

Announcements:

- October 20, at the Trade Center, Chattanooga 9a.m.-5p.m. *Modern Medicine, Biblical Technology and Your Brain*. Seats limited sign up at our website.
- We need 13 more volunteers to help with the webcasting so that people can only do it once every 3-4 weeks. Please see Dean if you are willing
- Come and Reason Ministries, in partnership with Heartwise Ministries has started a weekly TV program *Heart of Health*. In order to get our signal onto the satellites for broadcast a \$10,000 encoder was needed. Thanks to your generosity Come and Reason Ministries was able to purchase this piece of equipment and on October 4 the signal will go nationwide on WTNB and My FamilyLife TV. We are negotiating with other networks also. Keep us in your prayers.

Growing in Christ Lesson 1 4Q 2012

Introduction – read first paragraph, “Everyone believes...” thoughts?

We have power over what we believe, but what we believe has power over us – power to heal and power to destroy – the question is what you believe.

Satan’s power is the power of deception, to get us to believe lies, and getting us to believe lies changes us.

Everyone is free to believe as they choose, but all beliefs are not equally healthy. Believing the truth that God is love and exactly as Jesus revealed him to be is healing, while believing God is angry and wrathful is actually destructive.

What kind of a belief must one hold if they believe their god is honored when they riot and kill people because of a cartoon or movie?

Read next paragraph, “For Seventh-day Adventists...”
thoughts?

- Is it our common beliefs that hold us together?
 - Common beliefs can hold people together, no doubt
 - Political parties and cults hold common beliefs
- Should there be something more holding us together just our common beliefs?
 - What about the Holy Spirit?
 - What about experiencing renewal of heart?
 - What about practicing God’s methods of truth, love, freedom – the respect for all people, the principles of peace?
 - What about bonds of love?
 - What about common purpose, common mission?
- Can one hold to all 28 fundamentals, to the point they would die for them, and still be God’s enemy?
 - Were many of the Jews in Christ’s day, held together by common beliefs? And were many of them willing to die for their beliefs?
 - Were many of those same Jews enemies of Christ?
- How is it that one can believe the right “doctrines” and still be God’s enemy?
 - Read next paragraph, “Some argue that...” thoughts?
- How can one believe right “doctrines” and still be God’s enemy?
 - By making the assumption that truth and one’s doctrines are synonymous – what is the danger in this idea?
 - Did you notice the shift from doctrine to truth? Are these two statements the same:
 - What matters is your love for Christ not doctrine AND
 - What matters is your love for Christ not truth?
 - OR

- The Bible never separates love for Christ from love for truth AND
- The Bible never separates love for Christ from love for doctrine?
- By making doctrine stand alone beliefs, proving each and every doctrine as if each doctrine stood on its own, rather than recognizing, presenting and experiencing each true doctrine is simply a manifestation of God's character of love!
 - If the doctrine is disconnected from God's character of love and made stand alone beliefs then it and the organization that does this, becomes warped and the doctrine becomes what is worshipped and not God.
- Does knowing doctrine result in a love for God?
 - It depends on what doctrine you know AND how you understand the purpose of doctrine.

Read next paragraph, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church..." thoughts?

What is a creed?

I looked up the definition on Webster's online dictionary and this is what the definitions of a creed are:

- 1:** a brief authoritative formula of religious belief
- 2:** a set of fundamental beliefs

Okay, if a creed is a set of fundamental beliefs, why is it so necessary to claim our fundamentals are not a creed?

Has something changed in the SDA church since its inception that we are trying to deny? In previous lessons we have identified a stark difference in what our founders taught about the purpose of Christ's mission to earth and what is taught today.

But what about creeds, did our founders have a different idea in regard to setting out a list of fundamental beliefs as a test of fellowship? And if so why? And what are the dangers of making creeds?

- **Rome withheld the Bible from the people**, and required all men to accept her teachings in its place. **It was the work of the Reformation to restore to men the Word of God**; but is it not too true **that in the churches of our time men are taught to rest their faith upon their creed** and the teachings of their church rather than on the Scriptures? Said Charles Beecher, speaking of the Protestant churches: “They shrink from any rude word against creeds with the same sensitiveness with which those holy fathers would have shrunk from a rude word against the rising veneration for saints and martyrs which they were fostering. . . . The Protestant evangelical denominations have so tied up one another's hands, and their own, that, between them all, a man cannot become a preacher at all, anywhere, without accepting some book besides the Bible. . . . **There is nothing imaginary in the statement that the creed power is now beginning to prohibit the Bible as really as Rome did, though in a subtler way.**” {GC88 388.2}

Do you think creed power is prohibiting the Bible in our church?

