



The Teachings of Jesus Lesson 6 3rd Q 2014

Lesson 6: Growing in Christ

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Come and Reason FREE APP is now available for iPhones and Droid. The app allows access to our materials on your smart phones and tablets. Please download the app! **Be sure and type in Come and Reason Ministries** and search in your app store as another unofficial app with our logo is out there.

Aug 22/23: Dr. Jennings will be doing a spiritual emphasis weekend at Laurelbrook Academy.

Oct 2-4: Dr. Jennings will be at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Convention in Branson, MO. He and Dr. Curt Thomson, Christian Psychiatrist and author of *Anatomy of the Soul*, will be conducting an 8-hour workshop entitled, **Neurobiology and the Treatment of Mood and Anxiety Disorders**. Dr. Jennings will also be a plenary speaker and Come and Reason Ministries will have a booth to give away our materials.

Oct 24/25: Dr. Jennings will be at Loma Linda University presenting a Spiritual Emphasis Weekend for the psychiatry residents and students. The Friday evening meeting will be open to the public.

Nov 16: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the First Baptist Church in Frisco Texas. Speaking for the three church services Sunday morning and then a seminar Sunday afternoon.

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NOTE: WARNING: There is another ministry with a similar name called "Come Reason Ministries" and they are located in California. Please be sure and select **Come AND Reason Ministries Located in Collegedale TN**.

I received this email:

Just wanted to let you know that while we were in British Columbia a few weeks ago we shared the "God and your Brain" DVDs with some family there and a neighbor who broke her leg while we were there. Just heard today that she and her husband looked at them with a sister who was visiting and another friend. They were very excited about them and the sister said she had to have one to take back to New Brunswick to share with her family there. We had left several DVDs with our family living there, so she was given one to take home. We are sending more DVDs and books up with another family member going to visit for the pastor and some other people. We praise God that we have a way to get these to people there. Thank you for the box of materials you sent we are getting them out to people.

Our friends in Australia created a Facebook group called, Friends of the Designer, and on that site one of the proponents of this message in Australia posted this:

Hi fellow designer friends, Isn't it amazing how this message is moving around the world? Praise God!!!!

My younger brother in NZ has been relieved of his Sabbath school class because he's always talking about the true character of God unfortunately they prefer a God who punishes sinners. I



like to ask our group to remember him in your prayers... I told him they can stop him from taking the class but they can't stop him from talking from the pews and it actually makes it easier for him to expose their wrong ideas about our God. Thanks guys

SABBATH

Read memory text: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (Jn 3:3 NKJV)

What is the context – in other words what is the subject this being "born again" regarding? Seeing God's kingdom, being part of God's kingdom, Salvation – then note what Christ did NOT say – Christ did not say, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he has the penalty for his sins paid." Or, He Didn't say "No one can see the kingdom of God unless God's wrath has been propitiated."

Notice where Jesus puts the focus of change that is necessary for sinners to see God's kingdom – it is a change in the sinner, NOT God!

And, why must we be born again? Because there is something wrong with our first birth, which means Christ is focusing on what type of problem and its resolution?

Christ is focusing on the problem of our actual state of being, our condition, which is deviant from His design and needs healing.

So what is wrong with our first birth? We are born fearful and selfish rather than trusting and loving.

Parents have the responsibility of creating an atmosphere to counter fear and selfishness, to infuse love and trust into their children. One of the critical actions parents can take to instill trust is – never set boundaries you are unwilling to enforce. If you set boundaries, but because the child cries, begs, pleads, is hurt, disappointed etc. you allow your compassion to alter your enforcement, you undermine your child's ability to trust. How?

- If you tell your child that if they study hard and get an A on their next exam you would give them \$20 and they do, but then you don't give them \$20 what do you teach them?
- If you tell your child if they don't pick up their room they can't have dessert, and the room isn't picked up and when dessert is passed out they begin to cry when they don't get one, you then say, "okay, you can have one this time but next time pick up your room." What do you teach them?
- It is okay to change a boundary when you believe it is in the best interest, and you have a reason. Just explain the reason and educate on the new placement of the boundary.

