed, transformed. God has the power to reach into any person's heart and mind and make changes—but if He did that without that person's agreement, choice, consent, God would erase that person, destroy their mind, turn them into a robot, or replace them with another individuality. God cannot save you or me without each one of us being persuaded in our own mind to agree, to say yes, to trust, and then point by point, choose what we will cling to, hold to, cherish, value, esteem, prefer, in our own hearts and minds.

The Holy Spirit brings truth to our hearts and minds in ways we can comprehend with conviction and then leaves us free to choose what we will do, what we prefer, not merely what we cognitively agree with, but what we will choose to apply to our lives. And when we, in heart say yes, choose to apply it to our lives, then the Holy Spirit provides power to succeed and we are transformed.

And this is often painful, this is why we rejoice in our trials because those trials bring us to decision points where we identify and choose the things of God and let go the comforts, securities, values, attachments of this world. But often this is painful, but with each and every choice for God we are transformed and mature.

What of Jesus words not to worry about the future—how do we apply that? Do we find that the devil tempts people to live in fear of the future?

What do you think about the commentary saying:

- He [Jesus] insists upon the removal of that which is causing them to **mistake phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms.**

What does Christ insisting mean? Is it a rule and if you don't you get into legal trouble for not doing what God insists? Or is it like a doctor who insists that if you are to get healthy you must stop smoking?

What are phantoms? Any examples in society today of people mistaking phantoms for reality and realities for phantoms?

- No male or female
- Climate change is going to end the world

- More laws passed by government will fix societies problems (for instance passing more gun control laws will resolve violence in society)—is the problem of violence because of guns, or because of lack of Christ in hearts and minds?
- In the church, the fantasy God's law and government function like human law and government and that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death

How might Satan trick people into believing that imposed law and law enforcement is the way to justice, to righteousness?

By using those on his team who are not converted to undermine the guardrails of society, the imposed laws and their proper restraining enforcement, which will result in greater anarchy, chaos, abuse, crime, higher prices, injustice, fear, distress, ultimately leading to a backlash of greater imposed law and law enforcement which does results in reduced crime, safer streets, less violence in communities, and this leads people to conclude that law and law enforcement is the way to justice.

But God's kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Safety in heaven is not established by a heavenly police force, angels with flaming swords on every corner and the best surveillance system in existence. No, heaven will be safe not because of imposed law and law enforcement but because God's design law of love, truth, freedom and trust is written upon the hearts of every person and every being there is completely trustworthy.

This is the reality of the gospel, the good news about God. That He is not the kind of being Satan alleges. God is Creator and His laws are the design laws reality is built upon and harmony with Him and His design laws are the basis of life, health, and happiness. Satan is a creature, he cannot build reality so he must govern by made up rules enforced through punishment.

When we teach God governs by made up rules enforced through punishment we are replacing the truth about God with Satan's lie and leading people away from love and trust and into a system of fear and insecurity, which will fuel the rise of the beastly system of Revelation—seeking law, order, and justice.

This is why the final message that prepares people for the second coming is a call to return to worshiping God as Creator, and that requires we recognize His laws are design laws.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Joshua 8:30–35 plays a significant role in shaping the whole theological message of the book. By linking one of the most gruesome, violent stories (war) to something totally different—a scene of covenant reaffirmation (worship)—Joshua takes us back to one of the most important theological themes launched in the book at the outset: Joshua has the mandate of leading Israel to a life of covenantal obedience (Josh. 1:7). This is also the picture of Joshua at the end of the book (Joshua 24). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 59.

What is covenantal obedience?

Read the third paragraph,

- Notwithstanding the importance of warfare and the conquest, there is something even more vital: **loyalty to the requirements of God's law**. The conquest is only one step in the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel and the restoration of all humanity. **Faithfulness to the precepts of the Torah constitutes the ultimate question in the destiny of humanity**. Joshua writes the copy of the law on large, whitewashed stones, different from the stones of the altar (compare with Deut. 27:2–8). Thus, the stones, which probably contained the Ten Commandments, formed a separate monument in the vicinity of the altar, constantly reminding the Israelites of the privileges and duties implied in the covenant. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 59.

What do you hear as the message in this paragraph?

Does how one understands God's law functions impact how one understands God's requirements, what faithfulness to God's law is?

The lesson references Joshua 1:7 which reads,

- Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Joshua 1:7.

Consider, if we could stand at the foot of the cross, and talk to Caiaphas and the other Jewish religious leaders who crucified Christ, what do you think their answers would be to these questions:

- Is it important to have covenantal obedience to God?
- Is it important that we obey God's law?
- Would it be important to obey the law God's servant Moses gave us?

And if we asked them, "Why are you crucifying this fellow?" Wouldn't they answer, "Well you just said it yourself, we must be obedient to the covenant, we must obey God's law, we must obey the laws God gave us through Moses and this fellow keeps breaking them. Moses said to stone the adulterer, but this man forgave her. Moses said we could divorce our wives, but this man said we should not. Moses taught us not to work on the Sabbath, but this man heals on the Sabbath, His disciples pick grain on the Sabbath. Moses taught us to wash in a certain way before eating, but this man doesn't direct His disciples to do so. Moses taught us that laws must be enforced and that the evil must be purged from the community and that is what we are doing because we are children of both Abraham and God and we are faithful and obedient to the covenant."

Is the lesson suggesting that covenantal obedience is legal obedience, rule keeping, rule enforcement? Isn't that the type of obedience the Jewish leadership was giving 2000 years ago and it made them an enemy of God?

Paul takes up this entire misdirected legal focus to obedience in Romans and contrasts the obedience that comes from law with the obedience that comes from faith or trust and starts out the book in Romans 1:7 with:

- Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.
Romans 1:7 NIV84

Paul then tells us in Romans 1:20 that God's divine nature is seen from what He has made so that men are without excuse. Paul is telling us that God's kingdom is the kingdom of reality, built upon design laws that govern the operations of nature, the nature that the Creator built, and not upon made up legal rules. He goes on to say,

- All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. [Here he is referencing the written law, the Torah, the law of Moses. And he goes on to describe that righteousness is not from this type of imposed law keeping.] For it is not those who hear the

law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves**, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the **requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) Romans 2:12-15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is he saying? That the design laws of God are built into the operations of reality, and if no one ever teaches you about them in school, if you never read about them in a book, but you recognize them in nature and live in harmony with them because you value them and choose them, then the design laws of God become part of your being, your mind, your heart, and that is the new covenant experience, returning God's design law for life into the operations of our hearts and minds. And this cannot be done through external legal means.

Notice what Paul writes next,

- Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Romans 2:17-24 NIV84.

This is analogous to saying to doctors: you who call yourself healthcare leaders and rely on the knowledge in your medical textbooks and brag that you are more educated and know about medicine and health because you went to med school and got educated in medicine; if you are convinced in your own mind that you are a guide to the sick, a teacher to the infirmed, because you have the medical text book, why don't you teach yourselves how do live healthy? Why don't you stop smoking? Why don't you stop drinking? Why don't you get 8 hours of sleep per night? You who abhor sickness in others, who brag about your medical expertise, why do you dishonor God by breaking

his laws of health in how you live? As it is written God is misrepresented among people because of you.”

After Paul chastises them for having a legal rule oriented approach to religion while they live in violation of God’s design laws. He then writes:

- In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God’s law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God’s law but don’t obey it. Romans 2:27 NLT.

Paul is saying, in fact those who have never been to medical school but who live in harmony with God’s laws of health will condemn you doctors who have the medical text but break the laws of health.

Then Paul goes on to write how circumcision is not legal, behavioral, external, but circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, which is reality, cutting away the spirit of fear and selfishness and establishing our identity upon God’s Holy Spirit and life of Christ of love and trust. Being restored into harmony with God’s design laws.

Paul continues to make his case that imposed law, legal religion, external performance has no saving power, it is the reality of Jesus restoring His living law of love into humanity that matters. We read in chapter 3:

- But now God has revealed a healthy state of being — a character that is right and perfect in every way — that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the Ten Commandments were pointing your minds toward. This perfect state of being comes from Christ and is created within us by God when we place our trust in him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference among any ethnic groups, for all humanity is infected with the same disease — of distrust, fear and selfishness — and is deformed in character and falls far short of God's glorious ideal for humanity. Yet all who are willing are healed freely by God's gracious Remedy which has been provided by Jesus Christ. God presented Jesus as the way and the means of restoration. Now, through the trust established by the evidence of God’s character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also

be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 REM.

And we will skip all the way down to Romans 14, where Paul writes:

- “Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84.

And this is the issue, has the heart been transformed from distrust, fear, and selfishness to truth, love, and selflessness? This is the question and this cannot be accomplished by imposed law and law enforcement, only truth, love, and freedom to win us to trust and then recreate us in righteousness.

So real obedience is the obedience that springs from love and trust in God and stems from a heart that has been reborn and is motivated by the Spirit of Christ.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Mount Ebal is mentioned only in Deuteronomy (Deut. 11:29; Deut. 27:4, 13) and in the book of Joshua (Josh. 8:30, 33). Along with Gerizim, it was the site where the blessings and curses of the covenant were to be recited. More specifically, according to Deuteronomy 11:29 and Deuteronomy 27:4, 13, it had to be the site of the curses. Here the Israelites were to stand on either side of the ark in the presence of the priests (Josh. 8:33). One group stood in front of Mount Ebal, the other in front of Mount Gerizim. Here they symbolically enacted the two possible ways of relating to the covenant. The sacrifices that were brought there pointed to Jesus, who took upon Himself all the curses of the covenant so that all who believe in Him might enjoy its blessings (Gal. 3:13, 2 Cor. 5:21). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 60.

The lesson points us to an interesting object lesson enacted by the Jews, instructed by Moses and carried out by Joshua when they entered the promised land. And I was not familiar with this particular series of events and found it fascinating to dig into.

- When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are to possess, you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Deuteronomy 11:29 NET.

Mount Gerizim is the mountain where Abraham camped and built his first altar in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). Jacob settled at Shechem, nearby, and dug a well from which Jesus later requested a drink from the Samaritan woman (Genesis 33:18-20; John 4:5-7).

Mount Gerizim was fertile and Ebal was more barren; and Gerizim represented life, harmony with God, whereas Ebal death, disconnection from God.

As they enter the land the 12 tribes split, six descended from Rachel and Leah assemble before Gerizim and the four tribes descended from the handmaidens plus Leah's youngest Zebulun and Reuben who betrayed Jacob by sleeping with his handmaiden, assembled in front of Ebal.

The priests with the ark of the covenant stood between the two mountains. Joshua erected an altar on Ebal and made sacrifices along with the monument that posted the law along with the blessings and cursings.

What does all of this represent?

Blessings, life, health, come from living in harmony with God's design laws for life. We cannot experience health while violating the laws of health. Conversely, we cannot avoid healthy results from harmonizing with them. God's laws are the laws the Creator has built reality and life to operate upon. Break them and we injure ourselves and experiences the curse of sickness, disease, decay, and death. This is the curse all humanity is suffering under because of Adam's sin, because Adam broke God's design law for life and corrupted himself with fear and selfishness.

Every human being since Adam, is born infected with sin, with a spirit of fear and selfishness and is dead in trespass and sin (Psalm 51:5). We are born with a terminal sin condition that we did not choose and which we are not guilty for, but that condition, without remedy will still cause us suffering and death. This is just like a child born HIV infected the child did nothing wrong, but still has a condition that without remedy will cause symptoms and death.

We of ourselves cannot cure, heal, cleanse ourselves; we cannot do any work that will provide us with a new life, a new sinless spirit of love and trust. We cannot save ourselves; we can only be saved from the curse of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus, who took this humanity upon Himself, merged with His sinless life and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a cleansed and purified humanity to become the second Adam, the new head of humanity. Jesus became a real human, partaking of the life descended from Adam, and was really tempted in all ways like us, and really chose with human abilities to say no to every temptation, and really destroyed and purged the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a sinless humanity that He took into heaven and now reigns over God's creation.

Jesus becoming human and giving His life as a voluntary sacrifice in order to save humanity from sin, destroy death and the one who holds its power—that is the devil, and secure the universe unfallen in their loyalty was all symbolized by the altar and sacrifices made by Joshua on Mount Ebal (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 1:20).

Because of Jesus, every human is offered with a free to us (not free to God) remedy. Jesus offers us a new life, a new spirit, we can become partakers of the divine nature and exchange our natural fear-driven terminal life of sin for His sinless life of love and trust and be reborn via the indwelling Holy Spirit. And then, like Paul, we can say it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

We can leave the dead life behind and join Jesus and the living saints, by partaking of Jesus through faith. We can move from our natural terminal sin-sick state to a faith-filled abundant life state of being, which is symbolized by moving from Ebal to Gerizim. And the only way to get from Ebal to Gerizim is by the ark of the covenant, the gospel covenant must be experienced, the sinners must be atoned, must become at-one with God again. And this is only possible by partaking of Christ and being reborn, which united us with Him. And this was all symbolized by the ark of the covenant.

Remember that three objects were placed inside the ark: manna, the Ten Commandments, and Aaron's rod that budded—in that order. And this is symbolic of the covenant and how we participate.

The manna represents the bread that came down from heaven, the living Word of God. Jesus is the Word made flesh, who told us that we must eat His flesh and drink His

blood if we are to be saved (John 6:53). Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. In order from us to leave the barren wasteland of Ebal—this world of sin, we must first partake of the truth embodied, revealed, and fulfilled in Jesus. This truth destroys the lies and wins us to trust.

Then, as we choose to trust and open our hearts to God, the Holy Spirit comes and we receive a new life, the life of Christ, which is the fulfillment of God's living law, symbolized by the placing of the Ten Commandments into the ark. We receive this new life through faith and as the New Covenant tells us God's law is written upon our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10). This represents the new sinless life we receive via the indwelling Holy Spirit who enables us to live in harmony with God and His living law of love. This is also symbolically taught in the communion service as partaking of the wine, the bread in the communion service symbolically represents the truth, just as the manna does, and the wine represents the blood of Christ, which represents His sinless life. As Leviticus states, the life is in the blood (vs. 17:11). This is how we move from death (Ebal) to life (Gerizim) by actual, in reality, in fact, receiving the life of Christ via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

And then, we who were dead in trespass and sin come to life and bring about the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And this is symbolized by Aaron's dead rod that came to life and budded and produced fruit.

The events recorded in Joshua as the children of Israel entered Canaan, are theater, object lesson, acted out drama depicted the reality of what God has done through Jesus to redeem humanity from sin and instructs us on how we can participate through faith in the free gift of salvation.

God is calling each of us to internalize the truth, open our hearts in trust, receive through faith the indwelling Holy Spirit and be reborn with the life of Christ, as Paul wrote:

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

- The establishment of the sanctuary, “My Tabernacle,” represents the fulfillment of God’s promise to live among His people (Exod. 25:8; Lev. 26:11, 12) and reveals the central theme of the book: God’s presence in the middle of Israel has made possible the possession of the land and is going to be a continual source of blessing for Israel and, through it, to all the earth (Gen. 12:3). The worship of God takes center stage and preeminence, even over conquest and allotment of the land! The presence of the sanctuary, and later the temple, should have always helped the people realize the presence of God among them and their obligations to follow the covenant. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 61.

This sentence is not quite precise in my understanding, “The establishment of the sanctuary, ‘My Tabernacle,’ represents **the fulfillment of God’s promise** to live among His people...”

No, the fulfillment of God’s promise is Jesus who became incarnate and tabernacled among us in the temple of a human body, and said to the leaders that they would destroy His temple but He would raise it back in three days.

The establishment of the sanctuary was not the fulfillment of God’s promise but was an object lesson affirming the promise and teaching of its ultimate fulfillment.

What do you think? Am I misunderstanding, was the sanctuary built by Moses the fulfillment of God’s promise to live among His people, or an object lesson demonstrating the yet to come fulfillment?

Any questions about the object lessons of the sanctuary and their importance to us today?

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Also, through the symbol of the sacrificial lamb, the Feast of Passover pointed back to the redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. But it also pointed forward to its antitypical fulfillment in the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36;

1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19), who ransomed us from the bondage of sin. At the Lord's Supper, before offering Himself as the Ultimate Sacrifice, Jesus transformed Passover into a memorial of His death (Matt. 26:26–29, 1 Cor. 11:23–26). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 58.

I like how the lesson said, “ransomed us from the bondage of sin.” Yes, sin holds us in bondage and Jesus ransomed us from it. The ransom is the price necessary to free one from bondage, and the lesson rightly points out that it is sin that we need to be freed from.

All too often, the metaphor of ransom is misplaced, people teach Jesus paid a legal price not to ransom us from sin, but from God, from God's legal justice, to pay the legal penalty to ransom us from God's law. But the lesson got this right, He paid the price to ransom us from sin. As John the Baptist said, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, not who takes away the punishment of God for sin.

And what are the root elements of sin that hold us in bondage that Jesus died to free us from? The lies that we believe about God that keep us from trusting Him. Jesus lived, revealed, and provided the truth to destroy the lies and set us free restoring us to trust in God. And this truth is symbolized in the flesh of the Passover Lamb that they ate, and was replaced by Jesus with the bread.

Jesus is the Word made flesh and as we ingest the truth of Jesus we are ingesting the flesh of Jesus, and the truth nurtures our minds and souls and destroys lies ultimately winning us to trust.

But we need something else provided by Jesus to ransom us from sin besides the truth, something else holds us in bondage beyond the lies that undermine trust and that is our own fallen carnal nature, the animating spirit of fear and selfishness that we inherited from Adam and Eve.

Jesus came, partook of that life, but purged the spirit of fear and selfishness and replaced in His humanity His Holy Spirit of love and trust. And when we partake the flesh/bread, the truth, and are won to trust and open the heart then we receive the Holy Spirit who takes the life of Christ and reproduces it in us. It is not longer I that lives but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20). Thus we become partakers of the divine nature. And as Leviticus 17:11 says the life is in the blood, we receive a new life, a new animating energy, spirit, the life of Christ and that is symbolically taught by drinking the wine.

So the Passover is the festival that teaches that when Adam and Eve sinned God passed over their sin. He did not allow them to reap what separation from Him causes, but in Genesis Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. The Seed of the woman is promised to come and crush the serpent but will be bruised in the process. And as we partake of the sacrificial Lamb, partake of the truth, the flesh, the bread we are won to trust and open the heart to receive the life, the blood, of Christ we are reborn and saved from sin.

This is a requirement to salvation. The people participated in the symbolic Passover before going into Canaan and we must participate in the true Passover, be reborn and partake of the life of Christ in order to go into heaven.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Forming a New Come and Reason Distribution Hub in England: If you are interested in connecting with our team in England you can contact Michael Dragoyvich and his wife Billie Jordan at UK@comeandreason.com



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 8

Giants of Faith: Joshua and Caleb

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read the first paragraph,

- Every parent knows that their children learn by example, don't they? How many parents have fretted over seeing their children follow their bad traits instead of their good ones? Whatever our age, we find it easier to do wrong than to do right. It's just part of what it means to be fallen beings. "For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15, NKJV). Who can't relate? *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 64.

What do you think of the idea that whatever our age it is easier to do wrong than to do right?

Is this an absolute truth, a situational truth, or an untruth? If it contains truth, when is the truth?

Does this idea undermine victory in Jesus? Does it fit with the belief about sanctification, maturing in Christ, overcoming sin?

Is it the same as saying that throughout life we will continue to struggle with temptation?

Have you experienced any victories in your life, areas in your life that through God's grace you have overcome and, experienced a new motivation and today it would be more painful, more distressing to you to reengage that behavior than it was in the past? In other words, are there certain areas in your life where it is easier to obey than not to obey?

A simple example, for small children it is easier for them to disobey the rule to brush their teeth than to obey it. They need constant reminders and oversight to obey. But, what is actually easier for you today, what would be harder for you to live out and do, keep brushing your teeth every day or stop brushing them? Why?

Is there a lesson in this that applies to Christian maturity? Then back to what the lesson suggested, is it an absolute truth that "Whatever our age, we find it easier to do wrong than to do right"?

They quote Romans "For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15, NKJV).

What do we understand this to mean? Is this a person before conversion, during conversion, after conversion?

My view is that conversion is the experience of being reborn with a new Spirit, the Spirit of love and trust, the Spirit of Christ, which brings into the heart new desires, new motives, new priorities. And that is when the journey to spiritual maturity actually begins. We now desire to live out God's methods, and begin to choose to apply them, however, our new spirit with new motivation to love and trust is still operating upon the platform of a brain that prior to being reborn with the spirit of Christ, had habituated certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting and these wired in patterns (habits) established prior to conversion emerge reflexively and spontaneously when not actively thinking about it, and the writer is describing this.

An example of this process is deciding, because you have read studies on brain health, that changing the hand you brush your teeth with causes the brain to make new pathways, so you decide one day that you will do this. What is likely to happen that first evening when you are talking with your spouse or listening to a podcast when you go to brush your teeth? You will most likely brush with the same hand you always used. And then a few minutes later when you get into bed you will think, "Oh! I was supposed to brush with my other hand!" Do you then think, "I am a loser, I can't change, I am beyond hope. Why do I try?"

Or do you know that because you were not thinking about it, you would do what you had previously wired into your brain? And if you want to unwire the old habit and wire in the new, what do you have to do? Get up and brush your teeth again with the opposite hand. And this "stumbling" with the old behavior will recur for many days, you will be in the middle of brushing with the usual hand and then remember and change midway and then you will pick up the tooth brush with the usual hand, but remember and change, and so on until you finally wire in the new and stop using the old and that circuit slowly degrades.

