



2019 Q4 Ezra and Nehemiah: Lesson 3 God's Call

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory verse, “Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:27 NKJV).

Do we take this literally—God put this in his heart, or do we take this as the Bible writer attributing to God whatever happens good or bad?

If we believe God put it in the king’s heart, do we believe it in a general sense, in other words, God influencing people to do good in general and providing good motives of love in general, or do we believe God put this specific desire in the king’s heart?

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; Gen 3:15 NIV84

What does this mean enmity between the woman and the serpent?

Here is one Bible commentator’s view, do you agree?

The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." **The enmity does not exist as a natural fact.** As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and if God had not interfered in man's behalf, **Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven**, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. **There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men;** both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship. {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5}

So, do we see God putting this good thing in the king’s heart as a general interference on behalf of all humanity—or do we see God doing more than that, going beyond the desire for good in all hearts and specifically inspiring the king to bless Israel?

What evidence do we turn have that would support that God put this in the king’s heart?

In Daniel chapter 10 Daniel prays and 21 days later Gabriel comes to him with a message, starting in verse 12 Gabriel says:

Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the



Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

Then later Gabriel tells him the prince of Greece was coming to fight against them.

What is going on?

It is coming to the end of the 70-year captivity prophesied for Israel's. Daniel has been praying for the fulfillment of the promise and the release of Israel. Gabriel comes to influence the king with truth and love from the heavenly courts—but the prince of Persia and Greece oppose him.

Who are these princes? Jesus refers to Satan as the prince of this world John 12:31—so if Satan is the prince of this world, who would the regional princes be? Some of the fallen angel leaders in Satan's host.

In verse 21 Gabriel tells Daniel that there is none to help him fight against these princes of Satan except Michael.

Now the Bible says only 1/3 of the angels fell out of heaven. How is it that if the good angels have twice as many angels as the evil host do, that there are no other angels available to help Gabriel except Michael?

It all goes to your understanding of what is transpiring—what kind of warfare is going on here?

Satan is the father of lies—we war against lies and selfishness with truth and love.

Gabriel is now the angel who stands closest to the throne of God. No other angel in heaven has more knowledge of God, God's methods, character, the truths of heaven than Gabriel. Thus, there is no other angel that can bring greater amount of love and truth to bear than Gabriel.

One mightier than Gabriel is needed. One who is able to enter into infinity, one who is equal with God and in fact, is God and has life original, unborrowed, underived. Jesus is needed, and Jesus in His pre-incarnate form was Michael—Jesus was NOT an angel. Jesus did manifest in the form of an angel when Jesus left infinity to interact with His created beings prior to His incarnation. Now He has taken humanity upon Himself and lives in a human body. See Exodus 3, the angel of the Lord speaks to Moses from the bush—but it is God. Jesus said His voice raises the dead (John 5:25), Paul says it is the voice of the archangel (1Thes 4:16), and it was Michael who raised Moses according to Jude (vs 9).

So, this is why Michael was the only one available to help Gabriel because no created being could bring more truth and love to bear than Gabriel.

Did God force the king to do what He wanted Him to do? Or did God foreknow that with the influence of truth and love that the king would freely choose to restore Israel?



SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “We could say...” Then read Ezra 7:10:

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. (NIV84)

Was Ezra chosen of God? For what was Ezra chosen? Why was Ezra chosen?

Did Ezra need to possess certain qualities, abilities, attitudes, dispositions, skills, in order to be suitable for the calling the Lord chose him for?

Was Ezra free to refuse the calling?

What about Jonah—was Jonah called for the same reasons (not purpose, reasons, i.e. his qualities, abilities, attitudes, disposition, skills that were best suited for the mission that Jonah was called)?

Was Jonah free to refuse the calling?

Does God have foreknowledge? Yes, so was it a surprise to God that Jonah ran like he did?

Then, could God have called Jonah to go to Nineveh because of Jonah’s attitude and knowing Jonah would initially resist, but would ultimately choose to go? And in the resistance Jonah would allow God to enhance the impact of Jonah’s message—how? The Ninevites worshipped Dagon, the fish god, so might Jonah, having arrived delivered by a fish, to those who worship the fish-god, be taken more seriously?

So, when God calls a person for a task, a duty, a mission—that means they have the qualities that God desires for His agent to have and if they don’t possess the specific skills necessary the God will gift skills needed to complete the task.

Is there a difference between qualities of character and gifts or skills?

Is there a difference between fruits of the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit?

Can God give people new character without their participation, their choosing? Can God give people abilities or skills without their choosing?