The lesson points out that the concept of being born again was difficult for Nicodemus to grasp because he was descended from Abraham and thought that gave him special favor with God. What



about today? Are there any beliefs similar that lead people to believe they have special favor with God?

Some still believe genetic Jews have special favor with God, but what about in Christianity? Do some believe that belonging to a particular denomination engenders special favor, or status, or position in God's kingdom? Does it? Or participating in certain rituals, or worshipping on a certain day?

Read third paragraph, "Patiently, Jesus explained..." thoughts?

No doubt the transformation of our characters, the healing of our minds requires the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. But, does that mean we are absent of the process? Or do we have a work to do in our own salvation?

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Phlp 2:12,13

What is the balance between our working out our salvation and God working in you?

This is another point upon which the legal model fails, but it is quite simple when we understand reality and that reality our condition is deviant from God's design, we cannot fix what is broken in us but God has a plan to do just – heal and restore us.

Who procured the Remedy to our sinful state? Jesus – did he receive any help from any other human? No – He did this singly and alone.

Who applies the Remedy into the lives of believers? The Holy Spirit – and when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart is there a process, an activity that occurs which a person CANNOT do for themselves?

Consider a person with an infection who needs an antibiotic, did the person develop and produce the antibiotic? No, does the antibiotic do something inside them they can't do for themselves? It brings a new element which is not already there. But, does the person still have a work to do? What? To partake of the antibiotic.

Is there a work to do in our salvation? What? To partake of Jesus, to surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit, to choose to do that which we understand and know is right and healthy.

Here is how one of the founders of our church put it:

- **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. {DA 671.2}

- We are laborers together with God. This is the Lord's own wise arrangement. **The cooperation of the human will and endeavor with divine energy is the link that binds men up with one another and with God.** The apostle says, "We are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9). **Man is to work with the facilities God has given him.** "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," He says. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13).--MS 113, 1898. {2MCP 694.3}
- **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. [credulity - readiness/willingness to believe with little evidence]** **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. {OHC 310.5}

SUNDAY

Read fifth paragraph, "The fact that it is..." Of what is water baptism symbolic? Dying to the life of selfishness and rising to a life of love and unity with God.

Does the ritual change a person? Which is supposed to come first, the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart/mind, or baptism by water? It is baptism by the Spirit that is transformational.

Listen to this quote:

This new birth looks mysterious to Nicodemus. He asks, "How can these things be?" Jesus, bidding him marvel not, uses the wind as an illustration of his meaning. It is heard among the branches of the trees, and rustling the leaves and flowers, yet it is invisible to the eye, and from whence it comes and whither it goeth, no man knoweth. So is the experience of every one who is born of the Spirit. **The mind is an invisible agent of God to produce tangible results. Its influence is powerful, and governs the actions of men. If purified from all evil, it is the motive power of good. The regenerating Spirit of God, taking possession of the mind,**



transforms the life; wicked thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced, love, peace, and humility take the place of anger, envy, and strife. That power which no human eye can see, has created a new being in the image of God. . . . {ST, November 15, 1883 par. 9}

Our minds are not our brains; our minds operate upon the substrate of our brains like Windows operates on the substrate of a hard drive.

But our minds actually change the brain based on how and what we think.

There has been a great debate and some have argued that it is the brain that determines the mind – not so – the mind is much more than the mere results of chemical reactions in the brain.

There are different theories about the mind/brain relationship:

- *Mind-brain identity theory* asserts that mental events are created by and are identical to brain events. Thus we can have internal subjective experience “I feel great” but also external measures of that experience, increase activation of the nucleus accumbens, with increase dopamine release.
- *Eliminativism*, denies mental functions and claims there are only physical brain states. This view holds the mental world is an illusion.
- *Emergent mentalism* proposed by Nobel prize winner Roger Sperry, states that mental events are not possible independent of the brain, but the mental processes such as beliefs, values, feelings, etc. are activities beyond mere physical, chemical reactions.