- When God's Word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; new truths, received and acted upon, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. **The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony.** The Review and Herald, Dec. 15, 1885. {1SM 416.2}

What is suggested happens when the Bible alone is our creed? New truth are received and incorporated into practice and lighten the world. What do the new truths do? Bond us to

Jesus! What is the concern with having creeds or fundamental beliefs? They obstruct the receipt of unfolding truth?

Have we actually seen this happen?

Here is another concern regarding creeds from our founders:

- **Christ was not exclusive**, and He had given special offense to the Pharisees by departing in this respect from their rigid rules. He found the domain of religion fenced in by high walls of seclusion, as too sacred a matter for everyday life. **These walls of partition He overthrew.** In His contact with men **He did not ask, What is your creed? To what church do you belong?** He exercised His helping power in behalf of all who needed help. *Desire of Ages*, p. 86.
 - He didn't ask on what day you worship, what food do you eat, to what atonement model do you ascribe
 - He lived God's law of love!
 - Creeds cause division, how many SDAs are afraid to interact with those who worship on Sunday?
 - How many people of other denominations shrink back from interacting with each other?

- Oh, how Christ longed to open to Israel the precious treasures of the truth! But such was their spiritual blindness that it was impossible to reveal to them the truths relating to His kingdom. **They clung to their creed and their useless ceremonies when the truth of Heaven awaited their acceptance.** DA 241
 - Can creeds, fundamental beliefs, become an end in themselves and thus close the mind to truth about God's character?
 - This is why we have purchased and are distributing *Fundamental Focus* because it takes the 28 Fundamental Beliefs and refocuses them all back on the central truth – God's character of love!

If our church founders held the attitude toward creeds as I have read, do you see how some might become defensive about establishing a creed?

The lesson states it well in the second to last paragraph of the introduction: “Doctrines, then, are not as an end in and of themselves. They are a *means* to an end, and that end is Jesus, knowing Jesus for ourselves and growing in Him.”

Nothing wrong knowing what one believes, or being able to identify those beliefs clearly, but the true purpose of each and every belief is enlighten us about God, connect us to God, reveal God to us. If separated from God our beliefs, even if factually correct, become obstructions to salvation (like the Jews wanting Christ off the Cross to keep Sabbath. Their belief in the Sabbath obstructed love for God).

Lesson 1 The Great Controversy: The Foundation

When you hear this title, what comes to mind?

What is the Great Controversy? How would you describe it? Here are some questions to consider as we go through the lesson:

- What is the controversy about or over?
- Is it about who is most powerful?
- Is it fought with physical arms or might?
- Where is the battleground?
- What are the weapons employed?
- Who are the chief antagonists?
- How does Satan win?
- How does God win?
- How do you and I fit in?
- Whose side do we want to be on?
- Whose side are we on?
- How can you tell?

SABBATH

Memory text, “ ‘ 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” (Gen 3:15)

Thoughts? What does this mean?

What was the sin of Adam and Eve?

- Taking the fruit OR believing lies about God which resulted in distrusting God and the subsequent taking of the fruit?
- The introduction of the quarterly talked about the power of what we believe – Satan’s power is in lies, as we believe lies we are changed. Here is how one of our founders saw it:
 - “When we speak of unbelief, we do not mean that a person believes nothing. The mind must rest upon something; and when it does not grasp truth, it lays hold of error. All men in one sense believe, and the effect produced upon the heart and character is according to the things believed. **Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors,** and it was only by repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah that they could hope ever to **regain the lost image of God.** {RH, January 5, 1886 par. 8}
 - **Through belief in Satan's misrepresentation of God, man's character and destiny were changed, but if men will believe in the Word of God, they will be transformed in mind and character, and fitted for eternal life.** To believe that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), will change the heart, and reproduce in man the image of God.
{1SM 346.1}

Thoughts?

Do these quotations remind you of any Scripture?

- 2Cor 10:3-5 – waging war over the knowledge of God
- Romans 1:18-32 – believing lies about God damages the mind
- John 17:3 – life eternal is knowing God
- John 8:32 – truth will set you free
- Isa 1:18 – Come and Reason with God and be cleansed

SUNDAY

The first paragraph reminds us that there are “radically different views regarding what the conflict is about, who’s involved, what’s at stake, and how it is going to end.”

Thoughts?

What are some of the different views?

