



Oneness in Christ Lesson 12 4Q 2018 Church Organization and Unity

Tim Jennings

How many watched the funeral services at the National Cathedral for President George H.W. Bush?

What did you think?

- Was God glorified in the service?
- Was the message of God's character of love presented?
- Was the power of Christ and the victory over death presented?
- Was the message a message of unity?
- Unity upon what?

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "As Seventh-day Adventists..." Do you agree that salvation is found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and is not found or linked to institutional affiliation?

Read second paragraph, "Nevertheless the church..." When we speak of the church as God's creation are we speaking of denominations or the church universal, the church made up of all those who have been truly reconciled to Christ?

And believing that the church is God's creation for the distribution of the gospel, God's remedy to sin, would we expect that Satan would try to infiltrate and corrupt the church?

How would Satan do that? Would he try and substitute a false remedy, a false gospel for the truth?

Would his primary attack on the church be that there is no God, or an attack on the kind of being God is?

How might he do this?

If you were dying of a terminal disease and a physician had a remedy that would cure you, but you had an enemy that wanted to ensure that you would not take the remedy, what might that enemy do?

What would happen if the enemy got you to believe your condition isn't killing you, but your legal standing with the examiner, the one coming to look you over is the problem. If that doctor, now called a judge, comes and gets a good look at you, he will be required by all that is pure and right to kill you.

If you believed that what might you do?

How could Satan get Christians to twist their view of Jesus to believe Jesus wasn't coming to help



them but was going to kill them? He didn't—Satan twisted our view of God, so in our metaphor, the physician is the prince and the prince of the realm would like to heal us, but his father is a king who tolerates no breaking of his law. So, if the king sees you he will kill you for your law breaking.

So, how did Satan get Christians to believe God was the one from whom we needed to be protected and that Jesus is our agent to protect us from God? By getting Christians to change how they view God's law from design law.

Did God know Satan was going to do this?

Yes, in Daniel 7:21,22,25 states:

As I watched, this horn was **waging war** against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom...He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and **try to change the set times and the laws...**

What kind of war?

For though we live in the world, **we do not wage war** as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against **the knowledge of God**, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:3-5

What kind of war? Where is it being fought? And what is it over?

This is a war between truth and lies, centering on God's character, and being fought in our minds!

Amazingly, Paul describes the same thing:

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God**. 2Thes 2:1-4

What temple? The spirit temple, Satan distorts the truth about God so effectively that he sets himself up in the hearts and minds of people to believe that God is like Satan in character. Thus, the church becomes infected with Satan's view of God while claiming to be worshippers of God.

God, looking down the corridors of time told Daniel in Daniel 8:14 that it would be 2300 years before these lies would be cleansed from the hearts and minds of people.



Can we be specific, can we identify the core lie that is the root to all the distortions about God and from which we are to free ourselves in order to fulfill God's end-time mission for His people?

- **The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.** Upon this battle we are now entering,—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. {GC88 582.2}
- **There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be, holy, just, and good, complete in itself.** It cannot be repealed or changed. [what kind of law is this? It is design law] To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. {PK 625.1}

Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the *last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.* [What kind of laws do men enact? Imposed law, but God's law is design law. The final conflict will be over this issue, and upon what type of law does penal substitution theology rest? Imposed law! It is a lie that has infected Christianity and God is waiting for a people to cast it off] Upon this battle we are now entering--a battle not between rival churches contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition...[We are not in a battle between rival churches? How much of SDA eschatology has pitted the SDA church against the Roman and other Sunday keeping churches? Such a construct is a lie, we are not battling against other churches, but against the pagan god constructs that operate upon imposed law, inflict imposed punishments and require propitiation with a human sacrifice. **This is most prominently manifested in Penal Substitution Theology. We must reject this legal fraud and come back and worship Him who made the heavens...] {PK 625.2}**

Has Christianity been infected with lies about God? And did God call for a message to be given at this time in earth's history? What is that message?

The 3 angels' messages, which calls people out of a system of human imposed law constructs back to worshipping the Creator, the Designer who is working to heal and restore all who trust Him!

When we consider how human systems and God's system operate, what methods they employ, can we distinguish the movements of God's Spirit from Satan's?

Which system brings pressure and coercion to bear to get compliance God's or Satan's?

Which system presents truth in love and leaves people free?

What method did Saul of Tarsus use? What method did Paul the Apostle use?

What method does the beast of Revelation use? What about those who are sealed to God?



How does truth progress through the population? What organizational system would enhance the avenues for truth and what organizational system would obstruct the progression of truth?