Now, through this entire time of change, have you ever been in rebellion? No! Your heart was still committed to doing the new, but you were not yet capable of automatically doing it so without purposeful thought the old pathway activated and you carried out the old behavior. This is true whether it is teeth brushing or old emotional responses, negative thought responses, word or behavior responses, but, being converted with a new heart as soon as you recognize the old pattern your new heart says, "Oh, that is not what I intended to do." And you immediately go about doing it the new way, seeking God's grace, presence, forgiveness if necessary, and power to succeed. Such a person is not in rebellion against God, and that is why Paul a few chapters later in Romans 14 states,

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:5 NIV84.

And it is why the Bible states,

- "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84.

The outward appearance refers to more than physical appearance it includes the deeds, behaviors, and words, what man looks at on how well one behaves, how well one performs a task. But God looks on the heart motive, the true desire of the heart, not the momentary lapses that occur after rebirth. Those are residual symptoms of the damage of sinful living that God wants you to recognize and be unhappy with so you will continue to choose to activate the new pathways and stop activating the old. But He does not want you to buy into the lie that this means there is no victory, that we continue to live in sin, which is distrust and rebellion, and do not mature or grow.

The penal legal view focuses on the externals, the outward appearance, the deeds and behavior, God is our Creator and He focuses upon the design law reality of what salvation is, on the heart, the motive, the animating spirit that drives the action. Are we living in love and trust, and in our healing journey when we fall short do we grieve and run to Jesus longing for and experiencing further development and maturing?

I can tell you in my life, this is how it works. I have had certain wired in ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, reacting, that have fired without my conscious intention in certain situations, and when that happens I have learned to say, “O what a wretched man am I who will save me from this weak biology that has these old patterns wired in?” And I go to Jesus and I experience His grace and over time He has worked in me and my brain is rewiring and change is happening and new automatic responses are developing and it is easier to do the right and harder to do the wrong.

And because this understanding of how reality works in harmony with God’s design laws this is how I paraphrased this section of Romans 7:

- I am frustrated with what I do! For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, my old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. What is happening is this: I have come to trust God, and I desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses — which present almost reflexively in certain situations — have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. I know that my mind was completely infected with distrust, fear and selfishness, which totally perverted all my desires and faculties, so that even when distrust has been eradicated and trust has been restored, the damage caused by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So, I find that at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do: No! They are remnants of my selfish, unconverted mind. So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not myself that acts, but the vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed. And through God's grace, they will soon be removed.

So I find this reality at work: When I want to do good, my old selfish habits and residual feelings of fear are right there with me. In my mind, I rejoice in God's methods and principles,

but I recognize that I remain damaged from years of being infected with distrust and practicing Satan's methods, so that even though the infection of distrust has been removed, the old habits of fear and self-promotion tempt me from within. What a damaged and corrupt man I am! Who will deliver and heal me from a brain and body so diseased and deformed? Praise be to God—for he has provided the healing solution through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I find that in my mind I am now renewed with trust in God and love of his methods, but my brain and body remain damaged by years of self-indulgent behavior. Romans 7:15-25 REM.

So, do we anticipate victory, that right doing becomes easier than wrongdoing as we walk with Jesus or not?

What about Enoch, Elijah, Moses—yes Moses still had his momentary lapse at the rock, but overall, do you think day to day as these individuals walked with Jesus wrongdoing remained easier than doing right?

SUNDAY

What is faithfulness?

What does it mean to be faithful? How would you describe it?

If we could go back in time and interview Saul of Tarsus before his Damascus Road experience, and asked him, as he is persecuting Christians, “Saul, are you being faithful to God and His covenant with Israel?” What do you think he would have said?

Can people be faithful to something other than God and God’s cause?

Would faithfulness include loyalty, reliability, consistency? Would it also include integrity, faithfully fulfilling one’s duties, meaning to the standard or best of one’s abilities, not cutting corners?

Doesn’t God want our faithfulness—people who are both reliable as people, but who will be also will stay true to and stick with the cause, the mission?

And what is necessary for people to be faithful to God? Are we naturally faithful? Can we be faithful by simply saying, “I will be faithful”?

Isn’t faithfulness on our part the fruit of our first trusting God and being reborn with a new heart and right spirit? Isn’t it God living in us by His Holy Spirit that heals, renews, enlightens, empowers us to be faithful?

And what wins us to trust God? His faithfulness, as Paul wrote,

- God trusted his message to the Jews. But what if some of them were not faithful? Does this mean that God will not be faithful? Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, “You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.” Romans 3:2-4 GNT.

What undermines trust in God? Lies about God, and what establishes trust in God? The truth of about God, His faithfulness and reliability, which is an outworking of His character, His being. He never changes; He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And His laws, the protocols He, as our never-changing Creator God, built into the operations of reality, are the design laws of life and they are constant and reliable.

What undermines trust in God are the lies that He is not reliable, that He is not trustworthy and this lie is promoted most effectively under the lie that God’s laws functions like human law, made up rules enforced through inflicted punishment.

Thus our faithfulness requires our rebirth and that requires that we are won back to trust, which requires we understand, believe, God is truly trustworthy, and that requires we are won back to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we reject the penal legal lies about God and understand His laws are design laws.

The lesson cites the names of the 10 unfaithful spies and asks if we remember their names, and after suggesting we probably don’t, in the THIRD PARAGRAPH states,

- Why? Because they are the names of the other ten spies sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan. They are forgotten because their names were not worthy of being remembered. The report that they brought portrayed the Promised Land as impossible to conquer. They saw themselves as grasshoppers compared to the giants who inhabited some areas of the land, and their hearts melted with fear at the “impregnable” walls of the fortified cities in Canaan. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 65.

The people had reports from the majority of spies that the opposition was too great, the walls too high, the enemy too strong—and the people listened, and were defeated before even trying to occupy the land.

Is there in object lesson in this for us? Do we ever have leaders today who tell us sin is too great, the wall of wickedness too high, we can never overcome, we will continue to live defeated in sin until Jesus comes and our only hope is to claim the legal payment for our sins while we continue to live sinfully?

Is that the gospel message, that we more easily do wrong than right, that we cannot achieve victory here and now, that the enemy is too strong?

Here are two paragraphs from the book *The Desire of Ages*, what do you think of these, do you agree or disagree?

- The Comforter is called “the Spirit of truth.” His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. *The Desire of Ages* p. 671.1

Before I read the paragraph that immediately follows this one—what do you think of this one?

How is an individual changed or transformed? It is not by truth cognitively comprehended (remember the devils cognitively know the truth and are afraid, Luke 8:26-28; James 2:19), but by truth taken into the heart as building blocks to the individual, applied to the life. And as we choose truth, say yes and take it into our hearts as truths we identify with, cherish, prefer, and make part of our values, priorities, standards, our brains change. When we have an epiphany, an internalization and application of truth to ourselves, there is an immediate change in the substructure of our neurons.

The tubulin molecules that make up the microtubules within neurons and where memories are stored, change their polarity encoding the truth (or lie) we choose to embrace. This changes the resonate frequency, the harmonic quantum vibrations, of our consciousness, our spirit and we, by the internalization of truth come into every closer harmony, unity, resonance with the Holy Spirit.

And this saving truth is brought to us by the working of the Holy Spirit; it is not conjured, discovered, created by our fallen human ingenuity or imagination. In fact, our fallen hearts and minds cannot appreciate God’s truth without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Reading the Bible, which is God’s Word, without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, will not result in comprehension of truth. Many people have read the Bible without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and used it to promote falsehood. The Spirit of Truth brings truth to our hearts and minds in ways we can understand and then leaves us free to choose, will we accept the truth and choose it for ourselves, or reject the truth and cling to the lie? We are literally transformed, first in spirit, second in mind, lastly in body.

But the converse is true, if we believe the lie, the ugly, the false, the perverse, it gets encoded in the substructure of our brains and our spirit resonates ever more closely with the demonic, the evil, and when we live and act out the evil we wire that into our brains and if we do not repent and choose truth, love, and trust we eventually cut ourselves off from the Holy Spirit and God by destroying within ourselves the faculties that respond to the Spirit of truth.

As we choose the truth, our brains change, and truth by truth, we are transformed and our spirits our cleansed, we become ever more in harmony with the Holy Spirit and our consciences become more sensitive to His movements. When we embrace the truth and say yes, we not only experience a real-time change in our brains that changes our spirits (we have all experienced this, the immediate peace, joy, presence of God in our hearts) we also receive divine power to succeed in living out that truth in

our lives. The truth comes from God, the conviction comes from God, the power to succeed comes from God—but the choice to accept or reject the truth come from us.

Then, as we make choices to live out the truth over time our brain circuits rewire, old circuits are pruned back and bad habits lose power, and new circuits are wired in and godly habits become easier to carry out. We are actually, in reality, being transformed into the image of Christ.

But the converse is true, if we choose the lie, the ugly, the false, the perverse, it gets encoded in the substructure of our brains and our spirit resonates ever more closely with the demonic, the evil, and as we live and act out the evil we wire that into our brains and if we do not repent and choose truth, love, and trust we eventually cut ourselves off from the Holy Spirit by destroying within ourselves the faculties that respond to the Spirit of truth. This is what Pharaoh did to himself when Moses brought truth upon truth, through the ten plagues, demonstrating that his gods were false. Every time he chose to reject the truth, he changed himself, taking himself further out of harmony with the Holy Spirit until he destroyed his conscience and no further amount of truth had any impact upon him.

So what is described in this first paragraph is exactly how I understand reality works, how the Spirit of Truth frees people and conforms them to Christ. Now let's consider the next paragraph from the commentary,

- In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as **a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the **fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer**. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a **partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a **divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church**. *The Desire of Ages* p. 671.2, emphasis mine.

Do you agree or disagree?

Do you realize if this is true, this paragraph alone destroys the penal substitutionary model of salvation? The penal model is built upon the lie that God's law functions like human law, made up rules that require external enforcement through inflicted punishments. And in that false understanding, it teaches that all our sin-crimes were legally placed upon Jesus and punished by the Father, who it is claimed, killed Jesus for our sins. And then it is claimed that salvation is experienced when we claim Jesus' blood as our legal payment and the Father in the legal court system of heaven, then makes a verbal and legal declaration that we are not considered or reckoned or accounted to be righteous, even though we, in reality, in heart, mind, function remain unrighteous.

This legal model teaches that the effect of Jesus substitutionary sacrifice **does not** require the office work of the Holy Spirit to make it effectual in you or me, but the legal model teaches the effect of Jesus' sacrifice is legal and it is applied in the heavenly courts to effect or impact the Father so He won't kill us. This model, in function, rather than leading people to trust the Father, actually causes people to trust in the blood, the robe of righteousness to cover and hide them from the Father, the intercessory pleas of Jesus to His Father (or for some the added pleas of Mary and the saints) because they really do not trust the Father believing falsely that He will have to kill them if these interventions are not done.

But the truth, the reality, is that we must be reborn with a new heart and right spirit just as Jesus told Nicodemus.

The Bible teaches that,

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Through what God has provided in Jesus we BECOME the righteousness of God, and that is because we surrender our old life of fear and selfishness and reborn with the life of Christ, as the author quoted 2 Peter 1:4 wrote, we become actually partakers of the divine nature. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Jesus and shares that life with us. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, the Holy Spirit is the connecting link that infuses us with the animating energy, life, spirit of Jesus and we are reborn with new motives, desires, drives, and as we choose to live out that new life we are transformed.

Thus, as the author wrote, without the Holy Spirit coming into our hearts and minds and transfusing us with the life of Christ, His death on the cross does us no good, because salvation is not achieved through legal pardon, it is only achieved by actual, reality-based, healing, transformation, recreation, receiving a new life, the life of Christ.

What about the idea that the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome every sin whether cultivated by ourselves or inherited—for instance we inherit the spirit of fear and selfishness that causes us to act contrary to love?

MONDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- Caleb understood that the territory each tribe would eventually possess was directly proportionate to the extent to which they dared to claim the promises of the Lord and how much land they were willing to tread upon by faith. God's promises are not self-fulfilling, in the sense that they come true irrespective of our will. Rather, they require faith accompanied

by resolute action. The Hebrew term 'ulay, “maybe” (Josh. 14:12), can express fear and doubt, but it usually denotes hope and the anticipation that something positive will take place (Gen. 16:2; Num. 22:6, 11; Num. 23:3). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 66.

Have you ever struggled to move forward in faith, even when you knew God was leading?

I have thought a lot about this, how to know when to push forward and when to hold back, is God leading and I am following or am I running ahead of God and not waiting for His guidance?

What wisdom do you all have on this?

What kinds of things have caused you pause?

The hard ones are not the decisions that are clearly right and wrong decisions, but the ones that are in themselves neither right or wrong but are about following God’s plan, purpose, directions—like should one take this job or that job, go to this school or that school, etc.

In my life I have been caught in a certain type of doubt trap—it isn’t doubting God’s goodness, it isn’t doubting His faithfulness, it isn’t doubting His abilities, it is doubting the other people involved in the process when the decision is not solely my own.

When I get counsel from someone, should I follow it? If I get encouragement to go a certain direction should I listen? And then I start thinking of all the angles, what if this, what if that, and I pray—and the question is never whether I trust God, it is whether I trust the other people and whether they will respond with fidelity, faithfulness, reliability, if I choose to engage with them in some employment or activity.

And then it struck me, when I was wrestling with this type of concern—God knows the future; He has already accounted for the decisions of the others and if I trust Him, am listening to His guidance, genuinely seeking to fulfill His purpose in my life, then the unfaithfulness of others will be incorporated into a greater plan for God’s glory, so I don’t need to worry about what they do.

When we trust God with outcomes, He incorporates the decisions of the wicked into the plan for the advancement of His kingdom. Consider Daniel and the lion’s den and the three worthies on the plane of Dura as examples, Joseph and his brothers etc.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Caleb’s daughter’s pursuit of the land that God promised her father, and in the fourth paragraph we read,

- Indeed, the land is a gift from Yahweh to Israel, but Israel must appropriate it by claiming the promises of the Lord with faith and courage. Achsah's determination foreshadows the perseverance of those women in the Gospels who would not be turned away by the crowd or the disciples and would not give up until they received Jesus' blessing for themselves and their families. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 67.

Is there a lesson in this for us today? What does it mean to appropriate God's promises by claiming them with faith and courage?

Could someone miss out on the things God has promised because they do not claim them with faith and courage? Any examples?

How about the promise of salvation—is the promise of salvation one that we can confidently say is available to every single human being?

What does it mean to claim it by faith and courage and what would it mean to miss out by not doing so?

What is the core issue in being saved, the foundational requirement that every single saved person must and will experience?

- Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:3-8 NIV84

Would you agree that salvation requires a person to be reborn of the Holy Spirit?

How does one claim this with faith and courage? And what does it look like to miss out?

Why do sinners have to be reborn by the Spirit? Because there is something wrong with our first birth—what is wrong with our natural birth?

We are born, brought to live, enter this world,

- For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5 NLT.

When Adam and Eve sinned they corrupted their lives, their spirits, the animating motivating breath of life that moves to action from perfect, holy, sinless love and trust to that of fear and selfishness. And because God had already given them the ability to share their life and create new individuals in their own image, each of us are brought to life in the image of Adam and Eve, with their life shared, passed

down through the generations, and that life is corrupted with the motivating drive, energy, animation of fear and selfishness. As Paul wrote to Timothy,

- For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
2Timothy 1:7 NKJV

The spirit of fear is the life, the breath of life, we inherited from Adam and Eve, and it causes us to run and hide from God, to cover ourselves with our own fig leaves, excuses, defense mechanisms, comfort measures, anything we can find in this world to make us feel safe, including the multitude of destructive and ungodly worship practices—every single false religion is a manifestation of the spirit of fear seeking to find peace for the soul, to comfort self, but without the rebirth of the Holy Spirit who brings us a new life, the life of Christ.

So, we appropriate the promise of salvation by first being won to enough truth that we choose to trust Jesus. This is the faith portion, that despite our natural fear, we choose to open our hearts to Jesus in trust, in faith, and that always requires we confront our old fear-based life and the various attachments, comforts, security measures we have built into our hearts. And that requires courage, courage to stand firm in trust in the face of fear, doubt, insecurity, and the pain of dying to the old life and having our identity, our individuality, our personhood cut free of the various self-protective comfort measures that in reality keep us separated from God and from experiencing His promise of salvation, of being reborn, healed, transformed and renewed.

Claiming the promise of salvation requires every single person to go through the experience of Jacob's night of trouble where he, united with God, wrestled against his own fear and selfishness and overcame. Or like David after confronted by Nathan and who wrote Psalms 51. Or Peter after he denied Jesus; or Saul of Tarsus after Damascus Road.

When we claim the promise of salvation and genuine trust Jesus, He will initially lead us into green pastures still waters where we experience His presence, love, grace, forgiveness, peace, the joy of knowing He accepts and loves us. But very shortly thereafter, our heavenly Shepherd begins to lead us in the path of righteousness for His name sake, for the restoration of His name, His character into us which restores our soul, and that is when our Shepherd leads us into the valley of the shadow of death. This is not the valley of physical death, but the valley of the shadow of death, the valley where we must face our inherited life of fear and selfishness and choose whether we will surrender all, die to self, and be reborn fully with the life of Christ. If we do, the Lord prepares a table of spiritual resources to develop, nurture, and grow us in the face of our enemies and anoints our minds/hearts with His Spirit, and the goodness and mercy of the Lord is ours for the rest of our lives and we will dwell in God's house forever.

This is most clearly seen in the encounter between Jesus and Peter when Jesus explains His mission and plan to the disciples:

- From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “**Get behind me, Satan!** You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to **save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.**” Matthew 16:21–25 NIV84, emphasis mine.

- And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and **when thou art converted**, strengthen thy brethren. Luke 22:31,31 KJV.

My understanding is that Jacob, David, Peter, Saul of Tarsus were all responding to the work of the Holy Spirit, wanting to be right with God, following Him but not fully surrendered in their early journeying with God. Jacob not fully surrendered when lying to his father, it was only later, the night of trouble where he finally stopped trying to save self through his various dealings and trusted his life fully with God and was reborn and that is why his name was changed from deceiver to Israel, one who with God overcomes.

Same with David, Peter, Saul of Tarsus, they were all cognitive believers in God, were all responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and seeking to do what is right, but still holding onto their life of fear and selfishness, trying to obey through their strength, still protecting self while following Jesus. Only in these crisis moments, when they were confronted with fear that they could not handle did the true nature of their spirit of fear reveal itself:

- Jacob was afraid Esau was going to kill him and his family—and notice he sent his family ahead between him and the threat. It was then, he finally surrenders to God fully.
- David exercised faith with Goliath, with the lion, with the Philistine armies, but that faith is the faith that all naturally exercise when faced with threats beyond our own ability to handle. As the saying goes there are no atheists in foxholes. But it was when David was king, when the threats were not beyond his perceived ability to handle, that the spirit of fear and selfishness manifested in his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. And that was when he surrendered all and was fully reborn—as we read in Psalm 51.

Same with Peter and Saul, and the same with each of us. And as we are following the leading of our Shepherd, the impress of the Holy Spirit, He will lead us to those places in our own lives where we must face the things we have used to comfort and protect our life of fear and selfishness. And it will

cause emotional distress, anxiety, and of course intense fear, for the life we inherited from Adam is fear-driven. And it is frightening to let go of our security blankets. And it takes **courage** to exercise our trust in Jesus and say no to our fears, and it is when we do this that we then appropriate and experience inside of us His promise, His power, His life, His renewal and rebirth.

But, the journey for many people, like Jacob, David, Peter, Saul and myself, is that as we are following our Shepherd and He leads us into the valley of the shadow of death, and we face the fear, anxiety, emotional distress, sometimes we turn back to our old comfort measures. And then we find ourselves in some type of trouble, like Jacob and David, and we run to Jesus and He meets us with His love, grace, forgiveness, the green valleys and still waters and then begins to lead us back to that place in our lives where we must choose to die to that old life and be fully reborn.

And then when we are then there is a process of continual advancement where little things are slowly brought to our attention to be let go of and surrendered. Like Peter, who after he was fully converted, after he was reinstated by Jesus Himself, still had little things he had to surrender, like the security he found in religious ceremonies and his reluctance to associate with Gentiles. This ongoing struggles for Peter, and each of us, are not evidences of sinful living but evidences of the maturing, healing, transforming work of the person who has been reborn.

I cannot tell anyone else where they are in their journey, only that for every single person to be saved they must be reborn, the experience of surrendering their old life of fear and selfishness and being reborn with the life of Jesus, the Spirit of love and trust, and then being motivated and animated by that Spirit they will advance, grow, mature, as the Holy Spirit leads them to decision points where they choose to apply God's truth in trust and let go of any unhealthy attachments that previously used to comfort themselves.

Sadly, there are versions of Christianity that put obstacles in the way of people experiencing this. Instead of teaching them what we just went through, they instead teach them that salvation is a legal process in a courtroom off in another dimension far removed from them, in which, having made a legal claim of Jesus as their legal payment, they believe Jesus is in heaven pleading His blood to His Father to pay their debt to God so God won't kill them.

This theology, functionally, teaches people to distrust God rather than trust Him. They place their trust in the blood, the payment, the robe of Christ's righteousness that covers them and hides them from God, or they trust the pleadings of Jesus to His Father begging His Father to be merciful. Some Christians trust in Mary and the other saints to plead to God, or in the ceremonies, sacraments, and rituals.

The legal religion also leads people to trust in, believe that salvation is found in believing the right doctrines and being able to prove them from the Bible, or belonging to what they believe is the right denomination.

My point is that the penal legal view, in which people falsely believe God's law functions like human law, leads people to focus on the externals, mechanics, behaviors, to protect them from God. It obstructs genuine salvation which requires a rebirth experience.

