

Lesson #8,

Conformity, Compromise, and Crises in Worship

Memory Verse: “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.” Hebrews 5:14

I. Evil, Sabbath

What is sin or evil?

Romans 14:23 - “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”

How are we healed of evil? What might be included in the process?

Allowing God to heal us and following his prescriptions for the cure, which might include the following:

“Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things.” {DA 70.4}

“He was wise to discern evil, and strong to resist it.” {DA 72.1}

What is true worship?

“True worship consists in working together with Christ. Prayers, exhortation, and talk are cheap fruits, which are frequently tied on; but fruits that are manifested in good works, in caring for the needy, the fatherless, and widows, are genuine fruits, and grow naturally upon a good tree.”—
The Review and Herald, August 16, 1881. {ChS 96.5}

What kind of worship does that sound like to you?

Other-centered love.

What was God’s plan for Israel?

“The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God’s

purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world. {COL 290.1}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above.”{COL 290.2}

II. *In Different Eyes – Culture and Evil, Sunday*

What is the common denominator in the following texts?

Genesis 6:5 – “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 of the time.”

Jeremiah 17:5 – “This is what the Lord says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’”

John 2:25 – “He did not need man’s testimony about man for he knew what was in man.”

Romans 3:9-12 – “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that the Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written:

‘There is no one righteous, not even one;

There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, no not even one.

Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.

The poison of vipers is on their lips.

Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

These texts seem to indicate that since the fall, man has become selfish and self-centered and this leads to self destruction. Damaged as we are by sin and our relationship or lack of one with God we may or may not see a lack of trust with God in some areas of our lives.

Some areas we have surrendered to God and allowed his Holy Spirit to begin healing us and other areas we may still be struggling to surrender so with that perspective how do we become conscious that we are embracing evil?

“God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as wells of salvation in the world. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God’s will. In the early days of Israel the nations of the world, through corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God.” {AA 13.2}

So how do we learn about God’s character?

The word of God is the seed. Every seed has in itself a germinating principle. In it the life of the plant is enfolded. So there is life in God’s word. Christ says, “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” John 5:24. In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God. {COL 38.1}

III. *The Art (and Evil) of Compromise, Monday*

What does it mean to compromise?

Merriam - Webster:

- 1 a: settlement of differences by [arbitration](#) or by consent reached by mutual concessions
- b: something [intermediate](#) between or blending qualities of two different things

Is it evil to compromise?

Of course not! How many of us would have arrived here without some compromise? How many of us have dealt with differences of desires or ways of doing things among friends or family where we have needed to compromise?

To be civilized and sociable as a member of a team we must all compromise in order that goals and objectives of society, the group, or the team are met. As long as it does not lead us to violate or misrepresent the character of God then compromise can be an important part of life.

So evil and compromise are related only in what it is that we are willing to compromise; not just in the process of compromise.

Assumption for the next question: Assuming we wish to have God's character and thus are willing to have Him heal us and we desire to live out his character because we see He is gracious, loving, kind, intelligent.

Why or what would lead us to compromise in allowing God to heal and change us and thus fail to reflect his character or ultimately even reject God?

How about fear and believing Satan's lies about God? What about failure to trust God and what He says and what He is like.

The lesson provides us a scriptural example

1 Kings 11:1-13 – ¹ King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ² They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. ⁴ As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

⁷ On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

⁹ The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰ Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. ¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of

your subordinates. ¹² Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.”

Why would God forbid Israel to follow these Gods?

I am not a psychologist so I am stepping out on a limb here and willing to be corrected; however, I have heard it stated that the highest forms of abuse a human can suffer psychologically are either sexual or religious abuse. The only form of abuse more damaging is when both sexual and religious abuse take place simultaneously.

Who were these Gods? Who was Ashtoreth?

Goddess who was derived from god Ishtar, the morning and evening star, who originated from Babylon. Ashtoreth took on the evening star form of Ishtar, or the moon depending on the group who worshipped her. The goddess also took on the feminine form of Ishtar and became the goddess of fertility, sexuality, and war. The goddess was also considered the consort of Baal who was considered male. Thus, for those who worshipped her she was the god of creation, reproduction, and successful conquest.

Who was Molek?

A god whose name means the king and required human sacrifices in the form of children placed who were place in the white hot brass arms of this idol which was heated internally. Incense was used in the service to disguise the burning flesh and drums were beaten to drown out the screams of the children.

Who was Chemosh?

A god variation of either Ashtar the male form of Ashtoreth, or Baal. Human sacrifices were part of the rites in order to secure his favor.

Who was Baal?

God of rain, fertility, and agriculture. Name means lord or master. Demonic lord of the flies if considered as part of Baal zebub. Baal did not acknowledge death. Worship included human sacrifice and prostitution.

IV. *Counterfeit Worship, Tuesday*

In 1 Kings 11 and 12 we have the dramatic story of the end of Solomon's reign and the upheaval of political change that took place after his death. We find through the story that Solomon's pagan wives lead him into pagan worship and though God appeared twice to him to counsel him he did not for a time follow God's counsel.