A system with local control and without a top down authoritarian rule would keep open the avenues for truth, a system of top down authority would place obstacles in the path of truth.

Why are some in leadership in the SDA church seeking to impose a top-down authoritarian rule? Because they have accepted the lie about God's law. That lie is the root to all rebellion against God and one of God's design laws—by beholding we are changed, the law of worship—means that those who accept the lie eventually practice the false methods.

I received this email from an online listener this week:

Dear Come and Reason Team,

I thought deeply about your story when you went to talk to the Theologians about whether Design Law results in bringing Adventist people into or out of the Adventist denomination. The message brought Russell and a Pastor back.

I have been listening/studying for over six years now and God's design law is the only concept that brings the Bible into the perfect unity of love and the exquisite beauty of how all laws work together.

This is where I need your help/ advice. My church and conference are infected with the penal/legal view of God's law. This view has resulted in a fear-based organization that protects the organization above individual liberty. Almost everyone thinks the same and there is little learning where members refuse to consider new ideas. When these ideas are surfaced, members subtly demean us... The Pastor is an "out of the closet" penal legalist where each sermon becomes more and more painful to listen to. The church and conference penal/legal view misrepresents God's character and their refusal to have a discussion drives me away from this Church. When I first entered the church, I was on fire to learn more, but now these same people are stagnant. My life has been all about learning, but now I don't know what to do? I am very active in the community, Chaplain, Stephen Ministry, bible studies, Prison ministry, etc and know that I am part of the end-time remnant church, but am compelled to leave as I am being smothered. Can you provide any wisdom for me?

What wisdom do you have for our friend and brother?

This reminds me of what EGW described many years ago:

- **"But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's**



word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion.

"The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. **There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error.** When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, **who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what.**" *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 706,707 (1889); *GW* 297,298; *CWE* 39

Why do people in error fear investigation of their positions?

And what will organizations do in order to ensure their system remains in control? Make up rules

AW Tozer wrote:

Whenever a church backslides from the truth and runs away from the plain Word of God, that church begins establishing its own laws. -- *The Quotable Tozer* p. 74

This reminded me of a quote from Ellen White, one of the founders of the SDA church:

The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably **leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin.** For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, **they will devise rules and regulations** of their own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. **His love dies out of the heart,** and with it perishes love for his fellow men. **A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions,** will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become **self-centered judges and petty spies.** {MB 123.1}

Would this idea of judging others, of spying on others, to ensure they keep the rules be similar to setting up compliance committees?

We must come back to worship our Designer and that means we reject the lies about God's law and begin practicing God's methods again.

SUNDAY

Read the second paragraph, "The church also derives..." What do you think of the idea that Jesus is the originator of the church's beliefs and teachings?

Have all the teachings that are found in Christianity originated in Christ? Are there any teachings



within Christianity that you would suggest originated with Satan, yet these teachings are accepted as Christian? Can you name any?

- Eternal burning hell?
 - Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which flesh is heir. He has represented him as a God who delights in the sufferings of his creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone the human reason. {CE 73.2}
 - Why does believing in an eternal burning hell dethrone human reason? Is it reasonable to believe God is love yet will torture people who don't love Him for all eternity? So what do people do? "I don't think about that. I just take that on faith" which means they dethrone reason.
- What about any hell in which God uses His power to inflict death in order to punish sin? Would that also dethrone human reason?
 - **Satan is the author of death.** What did Christ do after He brought Satan under the dominion of death? The very last words of Christ while expiring on the cross were "It is finished" (John 19:30). The devil saw that he had overdone himself. Christ by dying accomplished the death of Satan and brought immortality to light. {CTr 287.3}
 - Who do you believe is the source of death—God or Satan?
 - Then if God is the source of life and Satan is the author of death, why do many Christians, including many SDAs teach that God will use His power to execute, i.e. kill, the unrepentant in the end?
 - Why do they teach this? Because they accept the lie about God's law that it is imposed requiring the law giver to impose penalties, but this also dethrones human reason because it has God saying love me or I will kill you.
 - Only when we come back to design law and realize that death is the unavoidable outcome for those who insist on staying out of harmony with God's design for life, do we get it right.
- Immortality of the soul
 - In Eden Satan's first lie to Eve was that she would not die—
 - In 1Tim 6:16 the Bible says God alone is immortal—do we teach in Christianity today that we are immortal?
 - Is this a lie of Satan infecting Christianity?
 - What impact does it have on how we see God?
- God's law functions like human law
 - How many teach that God in order to be just must punish sin?
 - Why? Because they believe God's law is not design law, but like the laws sinners make—Satan's view all along.