So, they will claim the promises of God as tokens or coins to drop in the heavenly vending machine to get out what they believe God is required to provide because they have claimed the legal promise.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points out that when the land was be apportioned to the people Caleb received his portion first, the rest of the tribes and people and Joshua was the last to receive his portion.

Read last paragraph,

- Moreover, Timnath-serah was located near Shiloh, in the vicinity of the sanctuary, which shows where Joshua's priorities lay and where his heart was bound. Certainly, after the newly born nation of Israel had been led into the Promised Land, and, with God's help, secured the inheritance of each tribe and family, it would not have objected to Joshua's demand for a more impressive inheritance. Yet, Joshua was content to live a simple life with a focus on what is most important, thus embodying the prayer expressed later by David: "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 68.

What lessons do we learn from this?

In the Bible many of the people who are real historical figures prefigured or are types of Jesus:

- Joseph—who was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, tempted to sin, imprisoned falsely, but eventually elevated to rule next to the Pharaoh to save both his family and the Egyptians.
- Moses—confronts the enslaver and overcomes him to lead the people to freedom, talks with God face to face, leaves God's presence to bring the people God's law and build the sanctuary Jesus left heaven to bring God's living law back to humanity and restore it within the human temple where God intends for it to be and becomes the chief cornerstone upon which His true temple is built out of living stones. Moses represents Jesus in His preincarnate life planning the plan of salvation with His Father and then leaving the Father's presence to come to Earth to fulfill it.
- Aaron—who as high priest represents Jesus in His ministry as our heavenly High Priest directing all the agencies of heaven for the cleansing of His true sanctuary.
- Joshua—also represents Jesus. In fact, the name Jesus had as a human on earth was Joshua, the Greek form is Jesus. Joshua leads the people to confront the enemy and through trust in God

overcome their fears and experience victory. Jesus leads us to confront our enemies and through trust in Him overcome our fears and experience victory. Joshua put others first, taking his reward after all the others had received theirs.

- Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5–11 NIV84.

Jesus sacrificed His place, His glory, His power, His life in order to give us life, to provide us reward, and only after He has provided His life, His reward to us does He receive His reward.

Can you think of other ways Joshua is a type of Jesus?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Ellen G. White speaks about the importance of beholding the character of Jesus: “Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 355. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 69.

What is being described here? The law of worship, that by beholding, worshiping, meaning we find worthy of our time, heart, preference, identity, what we value and hold to and invest ourselves in, changes us. And if we worship God in truth in love then we are transformed by that process. This is a design law of how reality works.

But the question is, do you believe what is written here true? Is it biblical? Any Bible verses that support this idea?

- But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV.

- They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5 NIV84.

Romans 1:18-32—they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and preferred images made with their own hands and their minds became darkened, depraved and futile.

This is why God says we are to have no other gods before Him, not because of a human law, a rule, that He must enforce through punishment, but because of design law, of how reality works. We are the highest created beings on planet earth, created in the image of God to be like Him, to bear His likeness, and there is nothing on earth we can worship that will ennoble, develop, advance us to be like Him. Anything on earth we worship degrades us and destroys the image of God in us. God says to worship Him the infinite one for when we do we enter into a never-ending experience of growth, healing, development, advancement, ennobling, for we never become infinite God, and even a billion years into the future we are still not God and there is still an infinite more growth for us to do. Thus, God's law is not a rule enforced through punishment, in fact if people view God that way they are not worshipping our Creator, but the corrupt creature who seeks to replace God in your worship so you install that corrupt abusive, murderer from the beginning, into your spirit temple. No, God's laws are the laws life is built to operate upon and through Christ we can be restored to harmony with God, to life and fulfill our high calling to be image bearers of our Creator.

Read last two paragraphs,

- In the summary chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul speaks about two antagonistic forces trying to shape our lives. On the one hand, the surrounding world, with its various influences, tries to force us daily into its own mold, effecting a conformation in us that works from the outside in.

To counteract this impact, the Holy Spirit is able to transform us inside out in a manner similar to the way a caterpillar metamorphoses into a beautiful butterfly. But for that process to happen, we need to consecrate ourselves to God and ask Him to continue the good work that He has started in us (Phil. 1:6). In the end, we have to make the conscious choice, moment by moment, to walk in the Spirit. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 69.

The lesson is correct that there are two antagonistic forces at work battling for every human being—how would you describe those two forces?

The lesson identifies the manifestation of one of those forces, but not the true force when they point to the surrounding world, which uses force, coercion, pressure. What is the true force of the enemy? The corrupt spirit of fear and selfishness which animates all human beings descended from Adam and Eve and all the fallen angels.

The Holy Spirit is the countering force which is the Spirit of truth, love, and trust.

Fear and selfishness leads to survival of the fittest methods, using power over others to control and coerce to get one's way, to make one feel safe, with the powerful rising up over the weak to take from

the weak and enforce their way upon the weak through threats of punishments. This is exactly how the creature Satan governs, and is how Satan the death dealer infected Christianity. He led Christians to believe God's law functions like human law and therefore God uses His infinite power over the weak to pressure through law and law enforcement compliance through inflicted punishment.

But the truth is God is the Creator whose laws are the protocols built into the operations of reality and life requires harmony with these laws. Adam and Eve believed lies, broke trust with God, changed themselves from beings who were animated with the spirit of love and trust, to beings animated by fear and selfishness and ran and hid from God. We are all born without spirit of fear and selfishness—it was the only life, spirit, animating energy Adam and Eve had to produce their children with. Eternal life requires eliminating that spirit of fear and selfishness and replacing it with a holy, sinless, perfect, spirit of love and trust based upon truth. Jesus became human and did that very thing—in reality. He took up that life through Mary, but through the Holy Spirit His humanity was born with a sinless, holy spirit. And in Jesus He faced temptation like all of us, but chose only to live sinlessly, animated by the spirit of love and trust and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness.

When we are won to trust by the truth, we open our hearts and receive the Holy Spirit who takes the life of Christ and reproduces it in us. This is not legal adjustment in books, it is actual recreation, healing, restoration of righteousness into living beings. We are in reality reborn with a new life, we become partakers of the divine nature, we live Christ's life.

Thus the two antagonistic forces are the force of lies, fear, selfishness, against truth, love, and trust. The law and government of the enemy is the imposed law with coercive enforcement, whereas the law and government of God is design law and reaping the consequences of one's choice.

Salvation in reality is the healing and transformation of sinners, which requires them to be won to trust by the truth and to choose for themselves what they will believe, who they will trust, who they will worship and as they choose daily God and where the Holy Spirit is leading they are in reality changed and renewed to be ever more like Jesus.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason CELEBRATES THANKSGIVING by giving special Thanks to **God for the payoff of our Mortgage.** God has blessed this ministry through your support and not only have we been able to purchase and renovate this building, produce all of our resources that we distribute for free, but God has blessed us to be able to pay off the mortgage on this building in just 3 years. We have produced just a few celebratory bookmarks to celebrate this:

New Pamphlet: *The Trap of Perfectionism and The Fear of Making Mistakes.* These are available for free shipped to any US Postal address, they will also be in our resource section under the publications to print and share. You can read this online, download pdf, share with others, print your own. If you are not in the US, we anticipate our various hubs (Australia and South Africa) will eventually get this in print also, but until then, please use the online resource.

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2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 9 Heirs of Promises, Prisoners of Hope

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title *Heirs of Promises, Prisoners of Hope*?

Doesn't this apply to us? Aren't we heirs of the promises to Abraham and prisoners of hope, imprisoned in this sinful world, imprisoned in decaying bodies, but promised freedom from both? And haven't we already received the downpayment from God guaranteeing our full freedom and the fulfillment of the promises?

- If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29 NIV84.

The promises made to Abraham were made to him and his descendants, and repeated to Isaac, and then Jacob, so the promises are to pass down to their descendants as an inheritance, how do we become their descendants and heirs according to the promise?

The Bible records the time the Roman centurion came to Jesus and asked Him to heal his servant and when Jesus said He would go and do it, the centurion said He didn't need to go in person, just give the command and it would be done. And the Bible records Jesus' response to this:

- When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such **great faith**. I say to you that **many will come from the east and the west**, and will take their places at the feast with **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** in the kingdom of heaven. But the **subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside**, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 8:10-12 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Do Jesus words give us insight into who are the heirs to the promises?

Who are the subjects of the kingdom that are being thrown out? In John 8 the genetic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob claimed they were the heirs of Abraham, children of God, and had the right to these promises, but notice Jesus' response and then theirs:

- "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." John 8:39-41 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus makes a condition an if/then statement, those who are considered children of Abraham do what Abraham did—and what is it Abraham did? He trusted God; he had faith in God and thus was reborn, transformed, and then followed God. Jesus is saying that those who are considered children of Abraham will resemble Abraham in this way, will carry the character trait of faith in God within them like Abraham did and thus resemble their father Abraham. But the Jews responded by saying:

- “We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.” John 8:41 NIV84

They claim to be children of God, which means they are claiming to be image bearers of God. These people are not arguing over the inspiration of Scripture, the state of the dead, the Sabbath day, tithing, health reform. They belief in the covenant given through Abraham, they belief in the advent of the Messiah. No, they did not disagree on specific doctrines. They disagree on who God is, His character, which is rooted in how they understand law. They understood God’s law to be like human law and they were supreme legalists, law enforcers, and they believe that their zealous loyalty to the laws they identified as God’s laws made them children of God—does it sound familiar? But notice what Jesus tells them?

- Jesus said to them, “**If** God were your Father, [**then**] you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **You belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, **not holding to the truth**, for there is **no truth in him**. When he **lies**, he speaks his native language, for he is a **liar and the father of lies**. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? **He who belongs to God hears what God says**. The reason you do not hear is that **you do not belong to God**.” John 8:42-47 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus explicitly states that genetics does not make them children of Abraham. Additionally, Jesus makes it clear that being a member of God’s authorized church, covenant people, denomination, even leaders in that organization and believing correct doctrines does not make them children of God because they still believe the core lie from the father of lies, and that lie is that God is not like Jesus, that God is like Satan, that God runs His universe like a creature runs an earthly government, with made up rules that are enforced through externally inflicted punishments.

Jesus is stating explicitly that if you hold to this lie about God, you become like the false satanic god you worship, which is the unavoidable result of the law of worship, and no matter what words you claim about yourself, you become an image bearer of Satan, and he is your father. The Jews confirm this themselves by their own words, as stated in the very next verse in response to Jesus they say:

- The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” John 8:48 NIV84

What is revealed by their response? What can the Holy Spirit do for people who view Jesus, truth, love, freedom, as demonic and prefer lies over truth, are motivated by fear instead of love, and who prefer a god who uses imposed law and law enforcement to punish their enemies and they themselves use law and law enforcement for their own security, safety, power, and control?

So those the true heirs to the promises to Abraham are those who have the faith of Abraham, but the promises are also passed down through Isaac and Jacob, and the celebration feast is the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so we must be more than children of Abraham, we must be children of Isaac and Jacob as well—and what does that mean?

- A child of Abraham is the one who has the faith of Abraham, which is trust, in other words, open their hearts to Jesus in trust and when they do that, they experience a miracle birth—the rebirth by the Spirit and become a new child in Christ—a child of Isaac.
- A child of Isaac then is one who, because of having faith like Abraham, is a miracle child, miraculously reborn with a new life, the life of Christ.
- And a child of Jacob is one who, because they have the faith of Abraham and experience the miraculous rebirth, then together with God the Holy Spirit working within them, wrestle against their old spirit of fear and selfishness until they are victor, the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit and they receive a new name, the name, or character of Christ.

This is what salvation actually is:

- One must first be won to trust in God and then
- One must be reborn with the life of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, brought by the Holy Spirit, and then
- One must choose to align their individuality, identity, personhood, with the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of love and trust and decision by decision, experience by experience, situation by situation, choose to do what the Spirit of Christ is motivating/leading/enlightening one to do and say no to the old spirit of fear and selfishness.

So, the promises to Abraham that we inherit are deliverance from sin and eternal life on the earth made new, not temporal life of physical war and abuse in Palestine. Remember the meek shall inherit the Earth.

But these promises are words, how do we know we can believe they will be fulfilled? Paul referenced an evidence, a proof, that guarantees that we will be set free from our imprisonment here in this sinful world and our imprisonment in these decaying bodies, what is that proof, evidence?

- And you also were **included in Christ** when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a **seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, who is a **deposit guaranteeing our inheritance** until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13-14, NIV84, emphasis mine.

Wow! Do you recognize what Paul is saying? The indwelling Holy Spirit that brings us the life of Christ, the new indwelling animating life of Jesus with the new motives, desires, wisdom, peace, love,

and trust—this is not natural to the human heart. Our natural spirit is fear and selfishness. Thus, when you experience God's love and trust, His indwelling transforming power that is proof, that is evidence, that is the first deposit from God that His promise is real and will be accomplished.

And do you see how the infection of the lie that God's law functions like Roman law, imposed law, human law undermines this evidence?

The imposed law lie teaches that salvation is not receiving a new life internal, empowering, victorious now, instead they teach that salvation is getting a legal adjustment in books in heaven with God declaring us to be legally accounted as righteous while we remain unrighteous.

Understand what that means, it means there is no evidence that we can point to that guarantees we will receive the future promises, that is one factor contributing to why so many legal Christians live in perpetual fear. They are taught a system of legal rules and legal promises without any power to transform and thus they have nothing but empty words to base their faith upon and so they claim it because they are afraid not to, but they really don't believe it. And this turns their attention away from Jesus to themselves, their behavior, their doctrinal beliefs, their church affiliation, and such fear-driven religionists get very upset with anything that challenges their understanding, rules, or organization—they will crucify whoever calls their legal system into question, just like they did Jesus.

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we realize that Jesus provides us an actual new life, a new spirit, a new animating energy, that is reality, right now today, we can experience a rebirth with a new identity through faith. This is righteousness by faith, as the Bible teaches, we become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

We can have absolute confidence that the promises of a future sinless world, where we are freed from the corruption of this world is going to be fulfilled. But notice again what the guarantee is that God has provided us that one day we will be free from the imprisonment of this old body:

- Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us **the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.** 2 Corinthians 5:1–5 NIV84

Notice the gift of the Holy Spirit is the deposit, the reality-based evidence in our lives today, the proof guaranteeing us that what God promised will happen.

Satan knows that without the work of the Holy Spirit **in our lives** that Christ's sacrifice does us individually no good. Thus Satan, having lost his battle with Jesus, now focuses on interfering with the work of the Holy Spirit because that is the only way to stop sinners from being saved.

Imagine someone dying of a terminal condition and an enemy wants them to die, but a doctor is actively working on a remedy. The enemy first tries to prevent the development of the remedy because if no remedy exists, the dying person will die. But the enemy fails and the doctor creates the remedy, the only strategy left is to prevent that remedy from being administered, taken in by the dying person. The death-promoter seeks to cut the IV line that is transfusing the medicine. This is what Satan does today, works to get people to cut themselves off from God, by severing themselves from the Holy Spirit.

He does this in many ways:

- Rejecting truth and preferring lies which get encoded into their brains changing the resonant harmonic of their spirits, their quantum energy, which sears their consciences making it harder and harder for them to hear and be convicted by the Spirit of truth and love, and thereby solidifying in their being fear and selfishness.
- Distractions, entertainments, drugs, worldliness that numb the heart and mind so the still small voice of the Holy Spirit is not heard and if they don't repent and surrender to God in genuine faith and are reborn, they also eventually harden themselves in fear, selfishness, and self-comforting addictions.
- The lie that there is no Holy Spirit so people don't even ask for or open their hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit—or like the Jews did with Jesus as we previously discussed, see the attributes of the Holy Spirit as demonic and thus close their hearts to His work.
- Penal legal lies that teach people to believe salvation is legal adjustment in books not an internal rebirth and transformation with a new life received by the indwelling Holy Spirit, which causes people to place their trust in legal mechanics to protect them from the legal punishing god they do not trust. And via the law of worship, they become like that legal enforcing god and are not children of Abraham, but just like Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:44, they are of their father the devil.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- At Creation, God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect environment that embodied abundance and beauty. The first human couple met their Creator in the setting of a lovely living space that could provide for all their physical needs. In addition to the spoken word of God, the Garden of Eden served as a learning center where Adam and Eve gained significant insight into God's character and the life He intended for them. Therefore, when they broke the trusting relationship with their Creator, their relationship with the Garden of Eden changed as well, and as a sign of the broken relationship, they had to leave the garden. They lost the territory that God had given to them. Thus, the Garden of Eden became the symbol of abundant life, and we will rediscover its motifs in the theme of the Promised Land. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 73.

Have you thought about the Garden of Eden as a learning center? I like this idea, isn't nature today also supposed to be a learning center?

What kinds of things might Adam and Eve have learned from what God created in the Garden of Eden?

Adam was the one who gave all the animals their names—consider that. In the Bible names were more than a nice sounding verbal expression, they held connection to the character of the person. Do you think it likely or unlikely, that Adam, in naming the animals, first studied them to determine things about them and then gave them names that somehow fit their unique position in the created order?

Consider this Bible Commentary on describing Adam and Eve before the fall while still in Eden, from the book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, first question of course when reading any Bible commentary is what do you understand it is saying and then do you agree with it, is it consistent with Scripture, does it help us understand the Bible better?

- The holy pair [Adam and Eve] were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the visible universe—"the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight. The **laws and operations of nature**, which have engaged men's study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. **They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life.** With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. **God's glory in the heavens**, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the **mysteries of light and sound**, of day and night—**all were open to the study of our first parents.** On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, **God's name was written.** The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of **infinite wisdom and power.** They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 50.3

Is there anything you disagree with? Is there anything which is contrary to Scripture?

I love the reality that God is Creator and as Creator we can learn about Him through studying what He has made, the laws that govern the operations of all things, the reliability, consistency, expression of love and goodness built into the operations of nature. We can still see in this fallen world with all its suffering and sin the reliability of God's design laws such as the law of liberty.

Love cannot be commanded, forced, compelled, obtained through imposed law and law enforcement. And reality teaches us that while we are free to break away from God and His design laws for life, we are not free of the pain, suffering, and death such choices cause.

God told them the truth in the day they exercise their freedom, in harmony with the law of liberty, to deviate from the design laws life is built upon and distrust God, they will change themselves, infect themselves with fear and selfishness, cut themselves off from God, and if it wasn't for God's grace, interventions, intercessions, they would have died the natural result of cutting themselves off from life.

But in this commentary what really intrigues me is the sentence, **“They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life.”**

Our modern definition of the word means to hold an informal conversation with and that caused me to think, is the author saying the plants talked back to Adam and Eve? Which, if that was so, I would question the accuracy of that description, but this is another example of how words can have more than one meaning or change meanings over time.

The archaic meaning of converse, which was the meaning when the commentary was written, is “to maintain a familiar association” with something, which would be described to today as, Adam and Eve having a close connection in studying and interacting with the plants and learning their secrets and guiding their growth, which makes perfect sense to me.

The next paragraph in the commentary reads,

- So long as they remained **loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase.** They would be **constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge**, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God. *Patriarchs and Prophets* 51.1

Do you agree? I was excited to read this commentary because I have been telling people in my programs for years that God is infinite and we are finite, and that when we enter into saving relationship with God we enter into a never-ending journey of growth, development, expansion of our insights, knowledge, wisdom, abilities—because we never become God. Even a billion years into eternity we are still not God, we are still finite and He is still infinite, which means a billion years from now we will be so much more developed, intelligent, wise, mature, knowledgeable than we are today, but we are still not God and there will still be an infinite amount more for us to discover and learn. In other words, life as God intends it for us is a never-ending adventure in discovery, deepening knowledge, love, connection, wisdom, maturity, ever growing to be more like God, but we never become God.

Do you agree with this idea?

With that in mind, then why is it for most of Christianity our understanding of God is not advancing like our understanding of medicine, physics, material science, technology? Do you see how rapidly our

understanding is growing in other aspects of reality? But do you see our understanding of God growing at the same rate or do you find, and it seems almost especially so within Christianity and other religions that claim to be representatives of God, that these organizations resist advancing truth and continue to teach old Dark Ages ideas like Reformation Theology, which may have been moving forward in its day, but would be either stagnation today or moving backward?

Why is this the state of things? Because of how reality works—truth cannot move forward when lies are clung to. If people in medicine still believed that fever was caused by evil humors and there are no such things as microorganisms that cause infection, medicine would not move forward.

And in Christianity it is stagnant because the lie that God's law functions like human law is orthodoxy in almost every branch of Christianity. And that lie obstructs advancement, development, intimacy with God as that lie causes people to believe in doctrines that purposely, intentionally, willfully, keeps them separated from God, hiding behind legal payments, intercessors pleading on their behalf, robes of righteousness etc.

Advancement in any field only occurs as people are lovers of truth and are willing to internalize, apply, and move forward in the truth. And the SDA church was given this truth in 1888 and it was rejected by official leadership and while EGW began writing profusely about the reality of God's law being design law, the leadership has consistently and actively rejected this and continued to teach Romanism, that God's law functions like Roman law, imposed rules enforced by infliction of external punishment—and the church spiritually has stagnated and failed, thus far, to fulfill its mission, just like the Jews did 2000 years ago.

Read the last paragraph,

- As Abraham entered the land God had shown him, by faith that land became the Land of Promise to him and his descendants. It remained the Land of Promise for 400 years. The patriarchs did not really own the land; it was not theirs in such a way that they were able to give it to their children as an inheritance. Rather, it belonged to God, as the Garden of Eden had belonged to Him. As Adam and Eve did not do anything that entitled them to the Garden of Eden, Israel had not contributed anything to deserve the land either. The Promised Land was a gift of God based on His initiative. Israel had no inherent right or claim to own the land (Deut. 9:4–6); it was only by God's grace that the Israelites could possess it. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 73.