Examples of God gifting skills for tasks:

- Bezalel, Oholiab—skilled with ability to build sanctuary
- Gift of languages to NT church
- Gifts of the Spirit



- Solomon's wisdom
- Samson's strength

When God provides gifts, does God control the use of those gifts?

Can a person use a gift from God for purposes that are not in harmony with God's purposes, plans, or designs?

What does this mean? What does it reveal?

That we are not robots, that even when God give supernatural gifts, skills, abilities, we retain our freedom—why? Because God is love and God operates upon design law and God will not violate His design for life—for His design is perfect and there is no improving upon perfection.

Love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom and God wants our love, trust, loyalty and devotion. This can only be achieved if we are free.

Thus God controls what God controls and God controls Himself and the laws upon which reality operates—one of those laws being the law of liberty. This is why the problem of evil is taking so long to resolve—because God cannot win this war with Satan by might and power—"not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord."

God in eliminating sin is doing it while sustaining His government, His design laws, His methods. Satan wants to make things so bad that God will eventually step in and use Satan's methods, so that Satan can then claim he was right about God all along.

Sadly, many Christians teach that God does use Satan's methods—and many of those will be deceived when Satan impersonates Christ.

It says Ezra was one who devoted himself to studying and applying God's law. What do you think this means?

Do you think it means he was serious about wanting to understand God, God's methods, designs, purposes and principles? Or, do you think it means he only wanted to memorize a rulebook—to be the best umpire for the Israel's societal "baseball league"—to know a list of rules to follow?

I am frequently asked when I describe design law versus imposed law: Did the people in Old Testament times know about design law?

When God spoke to Adam and Eve and said, "you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Gen 2:17 NIV84) what law is being described?

Does God say He will kill them, or that they will die—what kind of law would cause someone to die as a result of the act?



When David wrote the Psalms about meditating upon God’s law what was David writing about?

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. (Ps 19:7–8 NIV84).

What do you hear in this Psalm? Is David describing rules or a law upon which life is built? A law which has inherent consequence?

What about what Jeremiah wrote—what kind of law is referred to here:

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “**This is the covenant** I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. (Je 31:31–34 NIV84).

- What kind of law can be written into the heart?
- What is the heart? The character, the deep identity and wellsprings of motive, value, methods and affections.
- Is the heart part of a living being?
- Is God’s law living principles or dead rules?
- Does the law of love operate on stone, on parchment, or is the law of love a living principle upon which life is based?
- Does lifeless rock love? It doesn’t give or receive
- This is the law given at Sinai and this is the old covenant a list of rules, a diagnostic code, a tool to expose the actual sick condition of hearts to lead people to the New Covenant—which is restoring the living law of love into the living being.

Was the knowledge of design law in the Old Testament—yes!

MONDAY/TUESDAY

70 weeks and the 2300 Day Prophecies

Why does the prophecy of Daniel come up when studying the book of Ezra?



Because Daniel 9:24,25 reads:

“Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. **Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince**, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time. (NRSV)

So, Daniel tells us this time prophecy begins with the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and we have that decree recorded in Ezra.

But Ezra records three decrees:

- the first in the first year of Cyrus, about 537 b.c. (Ezra 1:1–4)
- the second in the reign of Darius I, soon after 520 b.c. (Ezra 6:1–12)
- the third in the 7th year of Artaxerxes, 458/457 b.c. (Ezra 7:1–26)

Which one would we pick of these three to start our time prophecy and why?

The angel said to Daniel to start the time with the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem—the first two decrees gave authority to rebuild, but the third also restored the civil government of Israel from Jerusalem—the first two did not. So it would be Artaxerxes decree that fulfills the prophecy of Daniel.

And in Bible prophecy a day symbolizes a year:

- “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, [even] forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, [even] forty years” Numbers 14:34
- “I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Ezekiel 4:6.

So we start our calculations at 457 b.c. and the first segment is 69 weeks, or 483 years which takes us to 27 AD, and the 70 weeks ends in 34 AD.

In the middle of the last week, or 7-year period, between 27 AD and 34 AD, an end to the sacrificial system occurs.

So, the prophecy tells Daniel that in 483 years from Artaxerxes decree the Messiah will be anointed to bring an end to transgression, and in the middle of that last 7-year period of the 70 weeks, He will bring an end to the sacrificial system by fulfilling what it was pointing toward. He will become the Remedy to our sinful condition.

But this 70-week period is cut off from a larger time prophecy, which is the 2300-year prophecy already mentioned in Daniel 8:14. Thus, the 457 year is also the starting point for the 2300-year prophecy, which ends in 1844.

Daniel 8:14 prophesies that it will be 2300 years until the sanctuary is cleansed.