Read third paragraph, "Although we may be hesitant..." To what kind of leadership are we to submit?

The problem with the idea of submission is that it is taught through the lens of imposed law, rules



over, enforcement by coercion and threat. This is Satan's government and Christianity is deeply infected with this lie.

We are to be worshippers of the Creator God, who builds reality. His laws are the laws of life, the laws which bring health, peace, and the good of all. We are to submit to goodness, to love, to righteousness, to healing, to restoration, to recreation, to eternal peace—all of which flow from the heart, mind and character of our Creator God of love!

We are to rebel against sin, which is selfishness, which is based upon lies about God, founded in imperial law constructs. We are not to submit to Satan or Satan's view of God.

Read last paragraph, "The church is built upon Christ..." What do you think about the idea that we are not to rely upon another human to dictate what we believe?

Would this include the General Conference (GC)?

Would this then invalidate and negate any type of compliance committee?

Some people at the GC attempt to suggest that when the GC meets in session and votes it is God's highest authority on earth. They do this because of this quote, written in 1875:

I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. **But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but surrendered.** - Testimonies For The Church, Vol. III page 492 (1875) {PC 422.2}

What do you think about this statement? Is it a statement that is written in stone and is true and will always be true and to which we must submit our thinking? Or are we to reason for ourselves and consider whether this was true only at one point in time and then is no longer true?

What I find interesting is that the current GC leaders who want to promote their authority by the pen of Ellen White, insisting that we must all submit to the vote of the GC, refuse to incorporate what she wrote on this very subject in 1896, 1898, and 1901. Consider these statements:

- The voice from Battle Creek [the GC], which has been regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, **is no longer the voice of God.**--17MR 185 (1896). {LDE 50.2}
- **It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God.**--17MR 216 (1898). {LDE 50.3}
- That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, **as we once believed the General Conference to be--that is past.**--GCB April 3, 1901, p. 25. {LDE 50.4}



- **It is working upon wrong principles** that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. **Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not**, because some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer, they are not **men of elevated principle**. [Notice she doesn't say they are not men who follow the rules, but that they don't practice elevated principles. They have embraced the imperial law, rule oriented approach and corrupt the church by using coercive power.] There is not a seeking of God with the whole heart; there is not a realization of the terrible responsibility that rests upon those in this institution **to mold and fashion minds after the divine similitude**.--Manuscript 37, 1901, p. 8 (April, 1901, Talk by Mrs. E. G. White in the Review Chapel regarding the Southern work). {ChL 20.4} [Notice the responsibility is to mold and fashion minds after the divine similitude, NOT rule the institution by enforcing rules. The only way minds can be transformed is through God's methods, truth, love and freedom. Thus the GC, practicing methods of top down authority are not practicing God's principles and are not working to heal hearts and minds and are not to be accepted as the voice of God!]

And what would it indicate if people, who profess to be supporting Christ and profess to love the church, were to implement methods of attempting to exert authority over what others in the church believe and teach?

Would it not indicate they are practicing the enemy's methods, which would be evidence of accepting the lie about God's law?

What happens when we replace God's design law with imposed law? We get a god who punishes and this leads to all kinds of distortions. Like the story Russell emailed me yesterday about the Minnesota State University professor who tweeted that the virgin Mary did not give consent to be impregnated because of the power difference between a created being and God. He cites the history of God punishing disobedience as evidence that she didn't really have a choice. He tweeted:

The biblical god regularly punished disobedience. The power difference (deity vs mortal) and the potential for violence for saying 'no' negates her 'yes.' To put someone in this position is an unethical abuse of power at best and grossly predatory at worst.

If God's law functions like human law and God is the source of inflicted suffering, pain and death, then this professor is right.

The problem, of course, is that the professor is making an argument based on a false reality—the lie that God's law is imposed, and He uses coercive power.

The sad part though is, that almost all of Christianity accepts the lie about God's law and agrees with the professor that the God of the Bible is the source of inflicted punishment for disobedience.



The truth of design law and God's character of love resolves this. If Mary would have said no, the only consequence to Mary would have been not having the blessing of being the mother of Jesus. There would have been no punishment or retaliation from God.

<https://www.campusreform.org/?ID=11607>

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 20:25-28:

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." NIV

Read second paragraph, "In this concise passage..." This is well said—the Roman idea of authority is power over, rules over, enforcement, coercion—it is the power of imperialism and it is not the power of God's kingdom.

Why would Christians then, resort to using this type of power in the church?