The results were that God's Spirit was grieved and his restraining power was removed so that enemies harassed Solomon's kingdom. God attempted to discipline Solomon so that he might reopen communication with him and Israel. He wanted to restore their friendship as well as warn and save Solomon and Israel from sin's terrible consequence should they persist in the direction they were headed. As part of that process God shared with Solomon that his kingdom was to be divided. We know that God was able to reach Solomon and communication and friendship was re-established because Solomon eventually did turn back to God. In this story, God's love, grace, and desire to heal are demonstrated in asking Solomon, who had gone from the pinnacle of wisdom and wealth to ultimate depravity, to write the wonderful book of Ecclesiastes to be included in the Bible.

Within the context of reconnecting, Jeroboam was a leader of the labor for the descendants of Joseph under Solomon's rule. Ahijah the prophet meets him going out of Jerusalem and shares with him that God intends to have him rule over ten of the twelve tribes. He apparently rebelled enough to come to Solomon's attention and runs to Egypt to save his life. He returns after Solomon's death and arrives in time for Rehoboam's coronation. During that time the people ask Rehoboam if he was going to make their lives miserable like his father did, or if he was going to ease up. Rehoboam decides he will make their lives even more difficult. As a consequence the people rebelled and killed Adoniram who is in charge of forced labor. Rehoboam escapes to Jerusalem and the ten tribes make Jeroboam king over them instead of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam feared he would lose power and influence over the people if they continued to go to Jerusalem to worship God. So he established new order of worship in that he created two golden calves, established a non-Levitical order of priests, established alternate festivals, developed new sacrificial times, placed locations of the religious services up in the pagan groves, and created new centers of worship in Dan and Bethel, north of Jerusalem.

What is idolatry?

Definition:

1. The worship of idols, images, or anything made by hands, or which is not God.

Idolatry is of two kinds; the worship of images, statues, pictures, &c. made by hands; and the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, or of demons, angels, men and animals.

2. Excessive attachment or veneration for anything, or that which borders on adoration.

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary 1828 – retrieved from University of Chicago Department of Romance Languages and Literature ARTFL Project website on August 3, 2011. .

<http://machaut.uchicago.edu/?action=search&word=idolatry&resource=Webster%27s&quicksearch=on>

What was wrong with the new system of worship that Rehoboam established and were they worshipping God?

Their worship certainly doesn't seem to be one that admired God and his character of other-centered love. It seems to have been motivated out of fear, selfishness, and distrust of God.

I am sure that for those who were unsure about worshipping golden calves, Rehoboam assured them that these were just mere representatives of the invisible true God.

Is there a problem with that line of thinking? If so, why is it a problem?

If one looks at the results of this form of worship we see Israel leaving the worship of the true God and worshipping severe, revengeful, arbitrary, and destructive deities and demons. As they worshipped these deities they took up their characters and became like them.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 - "18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate[a] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Did Rehoboam's worship advocate examining the evidences of God's character of love?

It appears that this worship was based solely on the emotional and imaginative experience of the participants, an experience that might be more exciting and interesting than that found in Jerusalem.

Certainly, God wants those who worship to enjoy good emotions. Have we not felt excitement, peace, and love for God as we learn the truth about His character? Just as the two travelers to Emmaus who exclaimed "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" - Luke 24:32. We are, after all, emotional beings;

however, if emotion alone dictates what or who we worship then we may be misled to worship a false picture of God.

V. *Elijah and the Prophets of Baal, Wednesday*

1 Kings 17-19 we have the showdown between the gods. Here God challenges the Israelites' preferred god, Baal, as to his true divinity and power in an attempt to win those who worship Baal back to trust in Himself, the true creator and God of the universe. Baal a deity who controls thunder, lightening, storms, and rain is shown to have lost his touch over three years. During this period of time Israel is allowed to contemplate who truly is interested in their prosperity and well being and who has ultimate control of nature.

The three years of drought come to a close and Elijah extends an invitation to Ahab and his 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Ashtoreth to a challenge between God and Baal in an ultimate showdown between who is the true God. The challenge is centered on Baal's preferred strengths and his ability to control lightening. God even allows his contender to go first and to take the majority of the day to prove his abilities and truthfulness.

Baal's prophets urge their god to act with the most barbaric and torturous of acts by cutting themselves until blood flowed profusely in vain attempts to reach the attention of their god so he would act on their behalf, but he does not answer as requested.

As the quiet of the evening began to settle on the mountain top Elijah rebuilds the alter, places the wood and pieces of bull on it, digs a trench, and drenches the sacrifice with water three times until there is not even a remote chance a fire can be kindled to light the sacrifice. Then he prays a simple prayer asking God to demonstrate the truth about himself as the creator and sustainer of life. God answers with a bolt of fire that consumes the sacrifice and alter.

The prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth are shown to have been counterfeits. Elijah rounds up the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth, and then they are killed in the valley below. Elijah returns to the mountain top then prays seven more times and the drought is broken as rain sweeps over the country and Elijah runs to lead Ahab home.

How can we compare and contrast how we worship with who we worship? In other words, in which direction is there progression in worship? Is it more important how we worship in order to receive and encourage Gods favor and love? Or is who we worship more important and the effect of who we worship influences our love and how we worship?

