

Glimpses of Our God Lesson 5 1Q 2012

The Holiness of God

What do you understand God's holiness to be? How would you define holy or holiness? What does it mean?

SABBATH

Read paragraphs 3-5 "This week's lesson..." thoughts? What do you hear?

Does it sound like the lesson is suggesting God's holiness is something other than His character of love? What would that be?

- Purity? What is the standard which determines whether something is spiritual pure or not? Would it not be God's character of love?
- Righteousness? What determines whether something is righteous or not, would it not be harmony with God's character of love?
- Set apart – set apart from what? Sin, worldliness – toward what? Wouldn't it be toward God's character of love?

What is holiness if not God's character of love?

What has been your reaction to the following:

- "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. Le 19:2
- Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:48
- Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. Heb 12:10

- But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”
1Pet 1:15,16

What do we understand it to mean to be perfect, or to be holy? What is holiness? Is it not God’s character of love? Then what does it mean to be perfect as God is perfect or to be holy? Does this help?

- 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. Rom 8:29

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “Even a superficial...” thoughts?

I thought this was well said, and so true – how can we guard against this happening to us? Are there objective actions we can take that will protect us?

- **Isaiah 1:18:** Come let us reason together though your sins are like scarlet they will be white as snow.
 - We must be willing to reason and think
 - God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient **evidence upon which to base our faith**. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that **appeals to our reason**; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith." *Steps to Christ* 105 (1892); *9MR* 202; compare *Education* 169
- **Romans 10:17:** So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (*NRSV*)

- The Bible is its own expositor. **Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts.** He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand **the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy**, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. Ed. 190
- We must reason, but we must also harmonize all scripture together, we cannot take a little here and there.
- 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 1:20
 - In the study of the sciences also, we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. **All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world.** Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. **Rightly understood, both the book of nature and the written word make us acquainted with God** by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works. {CE 66.2}
 - **Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.** {Ed 130.3}

- All science and scripture and experience must harmonize.
- Therefore, as we identify testable laws that God built His universe to operate upon, these become standards against which we can test our theoretical interpretations of scripture – such as the law of love, the law of liberty, the law of worship.

From these points I draw the following conclusions in regard to methods to determine truth:

- We must exercise our reasoning ability, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to form our beliefs based on an evaluation of the evidence God has provided in His Word, nature and our experience. ALL THREE!
- All the evidence, rightly understood, harmonizes perfectly.
- We are to, as far as our finite minds can, form our beliefs from a harmonious integration of *all* the evidence.

As we practice these principles we can be guarded from being deceived.

- Those who use science separated from scripture invariable fall into many distortions and false assumptions.
- Likewise, those who use scripture severed from nature and science will also find themselves teaching theories inconsistent with God and His nature and character.

Read fourth paragraph, “At the same time...” thoughts?

What do you think of this sentence, “How does one, for instance, make sense of the sacrifice of Jesus apart from the entire sacrificial system revealed in the Old Testament?”

- What bias does this sentence reveal?
- What lens do they use to understand Jesus and His ministry?

- It sounds as if they believe that they should use the OT system to understand the mission and work of Christ.
- Just think about that for a minute – don't we say that the OT system is a shadow, pointing forward to the reality of Christ?
- Now how sensible would it be to study your shadow and use that information as the template we force our conclusions about you to conform?
- Wouldn't it make much more sense to study you and from you wouldn't we then have greater understanding of what we are seeing in your shadow?

So listen to what one of the founders of the SDA church wrote, regarding our understanding of the sacrificial system and what method we should use to understand it:

The significance of the Jewish economy **is not yet fully comprehended.** Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. **The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries.** Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding. **Far more than we do, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes.**
{COL 133.1}

What is the key? The gospel and where is the gospel most fully and clearly revealed? Is it not in Jesus? So, I assert that the OT system can only be rightly understood when it is studied through the lens of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And that when we study the OT system first, and then use that and force Jesus to conform to our understanding of that system, then we distort the meaning and purpose of Christ and the entire system.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Genesis 2:3:

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.

Then read first paragraph, “This text...” thoughts?

Is the seventh day holy because God declared it holy, or did God declare it holy because it was, by its creation, made holy? In other words, God constructed, built, or made the 7th day in such a way, that it inherently is holy, set apart, and different from all the other days, and thus God pronounced it such.

At the end of each day of creation when God said “it is good” did His declaration that it is good, make it good, or did He say it was good, because, in fact, it was good?

What about the seventh day holiness?

If it is true, that the seventh day is no different than the other six days, and God, used His sovereign power to “declare” it holy, what would this mean? It would mean God is arbitrary. He chose one day above other days, without reason, and set it apart.

This is one of the allegations that Satan made against God in heaven, that God is arbitrary and when we suggest such a thing, we undermine the holiness of God and present Him as unholy, common and earthly.