Thoughts about this paragraph? What are the lessons for us today? What is the significance of the land of Palestine today in God's plan of salvation?

There are two covenants or agreements that people confusion, the eternal covenant of grace, which was the agreement made among the Godhead that when humanity fell into sin They would, among Themselves, handle it with each of Them taking different roles. It was Their agreement among Themselves that Jesus would become incarnate and be our substitutionary Savior—this is Their

covenant communicated to humanity after the fall in Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. This is God initiated and God fulfilled.

And it is this covenant that was communicated to Abraham in the promise:

- “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” Genesis 22:18 NKJV.

That “seed” is Jesus, the promised “seed” of Genesis 3:15.

And this universal promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob:

- To Isaac: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 26:4 NKJV.
- To Jacob: “In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Genesis 28:14 NKJV.

This eternal covenant is based upon God's eternal design law, the laws that life and the operations of reality are built upon.

To fulfill this universal covenant God did need human beings who would trust Him and work with Him. Abraham was called to be the father of the biological branch of the human family tree through whom God would fulfill this universal covenant. And therefore, God made a **temporary covenant** with Abraham and his descendants which is a **mission covenant**, the mission of being the holders of the inspired written record, of the teaching tools of the Levitical system, of being evangelists to share the truth about God with others, and of being the biological family through whom Jesus would be born to fulfill the eternal covenant of grace.

In other words, God made a temporary, **mission-focused** covenant/agreement with the Jews for the purpose of fulfilling His **eternal global covenant/agreement**.

This temporary, provisional, regional covenant was the covenant for the Jews to possess the land of Palestine. And it included the temporary imposed laws, ordinances, rituals, ceremonies, and the **added** and **temporary** arrangement of the eternal design law in the form of the Ten Commandments, written for the need of sinful humans.

All of these laws were added for the purpose of establishing an organization in a sinful world, composed of sinful, unconverted people, with sufficient externally imposed structure to maintain organizational integrity long enough for the fulfillment of the global eternal covenant that would actually resolve and remove sin—meaning until Jesus was born and completed the eternal covenant of grace made among the Godhead and communicated to humanity in Eden.

God's promise for the local/regional fulfillment to Abraham's biological descendants included the temporary promise of a local parcel of land:

- The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” Genesis 12:7 NIV84.

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

But God also promised to Abraham that through his “seed,” meaning Jesus, the universal covenant promised in Genesis 3:15 would be accomplished.

- The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84.

The covenant with and promises to Abraham were dual—a local, regional one *and* a global, eternal one. These covenants had two laws, two promised lands, two applications, two purposes, two starting points, and two ending points.

The *genetic* descendants inherited Canaan *in order* to be the avenue for Jesus, our Savior, to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Paul confirms this:

- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Galatians 3:26–29, emphasis mine.

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points. The starting point of the universal promise was in Eden, recorded in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur. The ending point of the universal is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people was when they rejected and crucified Christ and said, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15 NIV84). This is confirmed by Jesus when He said, to them, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Two Covenants

Grace	Law
Eternal/Universal	Temporary/Provisional/Regional
Design law	Law written on the heart
Imposed law	Law written on stone ¹
Entire world	Palestine
All humanity	Jews
Started with Adam's fall	Started with Abraham's call
Purpose: Eliminate sin from universe	Protect Written Word/Avenue Living Word
Applies to all the universe	Applies to Jewish nation in Bible times
Never ends/completes at end of 1,000 years.	Ended at Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection.

So the universal covenant is only completely fulfilled when the earth is made new after the 1000 years and the meek inherit the earth.

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived “in the promised land” (Hebrews 11:9)—“did not receive the things promised” (Hebrews 11:13), that they were “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). “All of these people” of faith “did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. ... They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that “*all* of these people” did *not* receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn't he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous.

¹ This does *not* mean that Ten Commandments were done away with or are no longer binding, but that in the new covenant the complete aspect of the law of love (love for God and man), which are codified by the Ten Commandments, are no longer externally written upon stone but are internally written upon the heart (Hebrews 8:10).

MONDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- Even if Israel received the land as a gift from Yahweh, in the ultimate sense, God Himself remained the owner. As the true owner of the whole earth (Ps. 24:1), Yahweh has the right to assign the land to Israel or to take it away. If God is the owner of the land, the Israelites and, by extension, all humans are strangers and sojourners, or in modern terminology, we are all God's long-term guests on His land/earth. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 74.

Just as the lesson states, the Bible teaches:

- “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.” Psalm 24:1, 2.
- “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:16, 17.
- “For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.” Psalm 50:10, 11.

And what does knowing and believing this protect people from in the world today?

Marxism, Socialism, and Communism—all three of these governmental systems are built upon two core lies: There is no God and the state is the rightful owner of everything.

The argument of these godless philosophies is that the core to human evil, exploitation, injustice, unfairness, is private ownership, and that by replacing private ownership with state ownership then the state can manage all things in a fair and equitable way.

As long as people believe Bible truth, that there is a Creator God, who is love and He is the rightful owner of all things and we are His stewards who are to manage all He puts in our hands with His principles, integrity, honesty, benevolence, for the advancement of His kingdom, which is the benefit of our fellow humans, leading them to salvation and the abundant life, then societies are protected from this godless and destructive form of government.

But when people reject God and His methods, when they choose selfishness, hedonism, fantasy rather than reality, which is another way of saying lies rather than the truth, then they will make choices in which they will reap painful consequences. They will not have the peace, the joy, the love, the wisdom of those who are walking with God. And they will be filled with envy, jealousy, hatred, and seek to take from others what God has placed in their hands.

I am not saying that all those who receive earthly blessings are converted in heart and reborn to God's kingdom, I am saying that those who are reborn and members of God's kingdom trust God with their lives, their position, their station, their mission, purpose, and are not envious of others and do not get inflamed with envy and manipulated into forming forces to take what others have to make themselves feel better.

The righteous are like Joseph— who when unfairly treated, trusted God with his situation; and Daniel, the three worthies, and David after he was anointed and knew God had chosen him as king, did not seek to overthrow Saul, but trusted God with his advancement.

The godless are fear-driven and selfish and will work to inflame envy, jealousy, and fear in those who are disadvantaged from the world's perspective, some disadvantaged by objective wrongdoing from others, like Joseph, Daniel, David, but many are disadvantaged by their own choices to walk away from God and pursue advancement through the methods of the world. But without God they have no peace, no real joy, and they hate seeing others having what they do not, so they are easily manipulated by the forces of this world to join with causes that proclaim a plan to lift them out of their disadvantaged situation and to put the government in the place of God, and give the state authority to take from those who have more and give it to them.

But this philosophy is a violation of design law, how reality works, if a person refuses to exercise and eat healthy foods and ends up overweight, deconditioned, with diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, etc., and they see others who live healthy lives, eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, it is not possible to pass a law to take health, vitality, wellness from the healthy and give to the unhealthy, strength comes from exercise, the law of exertion, and this is true in mental and spiritual development as well.

- One grows stronger physically by increasing the weight, which is stress, that they push against and overcome.
- One grows stronger in musical skill by ever increasing complexity of musical composition and diligent practice until mastered.
- One grows stronger in mathematics by ever increasing difficulty of problems to be wrestled over until understood.
- One grows stronger in character, wisdom, understanding by ever increasing problems and difficulties in life that humble us, remind us of our human finiteness, weakness, unfairness of life outside of God's design, and our complete dependence upon our Creator:

As the Bible teaches,

- Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:3-5 NIV84.

It is in the times of life where things are not fair, when things don't go our way, where life is too much for us, that we find the greatest opportunity for growth in faith, in trust in Jesus, in being set free from

the spirit of fear and selfishness with which we were born and become sealed with the Holy Spirit to shine ever brighter for Jesus.

As Paul wrote,

- But he [Jesus] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV84.

We must remember that all we have is God’s and we are His stewards. The evil one wants us to forget this and to believe we are the owners and then he wants us to believe that this is evil and justice and righteousness is found by making the state the owner because he wants to displace God from our hearts and minds. As long as people believe God and worship Him, these godless philosophies have always been rejected, so you can discern wherever you see socialism, Marxism, communism rising it is evidence that the people are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

But, if I read Bible prophecy and symbolism correctly, Satan has two grand forces on Earth that he has pitted against each other throughout human history in his attempt to get the righteous to join his side. The one side are the forces of godlessness, paganism, animism, evolutionism, scientism, atheism, socialism, communism, Marxism, wokeism, today’s political left—all the forces through history that deny the existence of God.

But he has always had the other side, the side of religious imperialism, those who claim a belief in the God of the Bible but teach their understanding of God and the Bible through the lens of human imposed law, which results in their god being Satan himself, a creature who uses law and law enforcement to advance their religious agenda. We see this in history with the Jews who crucified Christ. They didn’t have wrong specific core doctrines, they had set them in the wrong law setting and ended up with Satan as their god, or as Jesus Himself told them in John 8:44.

We see this same satanic force in the Dark Ages church, as they supposedly were promoting the Bible and the God of the Bible, but through the lens of imposed law they ended up doing all kinds of abuses, burning people at the stake, the inquisition, the Crusades and more all under the guise of promoting the God of the Bible. But in truth, they were worshiping and promoting the god of this world—and today we see this in various elements of the political right (but this can also be seen in certain Islamic factions on the political left, as they claim the belief in the Bible but want to use Sharia law. My view of this is that the Islamic forces on the political left today are advocating the policies of anarchy for the purpose of undermining Christianity in America so they can step in and advance Islam through imposed law).

These two satanic systems are in operation in the world today, with a third group, the truly righteous, who do not join either of these two sides. And Satan is marshalling his forces, for the purpose of establishing his beastly system, which as I understand it, will crush the forces of the godless left and

establish a soul destroying religious imperialism designed to do justice, do what is right by their legal standards, but it will be the justice of imposed law with imposed punishments that ultimately coerces consciences, and once established, it will turn its attention upon those who are not submissive, obedient, or compliant with its rule—which will ultimately, right before Christ returns, be the saints of God.

And this leads us right into Tuesday's lesson, which points out that while Israel could only possess the land through God's grace, at the same time they were required to apply themselves to fulfilling God's calling, as the lesson states, "God's initiative must be matched by human response."

This truth will be applied by some to the rise of the beastly system, that in order for God's grace to be experienced in our lives today, in order for God's will to be done in our communities and nations, we must rise up and seize the government, the laws, the schools, the military, courts, police, and as Israel did, establish a government in which God is central and first.

What is wrong with this thinking? Why is this a misapplication of the Bible lesson?

In Old Testament times God established Israel as a nation for the purpose of keeping open the avenue for the Messiah who provides actual salvation. There was no salvation in the ancient government of Israel, in their laws or law keeping, in their religious ceremonies and rituals. Just look at the Jews who killed Christ who were keeping those rules and rituals.

Salvation is only in Jesus. Thus the purpose of the ancient government of Israel was not to establish God's heavenly government on Earth, but, as we said earlier, was mission covenant for God to fulfill His eternal covenant—which is Jesus.

And Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world—He didn't say it His kingdom is not of this world except for Israel, no, He included that system as not being part of His kingdom. Because His kingdom does not operate upon imposed rules with imposed punishments, but is the kingdom of reality, of truth, love, and freedom, which cannot be commanded or externally enforced.

There is an object lesson application to Israel's conquest of the ancient promised land however, and what is it?

The lesson states in the third paragraph,

- This complexity of the conquest illustrates the dynamics of our salvation. Similar to Israel, we cannot do anything to earn our salvation (Eph. 2:8, 9). It is a gift, just as the land was God's gift to the Israelites based on their covenantal relationship with Him. It certainly wasn't based on their merits (see Deut. 9:5). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 75.

After we receive the free gift of salvation through trust in Jesus, do we then engage in warfare? What kind of warfare? Spiritual warfare—which is what? And where is the daily and primary focus of our efforts in this war?

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

This is the battle we are to engage; our hearts joined in trust with Jesus through His representative the Holy Spirit we are to battle in our own hearts and minds against the spirit of fear and selfishness and live out the new life of Jesus we receive through the Holy Spirit. So we battle with the lies, distortions, beliefs, methods, practices of this world which we have embraced in times past that we used to bring us security, make us feel safe, comfort us, and we cut those out through the spiritual application of the sword of truth and love guided by and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

WEDNESDAY

God directed that the land was apportioned all the way down to individual families and the land could never be permanently taken or sold from the family, basically the land could be leased for a number of years, but when the jubilee year came all land was returned to the ownership of the family.

What is the object lesson in this?

The Earth is God's and was created to be the home of humanity. Adam sold the Earth through his sin to Satan who claims it as his own, but in truth Jesus is the true owner of the Earth. Jesus came and redeemed Adam's loss and in the great jubilee at the end of the 1000 years the Earth will be returned to its rightful occupants, human beings, and the meek will inherit from Jesus the Earth made new.

Read third paragraph,

- The allotment of the land becomes a window into God's heart. As our heavenly Father, He wants His children to be generous with those who are less fortunate and to allow their lands to feed them every seventh year. The sabbatical year applied the principle of the Sabbath commandment on a larger scale. Besides valuing and encouraging hard work, ownership of the land also calls for respect and kindness to those facing financial challenges. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 76.

What is the principle of the Sabbath that is being referenced here?

I like how they said principle, because principles are another way of saying design law, they are not rules, imposed laws. So what is the principle of the Sabbath being applied to the jubilee?

It is one of resting our lives, ourselves, our security, our welfare, our futures, our estates, our fortunes, into the hands of God.

The weekly Sabbath is an evidence built into time by God of His character and methods of governing. It was created at the end of creation week when God, instead of using power to enforce His law and government, instead of using power to force Satan and the rebellious angels to bow and submit, instead of using power to punish Satan's rebellion, instead God stopped using power, God ceased using power, God rested. The Sabbath was built into time by God as a proof, demonstration, evidence, validation, reality-based expression of God's character, kingdom, methods, and law. God is the God of reality and He rules on truth, love, and freedom. He does not rule on imposed law, force, coercion, and law enforcement. That is Satan's kingdom.

Thus the Sabbath is God's holy day as it reveals God's holy character. Our rest on Sabbath is our opportunity to exercise trust or faith in God, to say no to the spirit of fear which tempts us to fear that if we don't work all seven days that we will fall behind or our crops will fail or we will lose what we have. Our resting and putting away our pursuit for our own protection, promotion, advancement is a weekly opportunity to grow in faith, love, and trust in God. The jubilee was also an opportunity for this, for people to trust their futures, their livelihoods, their very lives that they will have enough food if they don't plant one year.

And of course this is exactly right, allowing the land to rest restores the important nutrients into the land bringing maximum harvest but not allowing the land to rest depletes the soil resulting in every diminishing returns and eventually the crops fail.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

New Pamphlet: *The Trap of Perfectionism and The Fear of Making Mistakes*. These are available for free shipped to any US Postal address, they will also be in our resource section under the publications to print and share. You can read this online, download pdf, share with others, print your own. If you are not in the US, we anticipate our various hubs (Australia and South Africa) will eventually get this in print also, but until then, please use the online resource.

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2025 Q4 Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 10

The True Joshua

by Russell Atkins

SABBATH

Memory Text:

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” 1 Corinthians 10:11, ESV

From the lesson:

In the book of Joshua, there is a sense that the life of its main character points beyond itself to a reality that is much greater than the man himself. We see this principle all through the Bible, such as with the land of Canaan, a symbol of our eternal hope in a new earth. And, of course, the earthly sanctuary service pointed to a greater reality: “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Heb. 9:11, NKJV

But the question arises: In what way does Joshua point to a future fulfillment? How can we be sure that such an interpretation of the book is legitimate? What are the biblical principles that control the application of the book of Joshua to New Testament realities and to end-time events? Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 124

Any thoughts?

This principle has been a focus for our class for quite some time now. Events documented in Scripture are recorded about real people in real places in past history. They also have lessons for us now, and in the future [see memory verse].

For those wanting a deeper understanding of Typology":
https://biblehub.com/q/what_is_biblical_typology.htm

From the Lesson's teacher's comments:

Scriptural typology is a fascinating area of biblical study and should not be restricted to scholars. In his dialogue on the road to Emmaus, Jesus tenderly rebuked the two men for failing to read the Scriptures typologically: “ ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25–27, NKJV). May Seventh-day

Adventists avoid making the same mistake today. Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 124

AMEN.

SUNDAY

Biblical Typology.

The lesson encourages us to look at Romans 5: 14 along with other texts for today's lesson.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Rom. 5: 14 NASB.

Have you ever considered Adam a "type" of Christ? How is he one? How is he not one?

From the Lesson:

These biblical passages use the term “type” (Greek typos) or “antitype” (Greek antitypos) to refer to the way the New Testament writer defined the relationship between an Old Testament text or event and its meaning in his own time or in the future.

Typology is a specific interpretation of persons, events, or institutions that prefigure Jesus or other realities contained in the gospel. The type corresponds to the antitype as a mold or a hollow form that reflects the original form, even if the latter, the antitype, more fully fulfills the purpose of the type. Thus, the biblical type was shaped according to a divine design that had existed concretely, or conceptually, in the mind of God, and it serves to shape future copies (antitypes).

It is crucial to understand that the writers of the New Testament did not randomly attribute a typological meaning to some Old Testament texts in order to make a point. An Old Testament type is always validated in the prophetic writings before it acquires an antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament. -- Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 125

New Testament writers understood the Old Testament. It was their ONLY source of Scripture. They recognized patterns and "types" in the OT and then saw them fulfilled in their time, and saw other "types" to be fulfilled in the future.

What has God's purpose been since man's fall?

To restore mankind to its original sinless design, and rewrite His Law on our hearts and minds.

Christ came to give an example of the perfect conformity to the law of God required of Adam, the first man, down to the last person that shall live on the earth. He declares that His mission is not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in perfect and entire obedience.

In this way He magnified the law and made it honorable. In His life He revealed its spiritual nature. He revealed to heavenly beings, to worlds unfallen, to a disobedient, unthankful, unholy world, that He fulfilled the far-reaching principles of the law. He came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep all God's commandments.

The typical offerings pointed to Christ, and when the perfect sacrifice was made the sacrificial offerings were no longer acceptable to God. Type met antitype in the death of the only begotten Son of God. He came to make plain the immutable character of the law, to declare that disobedience and transgression could never be rewarded by God with eternal life. He came as a man to humanity, that humanity might touch humanity. To Be Like Jesus, pg 362

MONDAY

Type and Antitype.

From the Lesson:

Interpreters of the Bible cannot arbitrarily decide on what constitutes a biblical type or how that particular type is fulfilled in the New Testament and beyond. The Bible itself provides some controls and principles as to the application of biblical typology.

Similarly, the New Testament unfolds the antitypical fulfillment of a type in three distinct phases: (1) in the life of Christ (the Christological fulfillment), (2) in the experience of the church (the ecclesiological fulfillment), and (3) at the end of time (the eschatological fulfillment). Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 126

I've never considered this way of looking at Biblical typology. I like its structure and organization.

Again, from the Lesson:

1. Israel
 - a. Christological phase (Matt. 2:15)
 - b. Ecclesiological phase (Gal. 6:16)
 - c. Eschatological phase (Rev. 7:4–8, 14)
2. The Exodus
 - a. Christological phase (Matt. 2:19–21)
 - b. Ecclesiological phase (2 Cor. 6:17)
 - c. Eschatological phase (Rev. 18:4)
3. The Sanctuary
 - a. Christological phase (John 1:14, John 2:21, Matt. 26:61)

- b. Ecclesiological phase (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16)
- c. Eschatological phase (Rev. 3:12, Rev. 11:19, Rev. 21:3, Rev. 21:22)

Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other... All the doctrines of the Bible will cohere with each other; interpretations of individual passages will harmonize with the totality of what Scripture teaches on a given subject. — Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), pg 65

I have an issue with this quote. Scripture was **inspired** by a "single divine" spirit, but **authored** by men using language they and others could understand.

All [sic] the time of Christ's coming there was much agitation concerning the appearance of the world's Messiah. The Jewish nation expected that a great deliverer would come, and there were men who took advantage of this expectation, turning it to the service of themselves, that they might be thereby profited and glorified. Prophecy had foretold that these deceivers would arise. The deceivers did not come in the way in which it was prophesied that the world's Redeemer should come; but Christ came, answering every specification. Types and symbols had represented Him, and in Him type met antitype. In the life, mission, and death of Jesus every specification was fulfilled." — Lift Him Up, pg 197

Might this happen again before the Second Advent?

TUESDAY

Joshua, the Type

From the Lesson:

As we discovered in the first week, Joshua was presented as a new Moses who, in the life of the second generation, repeated the most significant steps of the Exodus from Egypt. Just as Moses was, Joshua was commissioned by a personal encounter with the Lord. Under the leadership of both Moses and Joshua, Israel's fame among the nations inspired fear. Moses led Israel in crossing the Red Sea, and Joshua led Israel in a miraculous crossing of the Jordan. Both leaders were reminded of the necessity of circumcision and the importance of the Passover. Manna began to fall in the time of Moses, and it ended with Joshua. Both were commanded to take off their sandals. The outstretched hand of both signaled victory for Israel. Moses gave instructions for the division of the land and the institution of cities of refuge. Joshua fulfilled the instructions. Both gave a farewell address to the nation and renewed the covenant for the people at the end of their ministry. Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 127

I have to add that GOD's protection and might inspired the fear of nations. GOD led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and across the Jordan. As for circumcision and the Passover, both of these

rituals were given by GOD for the education about a coming Redeemer. Moses and Joshua were chosen by GOD to be His ambassador, and each fulfilled his role.