One of the founders of our church saw it saw it much like the Nobel prize winner:

The brain nerves which communicate to the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man, and affect his inmost life. Whatever disturbs the circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system, lessens the strength of the vital powers, and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind.—2T, p. 347.

My view is that the mind is analogous to software, yet capable of rewriting and changing itself, and the brain analogous to hardware – can software operate without hardware? Does the hardware determine the quality of the software? But can a faulty hardware impact the functioning of the software?

Brain illness can impair the functioning of the mind, but doesn't determine the mind. So a person with a brain illness – MS, Sz d/o, brain tumor, schizophrenia, bipolar – may have altered hardware, but can still be kind, honest, faithful, loyal, noble, be repulsed by evil and love the good. In other words, their mind, their character, is not determined by the hardware – brain. However, their ability to carry out life's activities may be impacted by the hardware.



But, what we choose to believe, what we think, the methods we practice, the values we cherish will actually alter the brain:

Neurofeedback is a form of biofeedback – biofeedback is using some device such as heart monitor, skin galvanic meter, to give feedback about yourself, such as heart rate, or circulation to the skin which change with anxiety and stress levels. With this feedback people can learn to calm themselves.

Neurofeedback uses the brainwaves themselves, and gives the person conscious feedback regarding what brainwave state they are currently in.

A meta-analysis of 87 studies examining the effectiveness of neurofeedback on seizure frequency showed reduction in sz frequency in 80% of epileptics undergoing a certain form of neurofeedback, even when anti-seizure meds did not work. (Sterman et al, “Biofeedback in the Treatment of Epilepsy”; *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* 77(2010): S60-S67.)

In other words, based on a change in thinking, using one’s mind, the brain changed.

ADHD children tend to have high amount of theta waves in their frontal lobes. These are the waves we get when we daydream and our mind wanders. Studies using neurofeedback with children with ADHD demonstrate children receiving neurofeedback, when compared to ADHD controls, not only had improved performance on attention, focus and hyperactivity, but showed enhanced brain activity in areas involved in attention and focus. The controls did not show any of these changes. Further investigation documented improved white matter connections in the brains of the ADHD children who did neurofeedback, but not in the brains of the controls. (Levesque et al, *Effects of Neurofeedback Training on the Neural Substrates of Selective Attention in Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*, from Beauregard, M, *Brain Wars*, Harper One, New York, 2012, p 52,53)

The point of these studies and others like it is that we can, by focusing our thinking, change our brainwaves and thereby change our brain structure. Our minds are what make us who we are. And it is our minds that God takes to heaven when we die and which he brings back to earth at the second coming to put into new bodies.

Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. **The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved.** In the resurrection every man will have his own character. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him. {6BC 1093.2}



And Paul says the following:

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. ¹⁴ 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.** ¹⁵ 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.** ¹⁶ 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.** ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.
1Thes 4:13-18

How do we put together the mind goes to Christ at death, Christ brings with him those who have fallen asleep, that we alive will not precede those who have died into heaven, and the dead are being resurrected from the earth?

By understanding that the mind is like software, our identity, our individuality goes to Christ at death and is safe and secure with Him in heaven, perfectly stored in the Lamb's book of life. A great heavenly "server". When He returns He brings with Him the heavenly server and downloads all the saints into new heavenly bodies He creates from the dust. It is then they live again, until then they are, as the Bible states asleep, or as any software on a disc, in storage.

What can you do to develop your mind? Here is an idea from book called *Christian Education*:

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. **As an educating power, the Bible is without a rival.** In the word of God the mind finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God's word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race, unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. **The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted,** and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin, to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; **and all is but a revelation of the character of God.** In the reverent contemplation of the truths presented in his word, **the mind of the student is brought into communion with the infinite mind. Such**



a study will not only refine and ennoble the character, but it cannot fail to expand and invigorate the mental powers. {CE 65.1

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, “Likewise, the Holy Spirit...” thoughts?