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to **forget God**, that he might secure them to himself. Therefore he has sought to **misrepresent the character of God**, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. **The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself--as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving**--that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. . . . {HP 8.2}

- When was the Sabbath created?
- What was happening in the universe?
- When God was creating earth who was watching? (Job 38)
- What did God do on days 1-6?
- What did days 1-6 reveal about God?
- What did God do on day seven?
- What is revealed about God on day seven?
- So God “blessed” the Sabbath with the investment of God’s character, the TRUTH presented in LOVE while leaving intelligent being FREE to decide for themselves.
- Therefore, the Sabbath was “made” or “built” or “constructed” inherently holy and its existence is evidence of God’s character of love!

Were Adam and Eve made or created holy?

Adam was surrounded with everything his heart could wish. Every want was supplied. There were no sin and no signs of decay in glorious Eden. **Angels of God conversed freely and lovingly with the holy pair.** {AH 26.3}

Did they stay holy?

We are to keep the Sabbath holy – what does that mean? How do we keep the Sabbath holy?

- What makes the Sabbath holy?
 - God’s character of love, truth, and freedom!
- Then how do we keep it holy?
 - By possessing the character of Christ!

Read next two paragraphs, “The Hebrew word...” thoughts?

What do you think of the idea that “God is set apart from anything else in creation.” And this setting apart of God is what constitutes holiness?

It is true that God lives in “unapproachable light” 1Tim 6:16. But why? Why does God live in unapproachable light? What does this mean? Does it mean photons? Does it mean knowledge and truth and wisdom and understanding?

And why is God unapproachable? Is it because He is aloof and exclusionary, and prefers isolation and wants to selfishly hoard power and knowledge?

Or is it that finite beings cannot ever assimilate or approach infinity? And by nature God cannot be approached by finiteness as it would be too overwhelming for the finite mind?

Therefore, God has gone out from His infinity and fellowshiped with His creation in the person of His Son!

When Jesus came and dwelt with His creation, when He was not far off and disconnected from His creation, but instead intimately connected to it, even to the point of being connected by an umbilical cord in the womb of Mary – was He less holy?

What does holiness have to do with distance, isolation, and separateness?

In heaven before Lucifer rebelled was holiness something far off and foreign?

Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; **it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love.** {FLB 140.3}

No one can be omnipotent, **but all can cleanse themselves from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.** God requires every soul to be pure and holy. We have hereditary tendencies to wrong. This is a part of self that no one need carry about. It is a weakness of humanity to pet selfishness, because it is a natural trait of character. **But unless all selfishness is put away, unless self is crucified, we can never be holy as God is holy.** There is in humanity a tendency to suspicious imagining, which circumstances quicken into lively growth. If this trait is indulged, it spoils the character and ruins the soul. {FLB 140.4}

God requires moral perfection in all. Those who have been given light and opportunities should, as God's stewards, aim for perfection, and never, never lower the standard of righteousness to accommodate inherited and cultivated tendencies to wrong. **Christ took upon Him our human nature, and lived our life, to show us that we may be like Him. . . . We ought to be holy even as God is holy;** and when we comprehend the full significance of this statement, and set our heart to do the work of God, to be holy as He is holy, we shall approach the standard set for each individual in Christ Jesus. {FLB 140.5}

Did angels in heaven prior to Lucifer's rebellion trust God completely? And do those in heaven now trust God completely? Then are they holy?

And when we trust God completely here on earth, what happens to us? Do we open our hearts? Does the Holy Spirit come in? Is there a transformation that occurs? Does the heart become like Christ's? Is that holiness?

No man receives holiness as a birthright, or as a gift from any other human being. Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born

again, **renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed.** With clearer vision they behold eternal realities. They are adopted into God's family, and they **become conformed to His likeness, changed by His Spirit from glory to glory. From cherishing supreme love for self, they come to cherish supreme love for God and for Christ. . . . Accepting Christ as a personal Saviour, and following His example of self-denial-this is the secret of holiness. {AG 120.4}**

Wow – what is the secret of holiness? It is to be like God, like Christ in character, to love God and others more than self!

So, with this in mind, then how do we understand the idea in Scripture that holiness has something to do with cutting or separating?

Think about “circumcision of the heart by the spirit.” What is this metaphor teaching? Cutting away something – what?

We are to have cut away, within our hearts, our love for self, worldly indulgence and destructive practices, and be freed from fear, insecurity, lust, passion, habit, and every cultivated and inherited tendency toward evil.

Thus, the holiness of cutting, is actually the holiness of healing and transforming our character back into God’s ideal!

FRIDAY

Let’s read the top two paragraphs together and ask, what message do you hear being conveyed?