Also from the Lesson:

Joshua's life was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy made by Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18). However, the prophecy made by Moses was not fulfilled in its ultimate sense. In its ultimate sense, the prophecy could be accomplished (or fulfilled) only by the Messiah. The Messiah knew the Father intimately (John 1:14, 18); He was true and revealed God truthfully (Luke 10:22, John 14:6, Matt. 22:16). God indeed put His words in His mouth (John 14:24). So, both the life of Moses and that of Joshua become types of the coming Messiah, Jesus. Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 127

Excellent.

Additional reading:

Forty days and nights Moses remained in the mount; and during all this time, as at the first, he was miraculously sustained. No person had been permitted to go up with him, nor during the time of his absence were any to approach the mount. At God's command he had prepared two tables of stone, and had taken them with him to the summit; and again the Lord "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

During that long time spent in communion with God, the face of Moses had reflected the glory of the divine Presence; unknown to himself his face shone with a dazzling light when he descended from the mountain. Such a light illumined the countenance of Stephen when brought before his judges; "and all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). Aaron as well as the people shrank away from Moses, and "they were afraid to come nigh him." Seeing their confusion and terror, but ignorant of the cause, he urged them to come near. . .

By this brightness God designed to impress upon Israel the sacred, exalted character of His law, and the glory of the gospel revealed through Christ. While Moses was in the mount, God presented to him, not only the tables of the law, but also the plan of salvation. He saw that the sacrifice of Christ was prefigured by all the types and symbols of the Jewish age; and it was the heavenly light streaming from Calvary, no less than the glory of the law of God, that shed such a radiance upon the face of Moses. That divine illumination symbolized the glory of the dispensation of which Moses was the visible mediator. . .

Moses was a type of Christ. As Israel's intercessor veiled his countenance, because the people could not endure to look upon its glory, so Christ, the divine Mediator, veiled His divinity with humanity when He came to earth. Had He come clothed with the brightness of heaven, He could not have found access to men and women in their sinful state. They could not have endured the glory of His presence. Therefore He humbled Himself, and was made "in the

likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3), that He might reach the fallen race, and lift them up. — Patriarchs and Prophets, pp 329, 330

Moses was a type of Christ. . . God saw fit to discipline Moses in the school of affliction and poverty before he could be prepared to lead the hosts of Israel to the earthly Canaan. The Israel of God, journeying to the heavenly Canaan, have a Captain who needed no human teaching to prepare Him for His mission as a divine leader; yet He was made perfect through sufferings; and “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:10, 18). Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection; yet He died to obtain for us an entrance into the Promised Land. — Conflict and Courage, pg 111

WEDNESDAY

The True Joshua, the Antitype

From the Lesson:

The story of Joshua must be seen through the prism of typology. The wars Joshua conducted are historical events, constituting an essential segment of Israel’s history. The goal of these wars is to settle the Israelites in the Promised Land, where they can enjoy their allotted inheritance in peace and establish a new society based on the principles of God’s law. Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 128

The author/editor seems to have the mindset that war was necessary [see Lessons 4 & 5], but God's plan was to move the Cannanites out of the land gradually with the hornets and pestilence [Exodus 23: 28] because they were His children also and He loved them. He wanted the Cannanites to see His blessings and protection of Israel and be drawn away from their idolatry into a trust relationship with Him.

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "today if you hear his voice,⁸ do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness,⁹ where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw my works for forty years.¹⁰ "therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways';¹¹ as I swore in my wrath, 'they shall not enter my rest.'" ¹² Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, ¹⁵ while it is said, "today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked me." ¹⁶ For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." Hebrews 3: 7-19 NASB

Several Design Laws are being described here. Can you name them?? Are there any lessons to be learned as we come to the end of our "journey in the wilderness" and prepare to enter the "Promised Land"?

From the Lesson:

The authors of the New Testament presented many aspects of the ministry of Jesus Christ in terms of Joshua's work. As Joshua stepped into Canaan after 40 years in the wilderness, so the "antitypical Joshua," Jesus, entered His earthly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13) and His heavenly ministry after 40 days in the wilderness of this earth (Acts 1:3, 9–11; Heb. 1:2).

After Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan (His "crossing of the Jordan" [Matt. 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11]), the gospel writers quote from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, from a Messianic psalm and from a song about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (Matt. 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22). Consequently, through His baptism, Jesus is presented as the Divine Warrior who will—through a life of faithful obedience, even unto death—wage the wars of Yahweh against the evil forces. His life and death on the cross brought about the casting out of Satan, led the conquest over our spiritual enemies, offered spiritual rest to His people, and allotted an inheritance for the redeemed (Eph. 4:8, Heb. 1:4, Heb. 9:15).
Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 128

I like the 40 days/years parallels from the lesson. I've never noticed it before.

THURSDAY

Joshua and Us

The lesson asks us to compare the wars early Israel fought and the spiritual struggles of the Church.

My first thought was of 2 Cor. 10: 3-5, and I'm glad the lesson included it in the recommended reading.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10: 3-5

From the lesson:

The final and complete fulfillment of the Joshua typology will be accomplished at the second coming of Jesus Christ (apocalyptic/eschatological aspect).

Joshua's life reflected so much of God's character that certain aspects of his life took on a prophetic character foreshadowing the activity and person of the Messiah.

For us, today, the Messiah has already come. His ministry does not need to be prefigured, but we still have the privilege of reflecting His character—the glory that Christ longed to share with His disciples (John 17:22) and that can become ours by contemplating the character of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). The more we contemplate Jesus, the more we reflect the beauty of His character. This is so foundational to what our daily walk with Christ should lead to. This is why time in the Word, every day, is so important. This is why, too, we should also spend time dwelling on the life and character and teachings of Jesus. By beholding, yes, we do become changed." [ed: What Design Law?]. Adult SS Guide Q4 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua, pg 129

I think this is very well stated.



2025 Q4 Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 11

Living in the Land

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

Memory Text:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1, NIV

Did anyone have a chance to put this into practice around the Thanksgiving dinner table with relatives and friends?

Any differing beliefs, opinions, politics, doctrines?

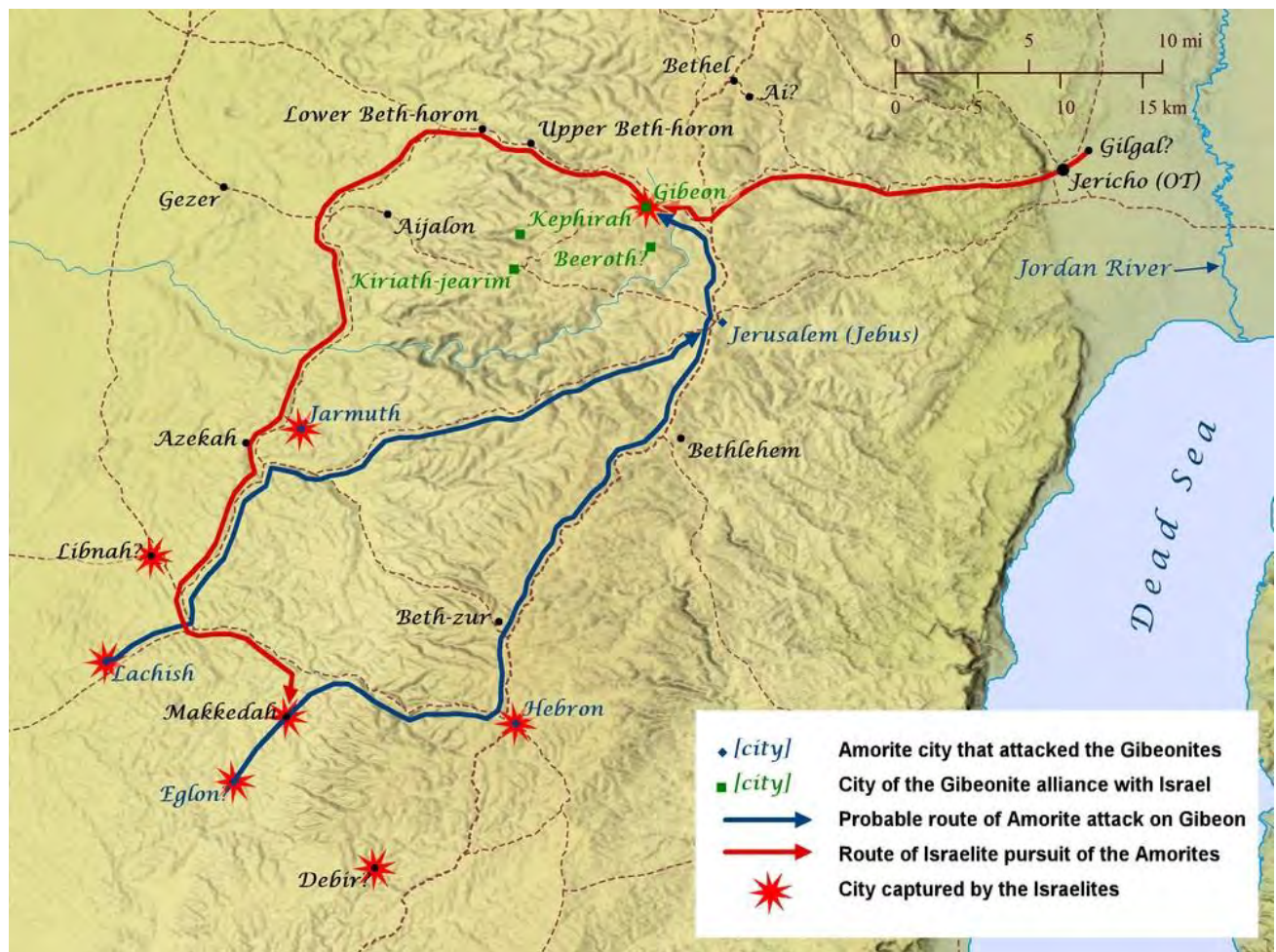
Nothing but peace and tranquility?

We will talk more about how the Israelites (and we) can avoid the wrath/conflict, but first we need to study what caused the differences and potential conflicts between tribes in Joshua 22.

For me, the quarterly did an okay job of explaining the events, but I got much more background insight and details from Chapter 47, “The Division of Canaan,” in the book Patriarchs and Prophets.

To give you some context, the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan into Canaan and because they had eschewed God’s offer of hornets and pestilence, they were busy fighting and conquering the pagan Canaanite nations. They had experienced a military victory at Beth-horon, followed closely by the conquest of southern Canaan. Joshua 10 goes through the whole list of nations and battles, and concludes by saying,

“So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded. Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.” (Joshua 10, NIV)



The tribes of northern Palestine, terrified at the success which had attended the armies of Israel, now entered into a league against them. At the head of this confederacy was Jabin, king of Hazor, a territory to the west of Lake Merom. ‘They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel.’ (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)



This army was much larger than any that the Israelites had before encountered in Canaan, and again a message of encouragement was given to Joshua:

Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)

Near Lake Merom he fell upon the camp of the allies (surprised them) and utterly routed their forces.

“The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them...until they left them none remaining.” The chariots and horses that had been the pride and boast of the Canaanites were not to be appropriated by Israel. At the command of God the chariots were burned, and the horses lamed and thus rendered unfit for battle. The Israelites were not to put their trust in chariots or horses, but “in the name of the Lord their God.

One by one the cities were taken, and Hazor, the stronghold of the confederacy, was burned. The **war was continued for several years**, but its close found Joshua master of Canaan. “And the land had rest from war.” (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)

Though the power of the Canaanites had been broken, they had not been fully dispossessed. On the west the Philistines still held a fertile plain along the seacoast, while north of them was the territory of the Sidonians. Lebanon also was in the possession of the latter people; and to the south, toward Egypt, the land was still occupied by the enemies of Israel.

Joshua was not, however, to continue the war. There was another work for the great leader to perform before he should relinquish the command of Israel. The whole land, both parts already conquered and that which was yet unsubdued, was to be apportioned among the tribes. And it was the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance. If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 511)

I'm sure all of us have read these chapters of the Bible many times in our lives, but did you realize that this job of dividing up the promised land amongst the Israelite tribes was such an important work – his last great work before handing things over to Caleb?

And what about the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance/territory/community? Does this command sound familiar...what other Old Testament folks were given orders to subdue?

From Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it**; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Gen. 1: 26-28.

What needed subduing?
Wasn't the Earth created perfect?

Traditional interpretations of the Hebrew word for "subdue" indicate that it was a strong, forceful verb. It is not a gentle "tend" or "care for"; it implies **bringing something resistant or chaotic under control**... humans, as God's image-bearers, are to bring the potentially wild and chaotic creation

under orderly rule, reflecting God's own ordering of chaos in Genesis 1...Tim paraphrased it as "fill the earth and develop its full potential."

Why do you believe that command was given to both Adam and Eve as well as the Israelite tribes? Why was it so important that they heed the command to subdue and participate in the process to bring it about?

Sense of ownership, skin in the game (literally), they were invested in the well-being and success (salvation) of those new communities.

How much more do you value and respect and cherish something you have fought valiantly for, perhaps lost family/loved ones in the fight, risked everything for compared to something that is just given to you and dropped in your lap.

Think about those definitions and consider the use of the word subdue in these quotes?

The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. **The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself.** [For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven Col 1:19-20] Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Psalm 40:8." {DA 175}

"When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that **the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart.** (Desire of Ages, pg 678)

The Comforter is called 'the Spirit of truth.' His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. [Do we see this happening in society today? Do you see false standards being proclaimed and accepted and do you see people becoming

more Christlike or more debased, abusive, unloving, violent, fearful, selfish and controlling?]

Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus, He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. **It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.**” (Desire of Ages, pg 671)

After Joshua and Caleb made special requests/claims for land, the Levites were given a specific location because of the sanctuary, and the remaining location of each tribe was determined by lot. The tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh (the children of Joseph) demanded a double portion because of their superior population numbers, but Joshua (who was one of them) refused and insisted that they “get up to the wood country and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants if Mount Ephraim is too narrow for you. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 513)

So now we get back to what happened to cause the big misunderstanding and conflict between the divided tribes.

Two of the tribes of Israel, Gad and Reuben, with half the tribe of Manasseh, had received their inheritance before crossing the Jordan...but they had pledged themselves to furnish their proportion of armed men to accompany their brethren across the Jordan and to share their battles till they also should enter upon their inheritance. The obligation had been faithfully discharged...For years they had fought bravely by the side of their brethren. Now the time had come for them to get unto the land of their possession. As they had united with their brethren in the conflicts, so they had shared in the spoils; and they returned ‘with much riches...and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment,’ all of which they were to share with those who had remained with the families and flocks. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 517)

They were now to dwell at a distance from the sanctuary of the Lord, and it was with an anxious heart that Joshua witnessed their departure, knowing how strong would be the temptations, in their isolated and wandering life, to fall into the customs of the heathen tribes that dwelt upon their borders. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 518)

Who here has experienced this scenario that where you physically live or work isolates you and limits your opportunity to engage with like minded believers/family/friends, and puts you more at risk of falling into the customs of those surrounding you?

What steps did you take or put in place to increase your chances of success?

While the minds of Joshua and other leaders were still oppressed with anxious forebodings, strange tidings reached them. Beside the Jordan, near the place of Israel's miraculous passage of the river, the two and a half tribes had erected a great altar, similar to the altar of burnt offering at Shiloh. The law of God prohibited, on pain of death, the establishment of another worship than that at the sanctuary. If such was the object of this altar, it would, if permitted to remain, lead the people away from the true faith. The representatives of the people assembled at Shiloh, and in the heat of their excitement and indignation proposed to make war at once upon the offenders. (Think social media comments section) Through the influence of the more cautious, however, it was decided to send first a delegation to obtain from the two and a half tribes an explanation of their conduct. Ten princes, one from each tribe, were chosen. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 518)

The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions. The ambassadors, taking it for granted that their brethren were guilty, met them with sharp rebuke. They accused them of rebelling against the Lord, and bade them remember how judgments had been visited upon Israel for joining themselves to Baalpeor. On behalf of all Israel, Phinehas stated to the children of Gad and Reuben that if they were unwilling to abide in that land without an altar for sacrifice, they would be welcome to a share in the possessions and privileges of their brethren on the other side. In reply the accused explained that their altar was not intended for sacrifice, but simply as a witness that, although separated by the river, they were of the same faith as their brethren in Canaan. They had feared that in future years their children might be excluded from the tabernacle, as having no part in Israel. Then this altar, erected after the pattern of the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, would be a witness that its builders were also worshipers of the living God. With great joy the ambassadors accepted this explanation, and immediately carried back the tidings to those who sent them. All thoughts of war were dismissed, and the people united in rejoicing and praise to God. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 519)

They also inscribed the altar with its purpose, hoping to prevent future misapprehension and to remove what might be a cause of temptation.

How often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow... Instead of making courteous inquiry to learn the facts in the case, they had met their brethren with censure and condemnation. (Again, think social media comments sections.) While very sensitive to the least blame in regard to their

own course, many are too severe in dealing with those whom they suppose to be in error. **No one was ever reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many are thus driven further from the right path and led to harden their hearts against conviction. A spirit of kindness, a courteous, forbearing deportment may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins.** (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 519)

Listen to this next part and think about whether you can relate as a member of this class:

The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence...Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind. It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. The prayer of Christ just before His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one as He is one with the Father, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were, ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.’ While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity. This is the evidence of our discipleship – ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 520)

And that brings us back around to Thanksgiving dinner around the table with differing beliefs, opinions, politics, doctrines...and our memory text “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Oprah’s latest podcast is entitled, “When Families Cut Ties – Exploring the Rising Trend of Going No Contact With Your Family”...it’s been out for three days, has ~2.5 million views on YouTube, and estimates a third of Americans has cut off ties or is estranged from their family.

What an incredibly sad statistic. What do you think about this trend and what’s causing it?

Don’t get me wrong, I have experienced it and have initiated it so I know that there are times and situations where those boundaries are totally appropriate and healthy...but I also know that we have

become much less tolerant and more combative, and as usual I'm guessing that those stats on Christians are similar to non-Christians...and I know that when there is no contact, no conversation, no dialogue, there is also no reconciliation.

Thursday's lesson lists some helpful principles for communication, resolving disagreements, and conflict resolution:

It is best to communicate rather than suppressing our observations/concerns until they explode. Lead with curiosity (versus trying to win a debate) – seek to understand before being understood. Agree before you disagree – “You’re right” are powerful words in de-escalation.

- Be willing to make a sacrifice in order to achieve unity.
- When accused, falsely or rightly, give a gentle answer that turns away wrath.
- Rejoice and bless God when peace is reestablished.



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 12

God is Faithful

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What do you think of the title? Doesn't it sound encouraging? Doesn't it sound inspiring? But can anyone spot the danger in this title? The potential opening for exploitation by God's enemy?

If we asked the Jews who crucified Christ if God is faithful—what would they likely have said?

If we could ask the clergy of the Dark Ages who burned people at the stake and carried out the Inquisition and Crusades if God is faithful—what do you think they would have said?

If we could ask Islamic suicide bombers if they believe God is faithful—what do you think they would have said?

If we, in the future, are able to ask the worshipers of the beast of Revelation and Satan when he impersonates Christ, if the god they are worshiping is faithful—what do you think they will say?

If we could ask certain leaders today in the SDA church who publicly write and teach that God is the wielder of death and that justice requires God to use His power to torture and kill the unrepentant in the end, whether God is faithful, what would they likely say?

Won't those who worship the false Christ, the prince of this world, who is a creature, who makes up rules and uses external power to punish rule-breakers, say that the god they worship is faithful? And they will say that their god is faithful, because he is faithful, faithful to himself, his laws, and his justice—the justice that uses his power to inflict torture on people, he will faithfully carry out that torture as the execution that he promised.

So, I absolutely agree that our God, the true God, the Creator God who is love, truth, and life and who is perfectly revealed in Jesus is faithful, but so is Satan—Satan is faithful to himself, his methods, his principles, his character of fear, selfishness, deceit, abuse, coercion, and death—remember the Bible tells us it is Satan who holds the power of death and Jesus destroys both him and his power of death.

To me, the better title would have been God is Trustworthy. Satan is faithful to himself and his methods, and because he is a faithful liar, deceiver, abuser, exploiter, faithful to wielding fear, being selfish, seeking always to exalt himself above all others—we CANNOT trust him. He is totally, completely, utterly, fully corrupted and untrustworthy while being faithful to all he has chosen to be.

God on the other hand is completely trustworthy, because God is love and truth, God is faithful to Himself. God's nature, character, methods, principles, and government are those of truth and love,

which operate only in freedom—which is fully revealed in Jesus who though being by nature God, did not think equality with God was something to be held onto but surrendered that position, power, prestige, glory, and life and humbled Himself all the way to the cross for the purpose of saving others. God is faithful but God is faithful to truth, to love, to freedom and thus God is trustworthy.

As Paul wrote,

- But what if some of them were not faithful? Does this mean that God will not be faithful? Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, “You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.” Romans 3:3-4 GNT.

So we trust God not merely because God is faithful, but because of God’s character and therefore what God is faithful to—truth, love, freedom!

And the lesson acknowledges this in the last paragraph of SUNDAY’s lesson,

- Indeed, emphasizing God’s faithfulness, Paul also wrote: “The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim. 2:11–13, ESV). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 97.

He cannot deny Himself, thus His faithfulness is all determined by His character, and thus our trust in Him, is not merely that He is faithful, but what do we believe His character to be?