- Yin/Yang – good and evil are not opposites and against each other, but two sides of the same energy, required for balance in the universe, there are no individual evil or good beings opposing each other, every living being contains both good and evil in balance and – thus the end is an eternity in which good and evil exist for eternity. A concept known as eternal dualism.
 - This is Satan’s goal a universe in which good and evil exist eternally
 - But the Bible teaches there was a time in eternity past when no evil existed, only good
 - That evil originated in Satan and spread to earth

- And that a future will arrive in which evil will be exterminated and the entire universe will again be good, in perfect harmony with God.
- How has the idea of eternal dualism, the eternal existence of both good and evil infected Christianity?
 - A universe in which we have heaven and an eternal burning hell in which the devil and sinners exist and suffer forever – (eternal dualism)
 - A universe in which God is the source of pain, suffering and death which he inflicts upon unrepentant sinners to exact justice to make them pay for their sins, thus God good and evil exist eternally in the character of God.
- Another view of the GC is, some allege the Bible teaches myths and the players are interpreted as concepts or forces of good and evil rather than real sentient beings.

Read last paragraph, “In fact, while secularism...” thoughts?

How might you present the ideas in a way that a scientific mind would be more open to consider?

What about instead of using the terms angels and demons, we use “extraterrestrials” and talk about intelligent life not originating on planet earth caught up in a conflict in the universe? Aren’t angels “extraterrestrials” Does it take away from anything if we call them that?

Is the issue over what we call angels, or over God’s character and methods versus Satan’s?

MONDAY

What do you understand led to Lucifer’s fall?

- The lesson states, “pride, autonomy, and independence” thoughts?

- Read second paragraph, “At least three issues...” thoughts?
- Is there something wrong, sinful, about autonomy and independence? I hear these words synonymous with freedom, how do you hear them? Maybe the lesson means instead of autonomy and independence, rebellion and defiance?
- What is “lawlessness”?
- So Satan was in rebellion and defiance of what? God’s design for life, God’s methods and principles, and ultimately God himself.
- What about instead of “pride, autonomy and independence” we use, Pride, selfishness, jealousy, rebellion and defiance?
- We do have autonomy and independence in all our choices, we just are not free of the natural consequences of those choices. We are free to break any of God’s laws, we just can’t avoid what happens when we do.
- So what is the restraining power? God’s imposed punishment, or the design protocols of life?
- In the end why will there be no more wickedness? What does God “give” to the obstinately rebellious? Freedom, independence and autonomy – He gives them what they have insisted upon, complete freedom to experience what it is like separated from him and to step outside his law of love – and what exists there? NOTHING! And thus they cease to exist!

How did Lucifer get 1/3 of other angels to follow him?

- By convincing the angels that God’s law is imposed and God is therefore arbitrary, and the only consequences to disobedience are those punishments inflicted by God. Thus, if we resist him, and get enough followers God will be forced to accept our terms.
- “Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence,

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

thoughts? Agree? What does arbitrary mean?

Webster’s online dictionary has the following definitions for “arbitrary”:

- 1:** depending on individual discretion and not fixed by law <the manner of punishment is *arbitrary*>
- 2:** marked by or resulting from the unrestrained and often tyrannical exercise of power
- 3: a:** based on or determined by individual preference or convenience rather than by necessity or the intrinsic nature of something
- b :** existing or coming about seemingly at random or by chance or as a capricious and unreasonable act of will

Thoughts? If God is like this, could he be trusted? What teachings do we hear today that make God out to be this way?

- Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience?
- God is required to inflict punishment?
- God said it, I believe it, that settles it?
- God's way or the highway?

What happens when we use methods that are severe, exacting and arbitrary? Listen to this, which is a letter from EGW to a church member over 100 years ago. Consider if you have ever known of a family like this:

Brother M, you have not taken a judicious course with your family. Your children do not love you. They have more hatred than love. Your wife does not love you. You do not take a course to be loved. You are an extremist. **You are severe, exacting, arbitrary, to your children.** You talk the truth to them, but do **not carry its principles into your everyday life. You are not patient, forbearing, and forgiving.** You have so long **indulged your own spirit**, you are so ready to fly into a passion if provoked, that it looks exceedingly doubtful whether you will make efforts sufficient to meet the mind of Christ. You do not possess the power of endurance, forbearance, gentleness, and love. These Christian graces must be possessed by you before you can be truly a Christian.

What is being described? What is suggested will happen when we interact with those who practice methods that are severe, exacting and arbitrary? Does love grow?

So, if Satan can get us to believe God is severe, exacting and arbitrary, what kind of Christians might we become? Could we become like those who put Christ on the cross?

WEDNESDAY

Read first two paragraphs beginning at: “God worked through the...” thoughts?

Fought over what issues?

Are they saying the fight is over understanding or misunderstand God and what he is doing? And that the tools God has provided to enlighten us the devil tries to twist to misrepresent God, or something else?

How has the sanctuary been misrepresented?