Do you agree? Does the Holy Spirit work on the heart of every person? What about those who have never had the Bible? What about those raised in pagan cultures?

Do we have any examples from Scripture of people, not part of Israel, that God’s Spirit worked with?

- Patriarchs
- Mechezedek
- Jethro priest of Midian
- Naaman
- Nebuchadnezzar
- The wise men from the East who came to visit Jesus
- The Roman centurion

What about since the time of Christ, does the Holy Spirit strive with people who have not heard about Christ and can they be saved?

This is what Paul said to the Romans:

since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰ 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...

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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ (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,¹⁵ 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.)¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. (Romans 1:19, 20; 2:12-16)

Have you ever heard that people can’t be saved unless they accept Jesus, or unless they are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or unless they perform some ritual etc.?

Why? Where do these ideas come from? Are there any truths behind such ideas?



These two texts are probably the most frequently used for such ideas:

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jn 14:6

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

And they are both true – the problem arises when we understand these texts through the Roman imposed law construct. When we do that then we falsely believe it is a legal issue, rather than a condition of being, and if a person hasn’t had legal solution they can’t be saved. Thus it is taken very concretely, a person must hear the name Jesus, must accept the historic Jesus and must receive legal pardon.

But, the legal model is a lie, therefore these ideas about the meaning of the text is a lie. Paul’s description in Romans 2 reveals that.

What is the truth?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. Jn 1:1-3

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. Rom 1:20

According to Scripture who is the one through which all of nature is created? Jesus, and whose divine nature is seen in nature? God’s. So if a person learns about God in nature, who put that lesson there? Jesus. So they are coming to God through Jesus.

And if they come to surrender to the God of love, as seen in nature, and trusts Him, the Holy Spirit comes in and recreates them into the likeness of Jesus. From where is the Holy Spirit getting this Remedy? Jesus, it is no longer “I that lives but Christ lives in me.”

Thus, everyone who is healed is healed (saved) only because Jesus presented the truth to win us to trust and provides the Remedy which restores us to righteousness.

Thus Peter’s statement, there is no other “name” whereby men can be saved. What does “name” mean in that culture? Character. Peter is saying you can possess no other character other than that of Jesus in



order to be saved, or healed. Or, it is only by possessing Jesus' character you are healed. Or, it is the character of Jesus, partaken of by the believer that heals and transforms.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "A flourishing spiritual..." What does it mean to be part of the vine? This is a metaphor – Jesus is not a vine, but every metaphor has some reality to which it refers. What is a more reality to which the vine metaphor is referring?

Does this text suggest anything?

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.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. Dan 7:9,10

Or what about this text:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ He is before all things, **and in him all things hold together.** Col 1:15-17

This is the last paragraph in the five book series *The Conflict of the Ages* from the book *The Great Controversy*:

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. 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. {GC 678.3}

Is this suggesting that God is the source of life and that from Him flows the very energy that sustains the universe, keeps the heart beating, etc. and only in actual connection with Him there is life? While He is not a vine, He is the source of everything and sustains it all.

Here is a paragraph from the book *Education*:

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence



that has the jurisdiction of the soul. **From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. **For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin.** {Ed 99.2}

Wow – what kind of law is described here? And what then do we understand the vine to be? God Himself as the Creator and Sustainer of all. Only in unity with Him is their life.

Now search your databases and see if you can identify any stories in the inspired record that would be related to this phenomenon, of God being the source of life, energy, sustenance etc. and separation results in death, but reuniting results in life and transformation?