Read the first paragraph in SABBATH’s,

- When John F. Kennedy addressed the United States at his inauguration, on January 20, 1961, his speech was only 1,366 words, but it left an indelible mark on the American mind. As he encouraged his country to focus on their responsibilities instead of their privileges, he said: “With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.” *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 96.

Would our nation be better if every person in our country took this to heart and applied it to their lives?

Be careful—doesn’t the view of God a person holds make all the difference?

Wouldn’t the Jews who crucified Christ, the Christians of the Dark Ages who burned people at the stake, the Islamic jihadists all embrace this statement and want to live up to it?

In fact, wouldn't the application of Shariah law be seen by those who value it to be, to them, an exact and perfect application of this statement by JFK?

So, what again, is the key? Who do we believe and understand God to be?

And what determines which God we are worshiping? How we understand God's law—that determines how we understand God's character, methods, and principles.

The common thread between the Jews who crucified Christ, the Inquisitors of the Dark Ages, and the Islamic shariah law proponents is that they all believe God's moral law functions like human law, imposed rules that require the use of external power to inflict punishment for law breaking in order for justice to be served.

When we return to worshiping God as Creator, we recognize He is the builder of reality and all His laws are the laws that reality itself is built to operate and function upon, law of gravity, laws of physics and health, but also the moral laws. When we realize this we realize that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:15), those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction (Galatians 6:8), and that Christ became human and by His death He destroys him who holds the power of death that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14), and that Jesus destroys death and brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim 1:10).

It is by returning to understand that all God's laws are design laws that we are then won to trust, open the heart to Jesus, are reborn with His Spirit, His life, and we become new beings who love God first and others as ourselves are willing to sacrifice self for the salvation of others. Thus we will not follow a leader who wants to use external power to coerce consciences and claim worship.

MONDAY

The lesson asks,

- What are the similarities between how the Israelites conquered Canaan under Joshua's leadership and the way Christians today can live a victorious spiritual life? *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 98.

Joshua led them to victory and we are led to victory by Jesus, whose Hebrew name was Joshua. We must follow the leadership of Jesus, like they followed Joshua. And Josuah followed the leadership of God, as Jesus follows the will/leadership of His Father.

What other lessons are there for us in this object lesson? These week's blog [Joshua Circumcises the Israelites Before They Can Occupy Canaan](#) unpacks the process of cutting away from our hearts anything that interferes with our connection with God—and how our natural selves, the natural spirit of fear and selfishness we inherited from Adam, causes us to attach all kinds of things to our hearts in attempts to comfort ourselves and resolve the fear—including all the false religions and penal legal

lies. It uncovers how the legal religious beliefs are the very things that keep people from trusting God and why we must call people back to Creator worship—it is so they can actually, in reality, be reborn with the Spirit of Christ and come the righteousness of God.

Read the third paragraph,

- God has given rest to Israel from its enemies, but there are some nations left that still have to be dispossessed. Victory is not an accomplished, unchangeable reality for Israel but an ever-present possibility by constant reliance in faithfulness on God's available help. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 98.

When we first surrender our hearts to Jesus and are converted, don't we experience an initial rest, peace, joy, comfort, His presence, the relief from guilt, shame, fear that had been controlling us?

What is that rest, peace, relief? Is it rest and relief from house chores? Is it rest and relief from schoolwork? Is it rest and relief from paying one's bills, going to their job, or dealing with difficult people? No, it is rest and relief from the fear of death, fear of failure, guilt, shame, trying to save ourselves. It is an internal rest for our souls when we are won to trust Jesus and surrender ourselves, our lives, the things we hold most precious to Him and trust Him with how things will turn out for us instead of constantly worrying and fighting to try and make things go the way we want them to go.

But, after that surrender to Jesus and the initial joyful rest in Him, are all our enemies gone, are all our battles over? Or, do we then find our life is an ongoing battle against our true enemy—the father of lies—Satan, and his methods of lies, fear, selfishness, and our own fallen nature of fear and selfishness? Do we find, after conversion, that we have both internal and external battles to wage? But isn't the most intense, the most crucial battles the internal battle against our old self, our old beliefs, habits, biases, assumptions, preferences, desires that tempt us?

And what is the key to victory as we follow Jesus?

Read the last paragraph,

- The victories of the Israelites could not be attributed to their strength and strategy. Similarly, spiritual victory over sin and temptation have been secured through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but God's people today must constantly rely on the spiritual supplies provided by the Holy Spirit in order to live a triumphant life. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 98.

This is true, can anyone explain what this means in reality, functionally, operationally, daily in our lives today?

What does Jesus' voluntary substitutionary sinless sacrifice provide us that is required for our victory?

- Truth that destroys Satan's lies and provides the basis for our trust.

- A new sinless life restored into humanity—Jesus is the vine, we are the branches. He is the one human being, in the aftermath of Adam’s fall, that was born with a new sinless breath of life, received by His humanity when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she became pregnant. And we receive this new life, this new spirit, from the Holy Spirit when we trust God and open our heart to Him—and that is when we are reborn.

Why was this required? Because a sinless spirit, breath of life, animating energy that is pure love, truth, trust, is required to be in unity, at-one-ment, harmony with God and be able to stand in His life-giving glory. Fear, selfishness, lies cause beings to cut themselves off from God, to run from Him, hide themselves, close their hearts because they do not trust Him and thus they cut themselves off from life.

This is what Adam and Eve did to themselves when they believed lies and broke their love/trust heart motivation with God, and their spirits became corrupted with fear and selfishness. And immediately, they ran away from God, tried to hide from Him, and if God did not intervene, intercede, in love, in mercy, they would have cut themselves off from life and died.

But God loved the world and human beings too much to let us die. And the Godhead, in their foreknowledge, knowing what was going to happen, had already covenanted amongst themselves, that when Adam sinned, Jesus would be the Remedy, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Jesus chose to voluntarily surrender His position and power and be born as a real human from a sinful mother and thereby partake of the very breath of life God breathed into Adam in Eden, and which was corrupted by Adam and is passed along to every single human being. That life, that animating energy, that spirit is the spirit of fear and selfishness, and Jesus partook of that life.

God breathed only one breath of life into humanity in Adam and every single other human is born from that same breath of life shared, passed down through the generations. We are all born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).

In order for Jesus to save this species, the humanity He created in Eden, He had to partake of that same life and destroy, purge, eliminate the spirit of fear and selfishness and replace it with His Holy Spirit, His sinless Spirit, His life.

And thus, Jesus was incarnate, He partook of the life corrupted by Adam through Mary, but the Father to His humanity was the Holy Spirit, thus Jesus was born with a sinless holy spirit. And throughout His life, He was tempted in all points like we are yet without sin, because He chose every single moment, every single thought, every single choice, to live out perfect truth, love, and trust in His Father and at the cross the life inherited from Adam through Mary was killed, purged, and Jesus rose from the tomb in a purified and perfected humanity with only His sinless, holy life, spirit and became the second Adam, the new head of humanity. As Hebrews says,

- Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV84.

He learned obedience through exercising His human faculties to think, reason, grow in wisdom and stature, and choose always the live out the spirit of love, truth, and trust and develop a perfect, sinless, human character and purge the spirit of fear and selfishness. This is objective, it is not merely demonstrating God's character of love, which was also necessary to do, but this was far more, it was reality-based accomplishment to fix humanity, purge and eliminate from humanity the cause of death and restore the cause of life.

And every human who returns to worshipping God as Jesus revealed and opens their heart to trust, receives the Holy Spirit who brings the life of Jesus and they are reborn with the spirit, life, of Jesus and can say as Paul did,

- I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 NIV84

It is as Peter described, we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

This is reality and it is only possible because of what Jesus accomplished. But this required that Jesus actually partake of the life corrupted by Adam. If Jesus did not partake of the life corrupted by Adam and replace it with His sinless life, then Jesus is not part of this species. If He is not part of humanity, then He is not able to save, because He cannot infuse us with a sinless human life that was tempted in all points like we are but without sin, a human life that eliminated the cause of death.

And there is a doctrine taught in certain segments of Christianity that denies what I just described, it teaches that Jesus did not partake of the life handed down from Adam, that Mary was not a sinner, but she somehow was a sinless being, and Jesus was born of a sinless mother and sinless father in order to be a sinless sacrifice who could have our legal sin-crimes placed upon Him and be punished and killed by God in our place to pay our legal penalty to God. And then go to heaven, and along with His mother, plead to God to be merciful, accept His blood payment and not kill us.

This is fantasy, it not only denies Scripture, it requires fantastical and reality-denying thinking and creates ideas that make God out to be completely arbitrary and untrustworthy.

For instance, how could Mary be born sinless? Who were her parents? Where did she receive her breath of life? And if her parents were sinful, receiving the spirit of fear from their parents all the way back to Adam as the genealogy of Mary recorded in Scripture describes, how was Mary born sinless, with a spirit not infected with fear and selfishness? And if God could cause Mary to be born sinless, why not every other human being? Why did David write that we are born in sin conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5)?

And if some think God formed a new body out of dirt and breathed into that new body a new breath of life and created Mary in this way—then they are teaching Mary is not actually part of the creation God made in Eden, but a new species of similar humans, but not related to us, and then Jesus is not related

to us, and cannot be our Savior, and could not be tempted in all points like we are, did not purge the spirit of fear and replace it with the spirit of life. So, that doctrine, is insidiously corrupt because it undermines and removes the core truth, central reality, of what Jesus had to accomplish in order to save humanity. And thereby cuts people off from participating in salvation—which is being reborn with a new spirit, the spirit of Jesus brought by the Holy Spirit, and instead teaches that salvation is a legal process in courts in heaven.

So, how is Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice the key to our victory today in our warfare with self today?

Because of Adam's sin, we are born with spirits, the animating life energy, the breath of life inherited from Adam that is contaminated with fear and selfishness (Psalm 51:5; 2 Timothy 1:7). We come into the world fear-ridden, seeking to find things to comfort ourselves, to get for self, to make self feel better. We come into the world afraid and distrusting, and we form all kinds of attachments, coping skills, and belief systems to make ourselves feel safe, secure, good—and every single one of those things that stands, exists, operates, functions in between our souls and God, everything that we prioritize above God, must be cut away and put in its proper place so that our life is founded on God and God alone.

And this is taught in the object lesson of circumcision, the sign of the covenant, which is God cutting out of our hearts everything that interferes with our love and trust in Him and writing into our hearts His living law of truth, love, and trust. (Hebrews 8:10).

Thus we, when we are won to trust by the truth, open our hearts and become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4); it is no longer our old fear-based, self-centered spirit animating us, but the Spirit of Christ living in us, and we live to love God and others (Galatians 2:20). We are reborn with a new life (John 3:3), a new breath of life, the life of Christ that He gives us freely and it is only possible because Jesus joined His divinity with our humanity and became a real human being descended from Adam.

And then we have rest from our fight to survive by faith, by trust, we choose to trust Jesus and experience peace with God.

This is not a legal adjustment in books; it is reality, a real-world, internal power that indwells you through the reality-based pathways that God built into all creation. We live new lives, the life of Christ. And this is why we must cut everything out of our hearts and minds that interferes with our connection with God.

This is transformation; this is freedom from fear, guilt, and shame. This is the gospel, the true message to go to the world. This is righteousness by faith—that we become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is what we must experience to be victorious as we move forward to the heavenly Promised Land!

And this is the message that was brought to our church in 1888 and which sadly was rejected and replaced with the false penal-legal lie based on the lie that God's law function like human law.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph,

- The danger facing Israel is not the threat of the remaining nations' animosity but the risk of their friendship. Their weapons might not represent any challenge to Israel; however, their ideology and values (or counter-values) could prove to be more harmful than any military force. Joshua draws the attention of the leaders to the crucial fact that the conflict they have been involved in is first, and ultimately, spiritual. Therefore, Israel has to maintain its unique identity. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 99.

What is the object lesson for us today?

Has Christianity faced the same danger—friendship with the world?

What examples can we identify of how Christianity has been corrupted by friendship with the world?

Historically, many things have been identified by various groups as dangers to Christianity, but they are the ever-changing fruits of the core problem, but these many things include:

- worldly entertainment (theater, music, gambling, TV, sports)
- dress standards
- ingestibles of various kinds (food, drink, drugs, inhalants)
- modern technologies
- physical living spaces (don't live in communities not of your faith)
- marriage to someone not of your denomination
- sexual practices and beliefs of the world

But what is the core, central, number one corruption to Christianity that comes from the world?

The lie that God's law functions like human law, this is the bedrock lie beneath every single corruption of Christianity.

Are there any questions about that? Any confusion? Any place where it is difficult to see the various things we listed are all rooted in the lie about God's law?

Thus, the number one truth that must go to the world to prepare people for Christ's return is the truth that calls people back to worship God as Creator, and requires people to recognize that God's laws are design laws. And when that truth is embraced and accepted, that leads to a correct understanding/diagnosis of what sin is, why sin causes death, why Christ had to die, and why the wicked in the end suffer terribly and die eternally, but not at God's hand. All of this truth restores trust in God opening the heart for healing and transformation.

Another way that Satan tries to corrupt Christianity is by splitting the attributes of the Holy Spirit, and thereby introduce functional falsehood, operational lies, in other words doing things out of harmony with God, while speaking words that are true.

What are the attributes of the Holy Spirit? Truth and love.

And Satan splits the attribute of love away from truth, seen most extremely today from the godless left in our society who deny the belief in God but promote a toxic empathy, which is a corruption of love. Under such corrupt ideas and practices as:

- speaking truth that hurts another's feelings is unkind, cruel, mean, bigoted, transphobic, racist, xenophobic, anti-others
- that your truth is your truth by my truth is my truth and to challenge my truth is not showing love to me and if you love you will accept my truth
- that words that hurt feelings are acts of violence and deserve a violent response
- providing so-called safe spaces in public society where speech is censored under the umbrella of love and care, not to upset or hurt someone's feelings
- that the way to love a person with a mental health problem that is confused about their identity to the point they become delusional and believe they are a man in woman's body or vice-versa that the way to love them is to join them in their delusion and then mutilate them through drugs and surgery. But if you speak truth to them, that would not be love, because it would upset them, hurt their feelings, and that is harmful.
- That speaking truth which challenges someone's religious beliefs, say, that certain systems of belief and practice are beastly, the beast of Revelation, that is unkind, cruel, intolerant, mean-spirited, and unloving and becomes a hate crime to do such things.

The Bible tells us that love rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6), and those who love others will not collude with lies, will not avoid the difficult conversations, but in love seek to have them because they want to save souls, souls that are trapped in layers of lies and fantasy.

But Satan also attacks from the others side, which is often from the political right. And that is by getting people who value truth to promote objective truths without love, without concern for others, from a position of authority, dominance, superiority, control, or pretentious righteousness that is intended to intimidate, crush, demoralize, and discourage struggling souls so they surrender their individuality and freedom to the control of those presenting such truth claims.

The beast of Revelation will rise, not to do away with the Bible, religion, the belief in God, law and law enforcement, but to merge them into a religious system that uses law and law enforcement as the means of promoting righteousness, worship, faith. There will be some truths promoted by that false system, just like the Jews who crucified Jesus had many truths—Sabbath day, inspiration of Scripture, God is Creator, etc.

But the central truth that is require to make all others fact truths functionally and operationally true, is the truth of God's character of love, which based upon the truth that God's laws are design laws. The

moment we take a fact truth, like the Sabbath, and set it in human imposed law understanding, we create the platform for religious conservatism to become beastly, because we divorce truth from functional love and will seek to advance our cause through law and law enforcement which eventually coerces consciences, and that destroys love, incites rebellion, and for those who stay, destroys individuality making people mindless followers of the one with power—which is Satan’s goal.

A couple of truisms:

- **Love without truth is not kind—it’s cruel;**
- **Truth without love is not healing—it’s destructive.**

- **Truth alone does the right thing for the wrong reasons** (driven by spirit of fear, fear of being wrong, fear of sin, fear of legal trouble etc.);
- **Love alone does the wrong thing for the right reasons** (toxic empathy—spirit of fear, fear of hurting others).

Godly people will speak the truth in love and leave others free to respond as they choose, and the Holy Spirit to take care of outcomes.

Read the third paragraph,

- The prohibition of invoking the name of a god, swearing by it, and serving or bowing to it has to do with idolatry. In the ancient Near East, the name of a deity represented his or her presence and power. Invoking or mentioning the names of foreign gods in everyday greetings or business transactions meant recognizing their authority and helped lead the Israelites to seek their power in time of need (compare with Judg. 2:1–3, 11–13). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 99.

Is this an issue of language, spoken words, or something else?

This is not an issue of language or words, but of belief, heart intention, attitude, mindset. God is instructing us that we are not to look to any other source than Him—He is the source of life, of truth, of love, of good, of salvation, of all blessings. The words are not the issue, but the heart attitude is.

This is important, because Satan would love to get Christians into the superstitious practice of incantations and magical thinking about words.

This can take various forms like:

- Prayers must be ended with the slogan “in Jesus’ name”
- But then some argue, “no, it must be in the name of Joshua”
- To which another argues, “no, it is in the name of Yashua”
 - all failing to realize the syllables are not important, the name means character and to pray in the name of Jesus means to pray with a heart and mind reborn with His life via

the indwelling Holy Spirit, such that we have the spirit of Christ in us leading us to pray with His motivation of love and trust in His Father.

- The name it claim it theologies, that our words, if spoken correctly, with the right Bible promises, and or phrases can speak our reality into existence, is another destructive idea.
- others?

WEDNESDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- At first glance, the biblical teaching on God's anger seems to be incompatible with the affirmation that God is love (John 3:16, 1 John 4:8). Yet, it is exactly in the light of God's wrath that the biblical doctrine of God's love becomes even more relevant. First, the Bible presents God as loving, patient, long-suffering, and ready to forgive (Exod. 34:6, Mic. 7:18). However, in the context of a world affected by sin, the wrath of the Lord is the attitude of His holiness and righteousness when confronted by sin and evil. His wrath is never an emotional, revengeful, unpredictable overreaction. The New Testament teaches that Christ became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), and through His death we have been reconciled with God (Rom. 5:10). Whoever believes in Him will not have to face God's wrath (John 3:36, Eph. 2:3, 1 Thess. 1:10). The concept of the wrath of God presents God as the righteous judge of the universe and the One who upholds the cause of justice (Ps. 7:11, Ps. 50:6, 2 Tim. 4:8). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 100.

What is the key to rightly understanding God's anger and wrath?

What law lens one sees the world through—God's design laws or the imposed laws that creatures make up?

There are two systems God's and Satan's, led by two different beings, with two different governments/methods/laws and both God and Satan are described as having wrath.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus tells us the following:

- Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having **great wrath**, because he knows that he has a short time. Revelation 12:12 NKJV, emphasis mine.

Is there a difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

Do we see God and Satan acting in similar ways, using similar powers, and causing similar outcomes?

Do we differentiate God's wrath and Satan's wrath only by motive—for instance, saying that God acts in justice whereas Satan acts in selfishness, but they both use power to inflict harm?

If we view the world through Satan's system of government, that of a creature who cannot create reality so, instead, makes up rules that are enforced through external punishments, then we understand wrath to be the use of power to punish—to inflict harm upon those whom one is wrathful toward. This is Satan's wrath, and it comes out as a result of satanic power.

Throughout human history, God has been shielding us from Satan's wrath, his evil use of power. God has been holding back the four winds of strife (Revelation 7:1); He has been warring against Satan and the principalities of darkness (Revelation 12:7; Colossians 2:15); and He has been sending angel armies to shield us (2 Kings 6:17–20). We see this happening all throughout Scripture.

Satan's wrath is the use of power to cause harm!

But God's wrath is the opposite—it is when He ***stops using power to protect us***. God is the Creator, the builder of reality whose laws are the template of health and life. Breaking His laws directly causes us harm, and God, in harmony with His character of love, must expend His power, His energy, His resources, to hold at bay the harm that results from breaking His design-laws and to impart the healing solution. While Satan uses power to injure, God uses power to heal, restore, recreate, renew, and rebuild.

God's wrath occurs when He respects the choices of rebellious people and gives them what they have insisted upon—freedom from Him, His design laws for life, and His merciful healing power and presence.

This is exactly what Paul describes in Romans:

The **wrath of God is being revealed** from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since what may be **known about God** is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his eternal power and divine nature—have been **clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:18–20 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Paul then goes on to explicitly state three times and describe with outcome-based evidence that God's wrath is letting people go to reap what they have chosen when they break away from His protective care. In verses 24, 26, and 28, Paul says that God *gave them up*, or *let them go*, or *handed them over* to what they insisted upon—and the only outcome from breaking away from the Creator and Sustainer of life and health is ruin and death.

God is the God of reality—and His wrath is the exact opposite of Satan's; yet, sadly, billions believe that God's wrath is functionally no different than Satan's. Billions have been led to believe that God's wrath is when He uses His power to inflict pain, suffering, and torture upon His children. This is a lie!

And this lie is the fruit, the unavoidable result, of believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.

If one believes that any part of God's law is like human law, made up rules, then one always believes that God must use power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking, for if there is no punishment in this artificial system, then there is no "justice."

God's justice is God doing what is right and just according to His law of truth and love and that is, if people insist, setting them free to reap what they have chosen, separation from Him, the source of life, and they ultimately die.

The reason for this is reality—what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship with Him and this cannot be achieved by the use of external rules and inflicted punishments. In fact, punishing people who do not love and trust you for not loving and trusting you, causes more fear, distrust, rebellion, and selfishness, seeking to protect self from the one using power to inflict harm.

This is the fruit of the penal legal theologies, they lead to doctrinal beliefs that function to hide and protect people from a god who is the source of torture and death.