If we contemplate the finer points of God's character, which include:

- His respect of us even as sinners and rebels
- His care
- His numerous and ongoing attempts to re-establish friendship with us
- His desire that we are informed about how to best live within the design parameters of His universe
- His willingness to heal us and accept us back into His family
- His determination throughout the Great Controversy to see that true freedom is maintained for his created beings
- His willingness to be challenged and have open dialog with all His creatures
- His willingness to demonstrate the consequences of sin by His dying the second death
- His humility in being willing to become eternally like his created beings
- His kind treatment of His most ardent enemies
- His willingness to meet us where we are even though His actions may be misunderstood for a time
- Etc.

Then doesn't the admiration and love that springs from knowing a God who is like this naturally create a desire to offer Him respectful, reverential, joyful, and loving worship in whatever way our particular culture and background suggests is appropriate?

Think of a figure that you highly esteemed and met. Share with us your experience and how you acted and responded in their presence.

As a child I had the opportunity to meet the then President of the United States as he visited family in my small home town. I remember Marine One flying in and his walking along the short drive from the airport to the highway greeting those who had come to see and hopefully shake his hand to welcome him to our community. I remember him shaking my hand and the thrill of that moment. I certainly didn't want to embarrass myself or act crudely, it wasn't even on my mind, I was just intent on seeing and meeting him.

How do we act in the presence of someone we really love, admire, respect, and want to know better?

Are we not in reverence and awe? Yet, will we not in the presence of such a gracious Being be open, happy, joyous and wish to tell him how much we love and respect him? Will we not seek to know Him even more deeply?

“The incense of true worship, which should have been offered to God, has been mingled with the worship of self. In the place of lifting their thoughts to God, in the place of learning to know Him

better, men deny Him in their lives. Their attention is taken up with objects that conceal God from their view.“ {9MR 386.1}

“ Thus it is with the great majority of religionists. God calls for sincere heart-worship. The door to light and an intelligent knowledge of the truth is open to every sincere worker for God. In order for worship to be acceptable, it must be offered in faith and hope, and the life must be in harmony with it. God requires the devotion of heart, mind, soul, and strength. Our noblest powers are to be used to do Him homage. Our thoughts are to be conformed to His will; our affections sanctified to His service”.--Letter 143, 1904, pp. 3,4. (To Marian Davis, April 28, 1904.)

Does worship take place only in a church and at a given time on Sabbath morning?

“The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and His creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten.” It was to keep His truth ever before the minds of men that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that he is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, "him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It follows that the message which commands men to worship God and keep His commandments, will especially call upon them to keep the fourth commandment.” {GC88 437.2}

VI. *The Elijah Message, Thursday*

Malachi 3:13-18 - ¹³(^{AB}) "Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. (^{AC}) But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' ¹⁴You have said, (^{AD}) 'It is vain to serve God. (^{AE}) What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? ¹⁵And now we call (^{AF}) the arrogant blessed. (^{AG}) Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.'"

¹⁶"Then those who feared the LORD (^{AH}) spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and (^{AI}) a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. ¹⁷"They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, (^{AJ}) in the day when I make up (^{AK}) my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall (^{AL}) see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

What can we take away from the Mount Carmel experience and will this play out again?

As in the Mount Carmel experience, a showdown between the True God and the false god Satan will take place again at the end of time. In Revelation we see glimpses of the Mount Carmel story and we too will choose one way or the other in whom we believe. However, the fire this time will come from the false god. Here it seems miracles and displays of power are not with who has the truth.

Revelation 13:13, 14 – “13 And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. 14 Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.”

Revelation 16:16-21 – “16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. 17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds,[a] fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”

So how can we know who the true God is?

The one who has not just made claims or used a show of power, but who has demonstrated his character over many various circumstances, is the true God. We will only know the true God as we seek to understand and believe the evidence we have available to us.

The one who lies can only make claims and deceive with the power he is allowed to use. The truth is not with him and in a way the evidence of his character will also be demonstrated by how he has interacted with the beings of the universe.

What will be the distinction between those who serve God and those who choose Satan and the picture of God he has presented?

For those who have believed God based on the evidence he has provided and who have asked him to heal them they will reflect and radiate his character. Those who have believed Satan's lies will reflect Satan and his character since they have rejected God's offer of healing.

What is the last day Elijah message?

Mark 16:15 – “15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Revelation 14:6 – “6 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.

What is the good news and message?

God has demonstrated with evidence he is not who his accuser has made him out to be. He loves all his created beings. He is not severe, arbitrary, revengeful, and unforgiving. He has become one with the human race by becoming one of us for all eternity, and He died to show us the truth about the consequences of sin. He offers to heal us from sin and make us right again to spend all eternity enjoying and developing a friendship with Him.

Harmegeddon – the stand off between the unholy trinity and the holy trinity. Satan this time will be using the miracles and God will not.

Paulien, Jon. (2008). *Armageddon at the Door*. Hagerstown, Maryland. Autumn House Publishing.

VII. Further Study, Friday