- That the blood of animals atones for sin – in OT times
- That God requires sacrifice as an appeasement or propitiation of his anger and wrath
- That the barrier between God and man is God’s inability to look upon sin
- That the plan of salvation is a market place transaction, one member of the Godhead bribing or paying off another member to with his blood
- That there is a smoke filled building in heaven in which Christ lights incense and mixes it with prayers and pleads to his Father to be merciful to us
- That there is a golden chest in heaven with stone tablets carved out of rock from earth
- That when God attempts to look at our records Jesus intervenes to obstruct his view by replacing what is recorded there with his record.
- That committees sit in heaven reviewing the sins of the wicked and voting on how long each person must burn in the flames before they are executed.

Read last paragraph, “Meanwhile, the book of Hebrews...”

Read Hebrews 9:24: “For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he

entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” (NRSV)

What does this mean? Do you think 2Cor 5:1 has any bearing?

“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.”

Is the sanctuary in heaven, the one not built with human hands, constructed out of inanimate material or living beings? Who is to dwell in the Sanctuary? Where would the living God of love abide? A lifeless, cold, inanimate edifice? Or within the hearts, minds of living beings?

Created beings can build inanimate builds, only God can construct living beings!

Does the following passage have any bearing on this:

Eze 28:14 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.
 15 You were blameless in your ways
 from the day you were created
 till wickedness was found in you.
 16 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.
 17 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.

¹⁸ 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.
 Eze 28:14-18 NIV

What do you think it means? What are his sanctuaries? What of the following is it connected?

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. ⁹ I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who **say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.** Rev 2:8,9

What are the synagogue or sanctuaries of Satan? Here is what one of the founders of our church thought, do you agree?

Satan has a large confederacy, his church. Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan because the members are the children of sin. The members of Satan's church have been constantly **working to cast off the divine law, and confuse the distinction between good and evil.** Satan is working with great power in and through the children of disobedience, to exalt treason and apostasy as truth and loyalty. And at this time the power of his satanic inspiration **is moving the living agencies** to carry out the great rebellion against God that commenced in heaven. {Christian Experience and Teaching 207.1}

What is the synagogue of Satan constructed out of? If the synagogue of Satan is the people who identify with him, who operate by his principles, who have his character reproduced within, then wouldn't the heavenly sanctuary be built out of God's loyal children?

What does Scripture teach?

We went through this a few weeks ago, so I am not going to relist the texts, but the sanctuary is built out of living stones, together to be a house for the Lord. We are a temple for the Lord where he dwells. Jesus said destroy this temple and he would raise it in three days.

EGW in DA 161 says when Christ cleansed the earthly temple he announced his mission to cleanse the human soul from sin. That temple was an object less that every being was created to be a dwelling place for God.

All through inspiration it is the same!

Satan wants to direct us away from the high calling God created us to be, beings to be temples where God dwells, to an idea of a smoky building in heaven where records are being reviewed. An idea that books are cleansed not people. It is time we grow out of the metaphor and step into the reality of God's kingdom and fulfill the purpose for which we were created, to be a dwelling place for God and reveal his character to the world!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Prophecy provides..." thoughts?

What are Satan's tactics? Flattery, inducements, coercion, death penalty.

What do Christians say Christ will do when returns? Offer the inducement of salvation, use power to inflict punishment for disobedience, and then execute those who remain rebellious, who does this sound like?

The third paragraph references the message of the three angels, what is that message? Can anyone tell me in clear terms?

- A first messenger from God came with the message to Admire God and reveal his true character of love in your life
- To Remember him who created all things, and the principles upon which life was designed to operate – the law of love, the principle of giving, which reveals God’s true character of love
- Because the hour in which he will be judged is at hand and
- A second messenger from God came saying, do what the first angel said because, the churches have fallen into Satan’s lie about God and teach an imposed law construct in which God is the imposer of law and the imposer of penalties, a being represented as arbitrary and severe and have made all the nations think God is like this.
- A third messenger came and said, if anyone agrees with this beastly picture of God, or practices such monstrous methods their characters will be permanently warped and they will experience the full force of their choice when God returns and they are bathed in the fire of his presence. Then unremedied sin will not be restrained and they will be tormented and consumed in the presence of the angels and the lamb.
- And the memory of their choice, and how unremedied sin tortures and kills will be recalled by the saved forever and ever.

Thoughts?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, “The cryptic language...” thoughts?

Does this passage have any affect on how we view and understand the OT Scripture? Should it? How?

In light of this passage, how do we understand the flood, Sodom, the first born of Egypt and the rest? What is going on behind the scenes?

What does Genesis 3:15 tell us about God's plan?

- That Christ is coming – why?
- Why is God going to send Christ?
- What if God doesn't send Christ?
- Does Satan know the implications of Christ's planned condescension?
- What do you think Satan's reaction was to hearing Genesis 3:15?

Do you think the OT is a history of how mankind was caught up in the war between God and Satan? How Satan was working to cut mankind off from God permanently, and how God was working to keep contact with man, and the channel open for the Messiah?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-3