God is waiting today, for the truth about Him as Creator to lighten the world, to set hearts and minds free of the legal lies about Him and win people back to trust so He can heal and restore them to righteousness.

And restoration to righteousness is contrary to the legal theologies, they teach that we get a legal declaration of being legally righteous based on the merits of Jesus being applied to our legal registry in heaven, while we remain unrighteous upon the earth. This leads to a form of godliness without power, where Christians continue to live sinfully, failing and falling, and calling on Jesus for legal forgiveness, but not living victoriously because they are taught a lie about salvation.

In the paragraph we quoted, they referenced a text but then didn't fully quote it, instead they rewrote it to fit the false narrative, notice what they did—it perpetuates the fear of God by inferring a lie:

- The New Testament teaches that Christ became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), and through His death we have been reconciled with God (Rom. 5:10). Whoever believes in Him will not have to face God's wrath (John 3:36, Eph. 2:3, 1 Thess. 1:10).

Everything that is written here can be understood through design law to be true, however, if one reads this through imposed law, then they read that Jesus took out sins upon Himself, in order to be punished by God in our place, so that we could be reconciled to God by absorbing God's wrath and through His legal payment we can then be declared righteous, legally justified, and then we won't have to face God's wrath—the day God uses power to torture and kill.

This false way of understanding things is built upon the legal fiction of legal adjustment being righteousness declared, rather than righteousness experienced within the believer when we are reborn and actually, within us, receive the life of Jesus animating us through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This legal fiction would have been exposed had they quoted 2 Corinthians 5:21 which reads,

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84.

We actually become righteous, and only after we are reborn with the life of Jesus and are in reality righteous, does God, who always speaks truth, declare that we are righteous, because we have in reality become righteous, not by our works, but by trusting Jesus and receiving His sinless life animating us from within by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The only way Israel will be able to avoid the temptation of idolatry and the wrath of God is not by constantly remembering the “don’ts” of the covenant but by fostering a conscious and consistent allegiance to the Lord. The same verb, “to cleave, adhere” to the Lord (see Deut. 4:4), also is used to describe the marriage covenant that was intended between wife and husband (Gen. 2:24) or the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 1:14). It is important to note that, according to Joshua’s evaluation, such faithfulness has characterized Israel as a nation “to this day.” Unfortunately, the same assertion will not be true for later periods of Israel’s history, as the book of Judges sadly demonstrates (Judg. 2:2, 7, 11; Judg. 3:7, 12; Judg. 4:1, etc.). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 101.

I like the lesson pointed to the marriage covenant as an example of what it means to cling or cleave to God. What does the clinging or cleaving that spouses are to have for each other teach us about how we are to cleave to God?

Does clinging to God, and to our spouses, require faithfulness, loyalty? What about obedience? What kind of obedience?

If we our relationship with God is from an imposed law, requiring imposed punishments upon us for rule-breaking approach—what is the result?

Ty Gibson beautifully illustrates the problem of a relationship based on law in the following story:

Linda was eager to be married, to have someone special to spend her life with, but there were not many prospects on the horizon. Then one day she met Herman. He treated her so nicely. He opened the door for her, held her hand as they walked, and pulled her chair out as she sat down.

After months of courtship, Herman proposed. Joyfully, she immediately said yes, and they were married.

For the honeymoon Herman took her to a very nice place. They had a wonderful time, but all too quickly the honeymoon was over. Their first morning home Linda was awakened early at 5 a.m. by a bright light. She opened her eyes and there stood Herman saying, "Rise and shine. The honeymoon is over, and we need to get down to real life."

She noticed he was holding a piece of paper in his hand, and he presented to her the first of many lists to come. He had spelled out in great detail her responsibilities in two-week segments.

March 1–14:

5:30 rise and shower

6:00 begin breakfast; see attached menu

6:15 awaken Hermie-cuddles with a gentle kiss and turn on his shower

6:45 serve breakfast (do not forget grapefruit)

7:15 begin breakfast cleanup while husband brushes teeth

7:25 meet Hermie-cuddles at the door with appropriate jacket (be sure to pay attention to the weather), and say good-bye with a smile and a kiss

7:30 finish breakfast cleanup

8:00 free time

8:15 housecleaning; see attached cleaning supply list and detailed instructions

M—north rooms

T—east rooms

W—south rooms

TH—west rooms

F—the garage

11:00 balance checkbook

12:00 lunch, whatever you like except marked items; check list

12:30 miscellaneous duties

M—car maintenance and wash car

T—dry cleaning and banking

W—shopping

TH—wash windows

F—yard work

3:30 dinner prep; see attached menu

4:30 meet husband at door with kiss and hang up his coat

5:00 serve dinner

5:45 dinner cleanup

6:15 free time; see list of suggestions

6:45 draw Hermie-cuddles's bath
7:00 do next day's ironing
7:45 hand husband towel as he exits bath
8:00 neck and back massage for the man of your dreams
9:00 lights out, pleasant dreams sweetheart

Linda was given a new list with slight variations every two weeks without fail. As the years dragged on—and they were dragging—ten years into the relationship Hermie-cuddles dropped dead of an unknown cause. Linda's first reaction was to praise God! She didn't know whether to rejoice or grieve.

She made a vow that she would never, ever, get married again. But after three years of being single, she met a guy named Michael. He was like Herman in some ways. He opened the door for a lady to walk through. He was polite and courteous. He pulled out her chair as she sat and enjoyed holding her hand. And she kept telling herself, "No way, no way, no way." Then one day Michael popped the question, and she said yes.

They had a wonderful honeymoon. The first day back she woke up with a start at 5:30 a.m. and saw Michael standing at the end of the bed with a piece of paper in his hand. Immediately, she jumped into a karate stance, yelled "no way," and yanked the paper from him ripping it in two.

Michael, with a sad and surprised look, said, "Linda that was a poem I wrote for you after you fell asleep last night."

As his words sank in, she felt bad about her reaction. She picked up the pieces and read his beautiful expression of love, and it broke her heart. While she was reading, Michael came in and served her breakfast in bed. And no list was forthcoming. Ten years passed being married to this wonderful man. One spring day while cleaning in the attic she came across an old shoebox filled with lists given to her by Herman the horrible.

She pulled out one of the lists and began to read. The strangest realization came over her. She said quietly to herself, "Wow, I do all of these things for Michael, and I never think about it."

This is why the Bible teaches that it is the love of God that compels us—that love is the spirit, life, of Jesus that we only have through trust.



2025 4Q Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 13 Choose This Day!

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What does the title of the lesson mean to you?

What are we to choose? Salvation? What does it mean to choose salvation?

Does choosing salvation mean choosing to believe:

- We were created by God and did not evolve from nothing?
- That the Bible is inspired by God
- That Jesus is the Son of God and He is our substitutionary Savior
- That the Sabbath is the seventh-day
- And every other correct Bible doctrine?

Does choosing salvation mean choosing to believe the right Bible doctrines?

What does it mean to choose salvation? —to genuinely trust God, to open the heart, to let go of our life of fear and selfishness and cut away everything we have attached to our heart that is between us and Him and to trust Him with our everything.

And then, as we trust Him, He leads us, step by step, truth by truth, to make choices, specific to our lives, to our journey, that with every truth, every choice to follow Him in trust, we advance, mature, develop, grow, heal, and gain victory after victory—by choosing love, truth, and trust, over lies, fear, selfishness, and our old comfort habits. But it all starts with the choice to trust Jesus with everything.

Example—Job trusted God fully and was recognized as perfect—not sinless, but perfect in trust such that when tribulation came and he did not understand what was happening, when he still had many questions and frustrations, he continued to trust God. The one thing Job didn't do through it all is to distrust God.

The same with Joseph, Daniel, the three worthies—they never stopped trusting God.

And this trust, in the Bible is often called faith—it is a living, abiding, confident faith or trust in God with our inmost self. And this abiding, living faith—this moment-to-moment trust of God with our lives, futures, how things will turn out—is the key to victory. When this living faith is experienced it results in sinners *becoming the righteousness of God*. In other words, it is the righteousness by faith message, true transformation of a sinner into a righteous loyal friend of God, which happens only by faith or trust.

But the Bible teaches there is a false faith, a faith that does not lead to righteousness, a faith, a religion, a belief, a form of godliness that has no power and results in people functioning no different from the world, while they are deceived into believing they are righteous.

Jesus said,

- “Not everyone who **says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’** will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will **say to me** on that day, ‘**Lord, Lord,** did we not prophesy **in your name**, and **in your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**’ Matthew 7:21-23 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—**having a form of godliness but denying its power.** Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus and Paul are not talking about the atheist, agnostic, god-deniers. The people they are talking about have a form of godliness, claiming to be God-like, or Christian, but they deny the power of God and thus function no differently from the world.

And what does this false faith look like?

This is Christianity that is built on the lie that God’s law functions like human law, imposed rules requiring God to use power to torture and kill sinners for so-called justice sake.

In this false legal view, faith in this legal system is not restored in God, because the legal theology they hold so dear, teaches that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death that He inflicts upon any who break His law and do not propitiate or assuage His wrath by claiming the blood of His Son.

This false theology, rather than leading people to a living faith, genuine trust in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, divides the Godhead and teaches people to place their trust in the mechanics, the payments, systems, concepts, beliefs, that get applied through Jesus to placate or legally please the Father and these beliefs function to hide, conceal, separate, and protect sinners from God rather than reconcile sinners to God.

They will take the same beautiful words and metaphors of Scripture and pervert them to undermine living faith, to undermine saving trust and their very doctrines keep the spirit of fear alive in their hearts while they claim legal salvation. They teach people to trust in the blood payment, intercessory pleas and prayers to the Father, legal claims, adjustment in record books, erasure of records from books and minds, covering over wickedness with a white robe so the Father is blinded, prevented from

seeing reality so in heaven He makes a legal declaration of righteousness while the sinner remain unrighteous in reality.

Because this false legal model has no saving power, because it does not bring the life of Christ **into operation within the heart** of the sinner, what happens is that the sinner continues to be motivated by their inherited spirit of fear and selfishness. And this causes them to become very preoccupied with deeds, dos and don'ts, and ensuring they know the right doctrines and rules and rule enforcement.

They are falsely taught that salvation is choosing to believe the right doctrines, joining the right church, eating the right foods, resting on the right day, participating in the right ceremonies performed in the right way and reading from the right Bible. They feel secure in believing that they have identified Bible truths, are members of the remnant church, and obey the right rules—yet they are still unconverted and become ever more like the legalistic Jews who crucified Christ.

This legal approach with faith in the legal payments, from hearts motivated by fear and selfishness, leads to church members in constant conflict, constant debate, constant argument, and ever-increasing fracturing, division, and hostility. And what do we see in Christianity? In 2001 the WORLD CHRISTIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA reported that Christianity had divided into 34,000 separate groups, and by 2018, according to Center for Study of Global Christianity, Christianity was divided into 41,000 separate groups.

This happens because the unrenewed heart lives in fear, fear of making mistakes, forgetting something, not understanding properly, doing something wrong, and they are hypervigilant toward threats toward their own sense of safety. Thus rather than focusing on love for God and others, they focus on rules and rule enforcement, and are intolerant of others who don't practice their rules. They become thought police to maintain orthodoxy and those who stray too far and refuse to return to the proper way of thinking, must be removed from their positions in leadership, silenced, and eventually purged from the group.

Jesus sent another message through John for the church that exists just before the second coming:

- To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and **true witness, the ruler of God's creation**. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are **lukewarm**—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. **You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'** **But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.** I counsel you to **buy from me** gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! **I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.** Revelation 3:14-20 NIV84.

What does this mean?

- Lukewarm—is the mixture of hot and cold: cold are the rejectors of God, those who deny Him completely. Hot are those who are on fire for God, who have been reborn and are animated by His Spirit. Lukewarm are the ones Jesus described in the passage above, those who are doing all kinds of things in Jesus' name, appearing by behavior and even their words to be on fire for the Lord, but with unrenewed, cold, hearts, hearts without the fire of the Holy Spirit that would make them hot for the Lord, in other words, they are still motivated by the spirit of fear and selfishness, promoting a legal religion.
- These church members believe they are rich because they have the truth, the right doctrines, they are the remnant—they have the right Sabbath, Bible, sanctuary message, understanding of the state of the dead, the spirit of prophecy, belong to the organization called by God with His special message—they don't need anything because they are rich with the truth.
 - This was the exact state of the Jewish leadership that crucified Christ 2000 years ago; they had right doctrines, the spirit of prophecy, Sabbath, dietary reform, sanctuary message, believed in the inspiration of Scripture, God as Creator—and they were unrenewed, unregenerated, hard-hearted operating from the spirit of fear and selfishness upon a legal framework of religion in which they believed God's law functions like human law. And they thought they were rich in righteousness just like our church today, but in fact,
- Jesus' message to the church is that the people are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked, we are unrighteous, unrenewed. Notice the message of Jesus **is not you have the wrong doctrines—it is your condition of being**, you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. You must buy from me gold refined in the fire, a white robe, eye salve. The gold is the love and truth of God that leads to trust and results in surrender of our life of fear and selfishness and rebirth so we receive the life of Christ, which is the white robe, the pure life and then we are enlightened and cleansed by the eye salve of the Holy Spirit.
- How do we buy this from Jesus? By barter, in other words exchange, we surrender our sinful life and receive His sinless life, we surrender our fear and selfishness and receive His love and trust, our guilt and shame for His grace and peace, our will for His will, our desires for His desires. **We cannot receive the life of Christ while we cling to our life of fear and selfishness!**
- So Jesus pleads with us, standing at the door of our hearts, knocking with truth and love via the Holy Spirit, *Won't you trust me, won't you let me in so I can give you life, cleanse the temple of your soul, remove all your guilt, shame, and fear, clear up all the confusion, doubts, and misunderstandings, and rebuild you perfectly in my image?*

This special end-time message is the message of the 3 angels of Revelation 14 that is to go to the world at this time in history—the message that calls people back to the truth of who God is, the eternal gospel, good news, that God is not an imperial dictator whose laws function like a creature. We are called back to worshiping God as Creator, which requires returning to design law understanding, and leaving the corrupt system of Babylon behind, a system that enslaves the righteous, a system built upon imposed law, law enforcement, domination over others; and then, when we do this, we see God in His true light, and are won to trust and we choose to open the heart to Him in trust and are reborn with His Spirit of love and trust and we are animated, motivated, brought to life with His living law

established within our being and we live lives of righteousness, we become righteous by faith. Again, this is the righteousness by faith message.

This message of real righteousness by faith, established upon the eternal good news, the eternal gospel of who God is as Creator, built upon the truth that God's law is design law and the rejection of the imposed law lies that prevents genuine trust in God, and calls people out of Babylon, of Romanism, the legal system of religion—was brought to the SDA church at the 1888 GC through Jones and Waggoner, and endorsed by EGW.

But the official church leadership rejected it and chose instead, like the Pharisees years ago, to reject Jesus and His true gospel and the organizational church has been wandering in the wilderness of legal religion without power and incapable of fulfilling its mission until the people repent and actually return to worshiping God as Creator, embrace the truth that His law are design laws, open their hearts in actual trust, and receive the outpouring of the latter rain, the Holy Spirit to seal them and empower them to take the true message of God as Creator to the world.

Now, what I just said is a very strong indictment, but it did not come originally from me, I am only giving voice to it today. This indictment came from Jesus to the church of Laodicea and was further explicitly directed to the SDA church by none other than EGW who was at that meeting in 1888. This is what she said:

- On many occasions the Holy Spirit did work, but those who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis were waiting for a chance to travel over the same ground again, because **their spirit** was the same... They pronounced in their heart and soul and words that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit was fanaticism and delusion. They stood like a rock, the waves of mercy flowing upon and around them, but beaten back **by their hard and wicked hearts, which resisted the Holy Spirit's working.** [remember she is speaking of the delegates to the SDA General Conference session, not just church members, but these are church leaders, pastors, conference presidents, publishing house directors] Had this been received, it would have made them wise unto salvation; holier men, prepared to do the work of God with sanctified ability. **But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ.** E.G. White, 1888 1478.2, emphasis mine.

She also wrote:

- **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions**, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. [this truth, that the Ten Commandments were added, not eternal, that salvation is not legal, but actual transformation of sinners into righteous people by receiving the life of Christ through faith] By exciting that opposition **Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented

them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.** *Selected Messages, volume 1*, p 234, emphasis mine.

And she wrote:

- “But the **work that all heaven was waiting to do** (1888 Minneapolis) as soon as men prepared the way (Jones and Waggoner), **was not done. For the leaders closed and bolted the door against the Holy Spirit**” E.G. White, Letter 123 (1902) Battle Creek Letters pp 55, 56, emphasis mine.

The work that all heaven was waiting to do, if we accepted and advanced the true gospel message, WAS NOT DONE—so instead the organized church has been taking a false legal message to the world with the right doctrines, but the very penal legal theology they take, despite having right doctrines, closes and bolts the doors of hearts to the Holy Spirit—it prevents renewal, the very legal message being taught prevents salvation, while causing people to believe they are spiritual rich and increased in righteousness because they have the provable right doctrines.

The year following leadership’s rejection of the 1888 message, EGW immediately went about writing to advance the true message and calling the church to repent, to embrace the truth. Many books, *The Desire of Ages*, *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, *Christ Object Lessons* which all teach this truth were written. She wrote many letters and articles trying to break through the false legal lies. And in 1890 an article was published in the *Review and Herald* that lays this out plainly. Let’s examine some portions, notice what she wrote:

- The **Lord has seen our backslidings, and he has a controversy with his people.** [Have you heard of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan? Did you ever consider that Jesus has a controversy with Seventh-day Adventists? And what is that controversy? The very same one He has with Satan—one of pride, selfishness, thinking we are rich and righteous, which is driven by the unregenerate spirit of fear and selfishness and is advanced by the means of a creature, upon the imposed law, and law enforcement as justice. The imposed law legal system of theology prevents renewal, rebirth, regeneration, it protects the spirit of fear and selfishness. Notice what EGW writes next.] Their **pride, their selfishness, their opening of the mind to doubt and unbelief**, are manifest in his sight, and grieve his **heart of love.** [Doubt and unbelief are the same as saying they do not trust, they don’t have living faith, and the pride and selfishness is the same as saying they are animated by the spirit of fear and selfishness. This is manifestation of people distrusting God, not aligning, choosing, or living a life of love and trust—why? Because of the root lie about God’s law causes God to be viewed as untrustworthy and they place their faith in the legal mechanics that they believe protect them from God.] Many gather darkness about their souls as a garment, and virtually say, “We want not a knowledge of thy way, O God; we choose our own way.” [What is our own way? These are not people leaving the church saying I want to walk in godlessness, or I want to walk in hedonism,

worldliness in the sense of alcohol, drugs, porn. No, these are church members saying I want salvation my way, me first, protect and save me, not surrender of self, but the protection of self driven by the spirit of fear and selfishness, which always leads to law and law enforcement understanding, the rule-keepers, the penal legal lies.] These are the things that separate the soul from God. **There is in the soul of man an obstacle which he holds there with stubborn persistency, and which interposes between his soul and God. It is unbelief.** [The spirit of fear and selfishness which incites distrust of God, doubt in His goodness, refusal to believe God could really love and forgive us without something done to pay Him for our horrible crimes, which is solidified by the imposed law lie.] **God gives sufficient evidence**, but man, with his unsanctified will, refuses to **receive evidence** unless it comes in his own way, to favor his own ideas. With a spirit of bravado he cries, “Proof, proof, is what we want,” and **turns away from the evidence that God gives.** [Integrative evidenced-based approach, design law, how reality actually functions is rejected by legalists who believe based on claims, proclamations, and statements, “God said it, I believe it, that settles it” without any comprehension, do it because you will get into legal trouble if you don’t and the claim *sola scriptura* to sustain the false legal view, and then the Bible becomes a rule book of deeds and sins.] He talks doubt, unbelief, sowing the seeds of evil which will spring up and yield their harvest. He is separating his soul farther and farther from God. *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 1, emphasis mine

I encourage you to read this entire article, it is fantastic, but a few paragraphs later she states,

- We would seek most earnestly **to know God’s way**; we would **work in an opposite direction from selfishness**, and our constant prayer would be that we might **have the mind of Christ**, that **we might be molded and fashioned after his likeness. It is in looking to Jesus and beholding his loveliness, having our eyes steadfastly fixed upon him, that we become changed into his image.** [Notice the emphasis is on our being changed, transformed, having the mind of Christ within us, that we are being fashioned into the likeness of Christ. This is righteousness by faith, real righteousness by faith, we become the righteousness of God 2 Cor 5.21, not legally declared righteous while we are not. This requires we trust God, not trust the legal mechanisms to protect us from God. And notice she describes design law, the law of worship, by beholding we become changed. This is not a legal process in a court, it is an actual process of healing, transformation, occurring in a living being by the power of our Creator God. And the legal model is designed to obstruct people from experiencing this. This is why we have a message that is to call people back to Creator worship.] He will give grace to all that keep his way, and do his will, and walk in truth. But those who **love their own way**, who **worship their idols of opinion**, and do not love God and obey his word, will continue to walk in darkness. **O, how terrible is unbelief!** [Love their own way—selfishness, driven by the spirit of fear, forming their own idols of legal religion, with a god who functions like them, with the laws of a creature, made up rules requiring enforcement through infliction of punishment, which cause distrust in God while they claim faith in the legal mechanics, the payments. Their problem is not failing to believe a certain doctrine or truth such as Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior, the state of the dead, or the Sabbath, but failing to trust God because of the lie about His law] **As well let light be poured upon the blind, as to present**

truth to these souls; the one cannot see, and the other will not see. *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 4, emphasis mine.