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.³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, **his face was radiant**, and they were afraid to come near him.³¹ But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them.³² Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.³³ When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face.³⁴ But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded,³⁵ **they saw that his face was radiant.** Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord. Exodus 34:29-34

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Acts 6:15

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves... The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Gen 3:7,21

Our God is a consuming fire Heb 12:29

I came across this in an old journal from 1898:

Before the fall, not a cloud rested upon the minds of our first parents to obscure their clear perception of the character of God. **[notice the emphasis here – on clarity in knowing God's character]** They were perfectly conformed to the will of God. **For a covering, a beautiful light, the light of God, surrounded them.** The Lord visited the holy pair, and instructed them through the works of his hands. Nature was their lesson-book. In the garden of Eden the existence of God was demonstrated in the objects of nature that surrounded them. Every tree of the garden spoke to them. The invisible things of God were clearly seen, being understood by



the things which were made, even his eternal power and Godhead. {RH, November 8, 1898 par. 2}

But while it is true that God could thus be discerned in nature, this does not favor the assertion that after the fall a perfect knowledge of God was revealed in the natural world to Adam and his posterity. Nature could convey her lessons to man in his innocence; but transgression brought a blight upon nature, and intervened between nature and nature's God. Had Adam and Eve never disobeyed their Creator, had they remained in the path of perfect rectitude, they could have known and understood God. But when they listened to the voice of the tempter, and sinned against God, **the light of the garments of heavenly innocence departed from them; and in parting with the garments of innocence, they drew about them the dark robes of ignorance of God. The clear and perfect light that had hitherto surrounded them had lightened everything they approached; but deprived of that heavenly light, the posterity of Adam could no longer trace the character of God in his created works.** {RH, November 8, 1898 par. 3}

This commentary connects the knowledge of God's character with the robes of heavenly light. Jesus said in John 17 that life eternal is that we might know God – eternal death is not knowing God. Coming into a knowledge of God changes us.

This change is necessary in order to live in God's presence. God wants us to be shining lights, not just metaphorically, light of truth, but as we are conformed more and more in mind, thought, brain patterns to be like Him, then we experience closer connection with Him and more and more of His presence abides in us and shines through us, culminating in one day having faces like Moses and Stephen but even more.

Do you think we can experience this before the second coming – as Moses and Stephen did?

One of our founders did:

The service rendered in sincerity of heart has great recompense. "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." **By the life we live through the grace of Christ, the character is formed. The original loveliness begins to be restored to the soul. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted, and the image of the Divine begins to shine forth. The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven.** For these souls the kingdom of God has begun. They have Christ's joy, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master's use; they are trusted to do His work in His name. {DA 312}

And this from the book *The Great Controversy* describing the time just before Jesus returns:



The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. **Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them...** {GC 640.2}

Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, **its base a glory like consuming fire**, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. GC 640

This seem to be what John was saying:

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.³ Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 1Jn 3:2,3

Do you realize that unity with the Vine, with God, is more than just unity of attitude, it is being reunited with the very fountain, wellspring, of life, the source of energy in the entire universe. As we come back into a right knowledge of Him, then our minds are transformed to be able to experience greater and greater connectedness with Him until we literally, one day, begin shining, radiating the heavenly light as Adam and Eve did in Eden, and Moses and Stephen did on earth.

Read last paragraph, "By reading the Word..." thoughts?

Where do Christ's words have their impact or effect? In our minds, changing our beliefs, our thoughts, our understanding, our trust, our reality dispelling lies and distortions and returning us to harmony with Him!

WEDNESDAY

The lesson speaks of the importance of prayer – no doubt, but what would you say is the most important aspect of prayer?

To whom you are praying!

- The 450 prophets of baal prayed at Mt. Carmel
- Manasseh prayed and offered his own son to Molech
- Many people pray God will take vengeance on their enemies

The most critical thing it seems is to know the one to whom you are praying.



Then next most critical thing is being real – being honest, if you have hatred in your heart and want someone to die – tell God, but don't stop with that, ask Him if there is a better way to lead you to it and change you to be like Him.

Read last paragraph, “Jesus is our Mediator...” thoughts? What does this mean? What does it mean to pray in Jesus’ name?