The confusion is hushed. The sound of traffic and bargaining has ceased. The silence becomes painful. A sense of awe overpowers the assembly. **It is as if they were arraigned before the tribunal of God to answer for their deeds.** Looking upon Christ, they behold

divinity flash through the garb of humanity. **The Majesty of heaven stands as the Judge will stand at the last day**,--not now encircled with the glory that will then attend Him, but with **the same power to read the soul**. His eye sweeps over the multitude, taking in every individual. His form seems to rise above them in commanding dignity, and a divine light illuminates His countenance. He speaks, and His clear, ringing voice--the same that upon Mount Sinai proclaimed the law that priests and rulers are transgressing--is heard echoing through the arches of the temple: "Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise." {DA 158.1}

Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. **With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested**, He overthrows the tables of the money-changers. The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. **None presume to question His authority**. None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. **Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords**, but in His hand that simple scourge **seems** terrible as a flaming sword. Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence. {DA 158.2}

What do you hear? What is being conveyed? What lens are you looking at this scene through? Are you looking through the lens of an imposed law, which requires a judge to impose penalties, or natural law which requires therapy and healing?

The cord "seems" terrible as a flaming sword, to whom?

Amazingly, Jesus conducted Himself with such consummate skill and grace that even when brandishing a whip only those with a guilty conscience were afraid and ran away. The blind and lame stayed by and were

healed. And the children were not afraid and sang praises to God. Such was his demeanor that, even while driving out the thieves, the children were not frightened.

(Matthew 21:14-16)

Let's keep reading, we will skip one paragraph and pick up on the same thread of thought as we just read, remembering He is standing as the Judge will stand at the end of time, let's read:

In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was **designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world**. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being**, from the bright and holy seraph **to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator**. **Because of sin**, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, **the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One**. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through **saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple**. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the **high destiny open to every soul**. But the **Jews had not understood the significance** of the building they regarded with so much pride. **They did not yield themselves as holy temples** for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple** from the world's buyers and sellers, **Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin**,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come,

saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi**, and purge them as gold and silver." Malachi 3:1-3. {DA 161.1}

...No man can of himself cast out the evil throng that have taken possession of the heart. **Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple.** But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." Revelation 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; . . . and they shall be My people." **"He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."** 2 Corinthians 6:16; Micah 7:19. **His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord**, and "an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:21, 22. {DA 161.2}

What did you hear now? Is this what you heard when you read the first two paragraphs? I challenge you – it should be! This is who God is, God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his son...

What does Christ want to drive out? Sinfulness, selfishness, from our hearts!

The lens of imposed law has biased us to see God as being against us – just like last week the Genesis account was rendered as God pronouncing judgment against the serpent, woman and man, when we discovered it was God intervening to save – God is for us. Likewise, when we read Christ as standing as Judge – to do what? To diagnose properly and then cleanse, heal and restore!

This is the message of all eternity, the good news, that God is not like Satan alleges, God is not our enemy, God is not the source of suffering and death. Sin is the source of suffering and death and God is working through all His agencies, FOR US, to heal and restore! Holy Holy Holy Is the Lord God Almighty!

TUESDAY

Read last paragraph, “Even though...” thoughts?

What do you think of their reaction? What was the cause of the reaction?

How do the holy ones in heaven react to God’s presence? Don’t they fall down in front of Him, cast crowns and worship saying “Holy, Holy, Holy”?

Is this response necessarily borne of sin, or of something else? Could it be borne of awe, admiration, overwhelming majesty, awareness of such goodness it is breathtaking and humbling? Does one have to be sinful to respond this way?

In fact, when a sinful heart comes into the presence of God does it fall down in humble adoration and acknowledgement of unworthiness? Or does the sinful heart run away calling for deliverance?

What about the idea of a substitute to bridge the gap between God and sinful beings? Much is implied with this statement.

First, are sinful beings the only ones who need someone as a bridge builder with God, someone to go between them and God, someone to act as mediator? Do sinless beings need the same?

“While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save

the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is **mediating** in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his **mediatorial** work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}

The scripture states that "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." (Col 1:19,20)

Heavenly things were reconciled by the blood of Christ – why? What does it mean?

God lives in unapproachable light – Jesus through all eternity has been the one who left the infinity of the Godhead and went out to interact closely with creation, thus drawing as close as possible to creation.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "In the Old Testament..." thoughts?

Do they mean that God was not harsh in the OT or that He is still harsh today?

What do you think?

The lesson asks why Peter, after the miracle of the fishes in the net, fell down convicted of Christ's divinity asking Christ to

depart from him stating “I am a sinful man.” And then answer in the last paragraph, “Why this reaction?...”

And then read bottom paragraph THURSDAY “In all of the human encounters...”

What excellent points are made in these paragraphs?

- God is not changed by our sin
- We are changed by sin
- Sin causes us torment and torture of mind/heart in the presence of God’s unveiled truth
- Thus, sin is the source of suffering and ultimately death, not God

THURSDAY

Read fourth paragraph, “Although God is love...” thoughts?

Do you hear a suggestion that Holiness is something other than God’s character of love?

What would you say about this?