She goes on,

- **I beseech you whose names are registered on the church-book as worthy members, [This is written to church members!]** to be indeed worthy, through the virtue of Christ. Mercy and truth and the love of God are promised to the humble and contrite soul. **The displeasure and judgments of God are against those who persist in walking in their own ways, loving self, loving the praise of men.** [His displeasure at their refusal to trust, their refusal to allow Him to heal them, is the displeasure a parent experiences when their child refuses correction, healing, saving; and His judgment is the accurate diagnosis of their condition. He judges they refuse Him, prefer their own selfish, legal religion, worshiping a god who is like them, and that there is nothing more He can do for them.] **They will certainly be swept into the satanic delusions of these last days, because they received not the love of the truth.** [This is the natural result of refusing truth, the only thing left for the mind to rest upon is lies and thus the lies become fixed—delusional And we see these lies being taught by many in leadership, just like Caiaphas and Annas and the Jewish leadership did 20000 years ago.] Because the Lord has, in former days, blessed and honored them, they flatter themselves that they are chosen and true, and do not need warning and instruction and reproof. [This is the message to the church at Laodicea—we are rich, we have the right doctrines, God has blessed this movement...] The True Witness says, [remember who the True Witness is—Jesus] “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” **The professed people of God have the charge against them, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.** Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 5, emphasis mine.
- **The love to Jesus that once burned upon the altar of the heart, has become dimmed and nearly extinguished.** [The power of God is not primarily creation power, might and force, but the power of truth and love and this is the power that we need—it is gospel power, the good news about God that is obstructed by the penal legal lies who focus on physical power that they then falsely claim God will use to torture and kill His children, which undermines trust and obstructs salvation.] Spiritual strength has become enfeebled. **The displeasure of the Lord is against his people. In their present condition it is impossible for them to represent the character of Christ.** [Again, this is a message to the SDA church, and this is why the delay. The 1888 message was rejected, the lie that God’s law is imposed was retained and the organized system is promoting a false legal religion that has bolted the doors of hearts to the Holy Spirit.] And when the True Witness has sent them counsel, reproof, and warnings because he loves them, they have refused to receive the message; they have refused to come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Jesus said, “I lay down my life for the sheep.... Therefore doth my Father love me.” “By taking your sins upon myself, **I am opening a channel through which his grace can flow to all who will accept it. In giving myself for the sin of the world, I have prepared a way for the unrepressed tide of his love to flow to men.**” *Review and*

Herald December 23, 1890, par. 6, emphasis mine. [Notice again, the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was not to do something to the Father, it was not legal, it was operational, functional, reality-based because of how God has built life to function—His sacrifice was so that His life, His love, could flow back into humanity and regenerate, cleanse, heal, save us and make us righteous. His sacrifice was never a legal blood/payment to a punishing god applied to records in heaven, but the channel for His life, love, spirit, to flow into us to renew and transform us]

- **There is a lack of moral and spiritual power throughout our Conferences. Many churches do not have light in themselves.** [Again, our churches] The members do not give evidence that they are **branches of the True Vine**, [Design law, we must receive the life of Christ infused into us to be reborn with a new animating energy, the spirit of Christ, but the false legal theology closes the door of the heart to the Spirit.] by bearing much fruit to the glory of God, but appear to be withering away. **Their Redeemer has withdrawn his light, the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, from their assemblies...** There has been a separation of the soul from God; **many have cut off the communication between him and the soul by refusing his messengers and his message.** [Jones and Waggoner, messages like this from EGW, and every person since who is taking this same eternal gospel about God to the world.] *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 9, emphasis mine.
- **In our largest churches the greatest evils exist, because these have had the greatest light. They have not a true knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.** [Again, our churches! But they have the right 28 fundamental beliefs, and they are rich and feel good about themselves. What are they missing? The truth about God's law being design law. These deluded souls have all the right doctrines set in the wrong law, the imposed law, the law of a creature, and thus they have the wrong god. They are worshiping a dictator who is the wielder of death inflicted as punishment for law breaking. That is why we are called to reset all our right doctrines into design law, to worship God as Creator and then we will be won to genuine trust, open the heart, and experience the power of God for rebirth and salvation.] The leaven of unbelief is working, and unless these evils which bring the displeasure of God are corrected in its members, the whole church stands accountable for them. **The deep movings of the Spirit of God are not with them; the glorious presence of the King of saints, and his power to cleanse from all moral defilement, are not manifest among them.** [Again the focus is on cleansing people from sin so they love, they reveal in themselves the character, righteousness of Christ, they become righteous, but this reality is obstructed and prevented by the lie that God's law functions like human law.] Many come to the assembly as worshipers, like the door upon its hinges. **They understand not the true application of the Scriptures, nor the power of God. They have eyes, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not; they continue in their evil ways, yet regard themselves as the privileged, obedient people who are doers of the word...** [the false legal theology]. *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 10, emphasis mine.
- **The Lord has sent a message to arouse his people to repent, and do their first works; but how has his message been received? While some have heeded it, others have cast contempt and reproach on the message and the messenger.** [The 1888 message, God's law is design

law, and righteousness is experienced within the believer, it is not a legal adjustment in record books that claim legal righteousness while sinners remain unrighteous.] **Spirituality** deadened, humility and childlike simplicity gone, a mechanical, formal profession of faith has taken the place of love and devotion. [The mechanical performance is the faith in the mechanics of penal legal theology, price paid, legal declarations, robe covering, blood erasing, no faith/trust in God, but faith in the mechanics, thus no regeneration because the heart remains closed.] Is this mournful condition of things to continue? **is the lamp of God's love to go out in darkness?** The Saviour calls; listen to his voice: "Be zealous and repent." Repent, confess your sins, and you will be forgiven. "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" Why will you try to rekindle a mere fitful fire, and walk in the sparks of your own kindling? *Review and Herald* December 23, 1890, par. 16, emphasis mine.

She has more to say—it is a powerful article and an accurate description of the state of affairs in the church because the truth of God's design law has been rejected and the people have been taught a false legal system with no power to save.

SUNDAY

The lesson title for the day is You Were There and focuses on the idea that we are all included in the promises of God, not just the ones who were alive when they were made.

Read last paragraph,

- The Lord's speech contains a shift that occurs five times between "you" and "they" (the fathers). The fathers and this generation at Shechem are treated as one. Joshua is seeking to show what Moses affirmed already in Deuteronomy 5:3, that the Lord did not make the covenant only with the fathers but with all those present at the moment of Joshua's speech. The vast majority there now had not experienced the Exodus. Not "all" of them were at Horeb. Yet, Joshua says that all of them were there. In short, the lessons of the past must be appropriated by each new generation. The God who worked for the ancestors in the past is ready to act on behalf of the present generation. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 105.

And then the lesson asks this question,

- What are the ways in which we can, as a church, have a better sense of corporate responsibility?

What are your thoughts on this? Do we have corporate responsibility?

Corporate refers to the organization or corporation that we are a member of.

We have corporate membership in:

- Any church in which we have chosen to become members
- The nations to which we are citizens
- If one is a member of the military while on active duty they are a member of that organization or corporation
- Or if one is a member of pathfinders or boy scouts or girl scouts
- A ball team?

If one is a member in any organization, do they have responsibilities to that organization? What are those responsibilities?

Would a person be expected to represent that organization in such a way that is consistent with the values, ideals, goals, mission of that organization?

Would they have a responsibility to fulfill certain duties? To work for the betterment of that organization, including helping others in the organization?

Satan is a deceiver and he wants to confuse and divide—one strategy is to blur the lines of responsibilities we have in various organizations, or get us to believe our responsibility is to one organization when, in truth, it is to another.

For instance, we can have membership in a church denomination and have responsibility to that organization, say as deacon to open the doors, or pastor to share the gospel, pastoral ministry to members, as treasurer to keep the books etc. But is it possible that people could come to believe that membership in a denominational or community church organization is the same thing as membership in the true church of God, the church invisible, the church that is made up only of people who are reborn, connected to Jesus, and are infused with His Spirit? Could people come to believe that membership in a denominational church is membership in the church invisible?

And if people believe that, could they then be fearful of speaking truth to church authority, challenging the orthodox views, for fear of having their membership revoked?

The Bible tells the story of the man who was born blind and the church leaders of the day not wanting to believe he was healed by Jesus, so they interrogated the parents, notice the parents response and why they answered the way they did:

- “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” His parents said this **because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.** John 9:20-22 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Had they confused membership in the true church of God with organizational membership? And did that confusion impair their ability to fulfill their duties to God, to the true church?

Does this happen today? Do people in our church refuse to believe the truth because the leaders in the corporate system are telling them lies and they believe that if what we are teaching doesn't agree with corporate headquarters then it isn't the truth? And are others afraid to speak because of fear of losing positions in the church, perhaps employees afraid for their jobs?

The Bible tells us that within denominations the wheat and the tares grow up together. There are many people in church organizations that are not part of the body of Christ, that are actually working for God's enemies. Just consider the religious leaders who crucified Christ.

So, Satan confuses people by getting them to accept a lie that belonging to a denomination is the same as belonging to the true church of God through Jesus. It is not. But having accepted this lie, then Satan can cause further corruption by getting his agents in the church to lead people to believe false things, practice false practices etc., just like the religious leaders who crucified Jesus, imprisoned the Apostles, and the leaders of the Dark Ages. The soldiers going with Saul of Tarsus to arrest Christians were Temple guards, they were fulfilling their duty to their church, but they were not fulfilling their duty to Jesus, to God, and were not following the Holy Spirit.

So, one method Satan uses to deceive people and divide, is to confuse them about their duties and loyalties to corporations and believe that the denominational church is the same as the true church invisible.

I can tell you with certainty, that God has many of His true saints, members of His body, throughout the world in all the denominations. Remember the Magi that came to honor Jesus were not Jews.

We have a responsibility to share the truth and love of Jesus as effectively as we can, in our homes, in our communities, in every organization to which we belong, and in our corporate churches. I used to think God wanted everyone who loved Him to leave their denomination and join ours, but I realize that was my childish thinking, God needs His true saints everywhere, He needs people sharing His truth and love in every group around the world and His Spirit regenerates, matures, heals, every single person who trusts Him.

And we need to be careful not to confuse salvation, membership in the true church invisible with organizational affiliation—we affiliate together for common mission and purpose.

Consider this Bible commentary:

- As the **light and life of men was rejected** by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so **it has been rejected in every succeeding generation**. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the **religious leaders would not tolerate the light**, and those that bore it were forced to seek

another class, who were longing for the truth. **In our day** few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. **Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth** in whatever guise it may be presented. **Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God.** And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching **obliged to leave the church of their fathers**, that they may render obedience. *The Desire of Ages* p. 232, emphasis mine.

As members to any organization we keep our duty to God first and if conflict arises in the organization so significantly that one's duty to God is compromised by that organization then it is time to separate from it, otherwise, we do all we can, like Jesus did, to shine the light in the hallways and associations of that organization.

Another strategy employed by Satan when corporate responsibility is confused, is to get us to compromise our duty and responsibility as individuals to God for the greater good of the organization. For instance, the example of people covering up and protecting predators in the church to protect the reputation of the church; or as Caiaphas said,

- You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish. John 11:50 NIV84.

So what is the healthy balance to our relationship with organizations, corporations and God?

Do we recognize ourselves as part of the larger human family, all part of the same species, all part of the life God breathed into Adam and in need of rebirth, salvation, renewal through Jesus?

Is it this corporate love for others that Job manifested when he offered sacrifices for his children. He was not taking responsibility for his children's salvation or seeking to influence God to be merciful, but expressing his connection, empathy, love, concern for his children through the cultural conventions of his time. It is the same way parents today pray earnestly for their wayward children, not because they believe God doesn't care or needs pleading with, or that their prayers take responsibility for their child's sin, but because of love, corporate connection along the network of reality that God has built into our being. Which is also demonstrated when Jesus prayed earnestly for us in John 17, not because the Father needed to hear the prayer, but because of how hearts and minds and our connection to each other functions.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- Joshua's appeal is twofold: Israel should fear the Lord and serve Him "in sincerity and in truth." To fear the Lord does not mean a life of perpetual trembling and emotional insecurity. It rather refers to the reverence and awe that stem from the recognition of the unfathomable

greatness, holiness, and infinity of God on the one hand and our smallness, sinfulness, and finitude on the other. To fear God is a constant awareness of the magnitude of His demands, a recognition that He is not only our heavenly Father but also our Divine King. Such awareness will lead to a life of obedience to God (Lev. 19:14, Lev. 25:17, Deut. 17:19, 2 Kings 17:34). While “fear” describes the inner attitude that must characterize an Israelite, the practical outcome of reverence to God is service. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 106.

I really like how the lesson emphasizes the truth that to fear God is not anxiety, worry, dread, fright, terror, what we commonly think of as fear—because perfect love casts out fear. No, it is awe, admiration, respect, reverence, being humbled by the majesty of God so one is willing to listen and learn.

And when we return to worshiping God as Creator and realize His laws are design laws, our admiration, respect, awe, love, reverence increase. But the imposed law lie teaches that God is the source of death and He uses His power to torture and kill and this will always incite fear and distrust, which undermines actual salvation, because it undermines trust in God.

But the lesson rightly points out that the awe, reverence, and respect will lead to a life of obedience and service to God—what does that look like?

What is the difference in the obedience that stems from love and trust because we know God and are in awe of Him, versus the obedience that stems from fear and law because people have believed the legal lies about God?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- As a true and faithful leader, Joshua respects the free will of his people and wishes that Israel would serve the Lord out of free choice rather than compulsion. That was exactly the point made by the deliberate use of the verb “chosen” (see Josh. 24:22). In other passages baħar, “to choose,” describes Yahweh’s election of Israel (Deut. 7:6, 7; Deut. 10:15; Deut. 14:2). Israel is free to say “no” to Yahweh after their divine election, but that would be nonsensical and absurd. Israel can say “yes” to God and continue to live, or they can turn their backs on Him and cease to exist. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 107.

Why is it important that we serve God from a free choice rather than compulsion?

Why can God not use more external power to save people from sin?

What is the root cause of sin? Distrust of God which causes fear and selfishness, which is why Paul wrote in Romans 14:23, whatever is not from faith or trust is sin.

Can trust be established by using external power, force, threat, or inflicted punishments upon people?
In fact, if one does that what happens to trust?

Consider this Bible commentary, take note of what is being described, think through the design law elements, of how hearts and minds function, how love works, what destroys love and causes rebellion and decide, do you agree with this commentary or not?

- God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** The Lord's principles are not of this order. His **authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine.

It was **God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security**, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that **time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government.** He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe. *The Desire of Ages* p.759, emphasis mine.

Do you agree? And what are the principles of Satan's government? External force, compelling power, which is imposed law and law enforcement which are is how all the kingdoms of this world function, and why Satan is prince of this world and Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world.

God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth and love which exist only in freedom. His laws are design laws and breaking them cut people off from life and cause death unless the person is saved, healed, reconciled to God, by having God restore in them His living law, which means we receive the Holy Spirit who brings into us the life of Christ, the sinless animating, motivating, spirit of love and trust that Jesus perfected as a human and restored into the species.

Understand this very clearly, the penal legal theologies that teach that God makes up rules that function like human laws, and therefore God must use power to inflict pain suffering and death through force are promoting Satan's form of government. It is how the Satan is going to be able to successfully impersonate Christ because the masses will believe the lie that justice is the use of power to punish lawbreakers.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The threat of idolatry is not a theoretical one. Earlier, on the plains of Moab, in a similar context, Moses asked for the same decision (Deut. 30:19, 20). The gods that are in view now

are not the ones of Egypt or those beyond the river, but they are found “among them.” Therefore, Joshua pleads with his people to incline their hearts to the Lord. The Hebrew term used here, *natah*, means “to stretch,” “to bend.” It describes a God who is expected to bend down and listen to prayers (2 Kings 19:16; Ps. 31:2, 3; Dan. 9:18), and it is also the attitude required of Israel later by the prophets (Isa. 55:3, Jer. 7:24). It is employed to indicate the apostasy of Solomon when his heart inclined toward foreign gods (1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9). The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God’s voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God’s will. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 108.

What about us today—is idolatry a problem for Christians today? What about SDA Christians?

How is idolatry manifested in the church today?

- Money, power, prestige
- False concepts about God?

Is there a difference between worshiping a false god and worshiping the true God but be mistaken about certain ideas or facts? In other words, can a person be worshiping the true God but believe some wrong doctrines?

What is the difference between worshiping a false god versus the true God?

Did EGW and the founders of the SDA church have a time in their life when they believed many things they themselves later acknowledged were wrong? And while they were in error of those doctrines were they worshiping the true God or not?

Yes, the worship of the true God doesn’t mean we know all things, it means we have hearts and minds that respond positively to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and Love. Thus the true worshipers of God are not identified by knowing all doctrines correctly, but by the Spirit of God manifested in their life. They love God, they love others, **they love truth** and are willing to move forward in truth applied to their lives as they are able to comprehend it, and in this process they become more and more like Jesus, manifested in traits of character, the fruits of the Spirit, not in a list of doctrines.

But the worshipers of a false god, may attest to the correct list of doctrines, consider the religious leaders who crucified Christ. But they do not love the principles of God, they are not lovers of God, of others, or of truth, and they will not move forward in truth applied to themselves, which would bring conversion. They love self, they are motivated by fear and desire to lord over and control others and they prefer a god who is like them, a rule-making god, who will use power to dominate and control, and ultimately punish those who disagree with them, just like they did Jesus.

Thus the worshipers of a false god also manifest themselves as such, not primarily in a doctrinal test, but in a functional test, what methods and principles do they practice, and what character do they develop.

The lesson rightly pointed out,

- “The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God’s voice.”

But I do not believe the next sentence is the most helpful, or accurate.

- “It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God’s will.”

If one holds a legal model, one could read this and think I have to choose to obey, to do like the Israelites and make a public choice to be a Yahweh worshiper, to make a public stance and claim Jesus as my Savior, to claim His blood as my legal payment to receive the legal pardon for my sins. It takes a conscious choice to do this and serve God.

Consider Saul of Tarsus before Damascus Road, would he have argued this point? Or would he have affirmed that he was making a conscious choice to fulfill the will of God by hunting down Christians?

So, to me it would have been slightly better had the lesson read,

- “The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God’s voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to surrender ourselves to God and be reborn with a new Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, so that our hearts are animated and motivated by love to trust and then we are enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit to fulfill God’s will.”

Read the last paragraph,

- Even after the people’s threefold promise to serve the Lord, which implies, as Joshua commanded, the removal of foreign gods from among them, there is no report that it actually happened. Throughout the entire book, it became customary to report on the fulfillment of Joshua’s commands (or those of Moses) as examples of obedience. The lack of it now at the end of the book leaves the plea of Joshua open-ended. The central appeal of the book to serve the Lord is not only for Joshua’s generation but also for each new generation of God’s people who would read or hear this message. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 108.

Why were the Israelites not faithful after promising they would be?

Were they lying when they promised to be faithful?

When Peter, in the upper room, promised Jesus he would be loyal, and Jesus said to him, that before the cock crows he would deny Jesus three times, was Peter lying to Jesus?

If Peter was sincere, if Peter meant what he said at that time, then why couldn’t Jesus trust him?

Because while Peter loved Jesus, he still loved himself more, hadn't fully surrendered the spirit of fear and selfishness and when his life was threatened his spirit of fear, the survival drives took over, and he acted to protect self and betray Jesus.

This was not a doctrinal problem, it was a spiritual problem.

THURSDAY

Read the last paragraph,

- In fact, the church is always one generation away from extinction, and so it was with the Old Testament people of God. A great chapter in the history of Israel comes to an end. Its future depends on what kind of answers it will give to the many questions that concern the future. Will Israel be loyal to the Lord? Will they be able to continue the unfinished task of possessing the whole land? Will they be able to cling to Yahweh and not get entangled in idol worship? A generation under Joshua has been faithful to the Lord, but will the next generation maintain the same spiritual direction that has been traced by its great leader? Each successive generation of God's people, reading the book of Joshua, must face these same questions. Their success depends on the nature of the answers they provide in their everyday lives and how they relate to the truths they have inherited. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2025, Lessons of Faith From Joshua*, p. 109.

What of this idea of inheriting truths? Obviously, this isn't talking about biological inheritance through the DNA, it is talking about what passes down from parents to children, from one generation to the next.

What do you think of this idea? Is it suggesting that we must accept the teachings of our forefathers, that we should believe based on traditional teachings passed down to us?

Is there a religious organization, a religious system in history that did not become corrupt? While the Bible is the inspired Word of God and we can trust it, can we trust what church leaders tell us it teaches? Did the Jewish leaders 2000 years ago teach the truth contained in Scripture to their people?

Did Peter have to be corrected by Paul?

So, I understand the point, when truth is being shared with subsequent generations, it doesn't do those generations any good until they have assimilated it and applied to their own lives. In other words, until they know the truth experientially for themselves.

But my concern is that this could lead to traditionalism, indoctrination, and beliefs that others have thought through but the new generation hasn't.

And what is the problem in believing something that you haven't been persuaded in your mind is true—even if it is true, but you only believe it is true because the pastor, elder, or some other authority told you and that is your method for knowing truth?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The God of Reality: Separating Truth from Fiction Seminar: August 13-16 2026 Orlando, Florida—More information coming soon.

New Pamphlet: *The Trap of Perfectionism and The Fear of Making Mistakes*. These are available for free shipped to any US Postal address, they will also be in our resource section under the publications to print and share. You can read this online, download pdf, share with others, print your own. If you are not in the US, we anticipate our various hubs (Australia and South Africa) will eventually get this in print also, but until then, please use the online resource.

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