Can we get unity in this way?

Will love grow with more rules, more enforcement, more compliance?

How does love grow?

Is there a difference in using power to coerce consciences and establishing organizational policy or structure?

Where is the line drawn?

What about hours of operation, dress, diet rules, marriage, is there a difference between what is endorsed i.e. approved and thereby promoted, and what is allowed/permitted in individuals without organizational retaliation?

When a person attends 12 step meeting and acknowledges they have been using their substance, how are they treated? Does anyone send the message that continuing the addiction is desirable, healthy, acceptable? Is it understood by all parties that the addiction needs to be overcome?

What enables the 12 step groups to continue fellowship without reprisal with people who are still using their substances?



While they allow and encourage fellowship with people not yet in recovery, do they allow those who are known to not be in recovery to lead out, to sponsor others? Why not?

Are there any lessons to apply to the church?

Would making healthy decisions require we actually understand reality, understand design law, be able to recognize spiritual pathology in order to differentiate those who are mature in Christ from those who are still struggling for victory in their lives?

What would be elements that would differentiate the struggling sinner seeking victory in Christ, from a mature Christian who is growing in Christ and ready to be in position of leadership?

What does the writer of Hebrews use to differentiate the mature from the immature? What do the immature focus upon? Rule keeping and ritual, what do the mature focus upon? Reality, the transformation of character and the ability to discern right from wrong.

Should we desire that our leaders to have a mature understanding of God's character and design law? Should we ever hold out as a job requirement that those in leadership understand design law, reject imposed law penal legal views and practice God's methods?

What would an organization look like if run by those who hold to Satan's imposed law method?

What would an organization look like if run by those who hold God's design law method?

What is the difference between being a servant leader and being a doormat?

How do we serve without letting those we serve dictate what we do?

TUESDAY

The title is Preserving Church Unity. What would you say is the key to church unity?

Read 2Timothy 2:15 and Titus 1:9:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Read first paragraph, "Notice how much..." What is the key to unity? What is the sound doctrine or teaching that is the key to unity? Is it a list of fundamental beliefs that one must attest to, and if we all



agree on the right day of worship, the right standard for dress, the right diet, the right amount to give in tithes and offerings, if we can just formulate the right list of things to believe and do, then we will have unity?

This is the lie—this is the thinking one gets when one accepts Satan’s lie about God’s government and laws. When we think through the lens of human imperial law then we think we have to all agree on the right definition and we will get unity—not so, we actually get more fragmentation and division.

What did Jesus say?

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34,35

What about Romans 12:10:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Can we love others and be devoted to each other’s eternal good while disagreeing on what happens to the soul at death, whether the rapture is secret or not, what day to go to church upon, what foods we eat, how we dress etc.?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, “One of the main issues...” do you agree?

Is one of the main issues of church organization, i.e. to organize together is so that we can monitor each other and discipline those who diverge from the organizational standard—particularly in what they think?

Or is the purpose of church organization something entirely different?

- Spread the love and truth of God to heal hearts and minds?
- To oppose evil, i.e. elements that break God’s design and actually cause harm
- To demonstrate by action how God’s methods work, truth, presented in love while leaving others free?
- To minister to each other in love in order to help each member grow, mature and experience victory over fear and selfishness in their lives?
- More like 12 step programs?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “As we have seen throughout...” What is the mission of our church



organization? How would you describe it?

Is our mission to convert people to an organization or to Jesus?

Could a person be a disciple of Jesus and not be a member of a church organization?

Read second paragraph, “Jesus’ great commission...” Do we all agree on what the gospel is, how to baptize and what Jesus said?

What is the gospel that you would want to take to the world?

What does it mean to baptize?

What is the core message of Jesus that we need to teach people?

FRIDAY

read and discuss questions



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

January 4-6, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking for the Florida Conference of SDA Women's Convention in Orlando, FL.

February 2-3, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking Christ's Church of Oronogo, MO.

February 22-March 9, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be in Australia speaking in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Adelaide, Avondale, Sydney, Livingston, Perth, and Melbourne.

April 3-6, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking in Sophia Bulgaria.

Mental Health Matters

Community Gatherings for Help, Hope and Healing

In partnership with Come and Reason Ministries and Hixson United Methodist Church

The God-Shaped Brain Thursday, December 13, 2018

Our brains are in a constant state of flux. Moment by moment new connections are forming, idle tracks are being pruned back and brain circuits are changing. Discover how our beliefs change our brain wiring, our physical health, and even which genes are turned on or turned off. Do your beliefs matter – more than you ever knew!