But to pray in Christ's name means much. **It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works.** The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience. {DA 668.2}

Do you agree? Praying in Jesus’ name is not putting a tag line at the end of your prayer, but praying with the same character, motives and desire as Him, thus you will receive that which you pray for.

What does it mean Jesus is our Mediator in heaven?

Under imposed law models how is mediation described?

- Jesus representing us to the Father to plead mercy and forgiveness from the Father in exchange for the blood payment He has made
- Also, Jesus, in addition to Mary and the Saints pleading for mercy from God because God, in such views must be plead with
- Or, Jesus working to assuage or propitiate God’s wrath, to shield us from God etc.

All this is based on lies about God and lies about God’s design for life, His law.

What does mediation look like under Design Law?

In his efforts to reach God's ideal for him, the Christian is to despair of nothing. Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all. Jesus is the source of power, **the fountain of life. He brings us** to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls. **He leads us** to the throne of God, and **puts into our mouth** a prayer through which **we are brought** into close contact with Himself. **In our behalf He sets in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven. At every step we touch His living power.** {AA 478.2}

God's people, rescued from the fire by Jesus Christ, have a sense of their sin, feel humbled and ashamed. God sees and recognizes their repentance, and notes their sorrow for sin, which they cannot remove or cancel themselves. But as they pray their prayers are heard, and this is the reason that Satan stands by to resist Christ; because He hears their prayers, **He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He regenerates the sinner, and pardon is written off against his name.** This stirs Satan up to resistance. He steps in between



the repenting, believing soul and Christ. He seeks to cast his hellish shadow before that soul, to dampen faith, and to make of none effect the words of God. . . . {UL 20.3}

If Satan stands between the soul and Jesus Christ, then the love and acceptance and pardon of Christ are eclipsed--man will be constantly striving to prepare a robe of righteousness to cover his deformity and sin, when Christ wants him to come to Him just as he is, and believe in Him as his personal Saviour. In His tender love, **a forgiving Father** brings forth His best robe in which to array His returning child. . . . {UL 20.4}

How is Jesus our mediator? He is working in His Spirit Temple, the true temple set up by God and not by human hands, to restore His image in us. In the OT service, twice per day the High Priest would trim the wick on the lamps. This symbolizes working in our hearts to cut away unhealthy and selfish attributes and cause us to shine more brightly for Him every day.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “Paradoxically...” Because we remain vulnerable to temptation from selfish impulses, many believe the old “self” is still alive – but in reality, the self has been renewed, and old habits, conditioned responses, and residual defects remain to tempt us.

The old nature, or fallen humanity that tempts us is not the same as our individuality, and thus we can, via union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit, live free of the control of fear and selfishness, but not the temptations until the second coming.

My paraphrase of a portion of Romans 7:

^{7:14} 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. ¹⁵ 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, old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ What is happening is this: I have come to trust God and 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 do to things I do not want to do. ¹⁸ 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 cause by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So I find, at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. ¹⁹ For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do; no,



they are remnants of my selfish unconverted mind. ²⁰ So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not I, but vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed, and through God's grace will soon be removed.

^{7:21} So, I find this reality at work: When I want to do good, old selfish habits and residual feelings of fear are right there with me. ²² For in my mind I rejoice in God's methods and principles; ²³ but I recognize 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. ²⁴ What a damaged and corrupt man I am! Who will deliver and heal me from a brain and body so diseased and deformed? ²⁵ 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 for God and love of his methods, but my brain and body remain damaged by years of self-indulgent behavior.

Read fourth paragraph, "It is not easy..." This is why Eastern Meditation fail as a way to experience spiritual renewal, because it is self trying to empty self of self.

When we choose to say no to the desires of the selfish nature, we suffer in our flesh, but we are done with sin, or deviations from God's design, which occur when we act selfishly.

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph, "The warfare..." thoughts?

Read and discuss questions.