What is this referring to? What is happening? What is God telling Daniel about?

William Miller, a Baptist preacher, believed the sanctuary here referred to the earth and the cleansing would result in the second coming of Christ. He began to preach this and a huge revival occurred, resulting in the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844.

In the aftermath of the disappointment sincere followers of Christ reexamined Scripture and found that the Bible does not refer to the earth as the sanctuary and found that the Bible refers to a heavenly sanctuary and this led to the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment.

But, as with every Christian doctrine, it can be taught through the lens of human imposed law or God's design law.

Through the lens of human law this is what is taught:

- sin is a legal problem—breaking God's law
- breaking God's law requires God to inflict just punishments
- God sent Jesus to be our substitute, placed all sins of all time on Him and God punished and executed Jesus in our place
- Jesus in heaven now acts as our High Priest, or legal defense attorney in the heavenly courts pleading our case by presenting His merits (blood) to the heavenly judge.
- We must confess our sins and claim the legal payment of Jesus to our account and in heaven Jesus goes through the legal records and erases from the records the historical deeds
- We are legally accounted to be righteous, even though we are not righteous
- If we forget a sin, or don't ask it to be forgiven or removed, God is required by justice to exclude us from heaven, inflict suffering and kill us which God will do for all those who don't get Jesus' legal payment made to their heavenly account and their sins erased from the books

Does any of this sound wrong to you? Because it is wrong—it is all twisted to represent God through Satan's lies about God that God's law functions like human law and God is the source of inflicted pain and death, and God needs something done to Him in order to not kill us.

When Adam and Eve sinned—did God get changed? Did God's law get changed? Did the condition of humanity get changed? Then where must the work of God take place if human beings are going to be saved? Does God need changing, does God's law need changing, does the condition of human beings need changing?

What kind of war is being waged between Christ and Satan?

- Rev 12 war in heaven—the word war is polemo from which we get polemic, which is a war of word, ideas, beliefs.
- Satan is the father of lies—lies believed break the circle of love and trust.
- Satan lies about God, undermining trust in God and inciting rebellion and infecting hearts with fear and selfishness
- Jesus said the truth will set you free—truth destroys lies and wins to trust



So what kind of war? Thus Paul says:

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. (2Cor 10:3-5 NIV84)

What kind of war? Where is it being fought?

Consider Daniel 7:21,22:

As I watched, this horn was **waging war** against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and **pronounced judgment** in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. (NIV84)

Do you hear the imperial law view in the translation? The phrase “pronounced judgment makes it sound like a judicial magistrate hears testimony and then pronounces a ruling.

But, what is described in the text, the little horn power waging war against the saints and defeating them—what kind of war? A war of ideas, a war of lies and false beliefs about God. What is it the saints need in order for their minds to be freed—a ruling by a judge or the ability to discern and make a judgment to see through the lies and comprehend the truth?

So, notice the same passage from the KJV:

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. Daniel 7:22

The Hebrew word translated “pronounced” actually means “to give” or “to impart” and therefore the KJV is more accurate in this context. Why do the saints of God need judgment (another word for discernment) imparted to them? The Daniel text tells us the horn warred against the saints and was defeating them.

What kind of warfare was going on?

A war of ideas—and where is the battleground? Our hearts and minds—and what is another Bible description of our hearts and minds? The Spirit Temple—or the sanctuary. So, could this be suggesting that after Christ’s successful mission to earth that Satan counter-attacks and defiles the Spirit Temple and that the Spirit Temple needs to be cleansed?

Consider Paul’s words and the connection to the cleansing of the Temple; do you see the connection to our minds:



Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 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 is Paul referring to here?

Paul is describing the exact same events as Daniel 7 in which evil powers war against the saints and oppose God. In the aftermath of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, did this man of lawlessness ride into heaven overthrow God, set himself up in God's temple in heaven, and proclaim himself to be God? No, where did this happen? In the Spirit Temple! In our minds!

And how did Satan get himself set up as God in the minds, beliefs, of people around the world?

By getting them to reject design law and accept the lie that God's law is imposed rules, which is the type of laws that created beings make. Thus, God is worshipped as a dictator rather than the Creator.

The cleansing of the sanctuary, which was to begin in 1844, includes freeing the minds of people from lies about God, particularly God as dictator thus:

Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of **his** judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." Rev 14:7 NIV84

The time has come in human history for people to be giving judgment, discernment, to make a right judgment about God and to reject the imperial Satanic view of God and worship Him who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water!

Therefore, the cleansing of the temple, as described in the Bible, is the cleansing of our minds from the lies about God, which wins us back to trust and results in our cleansing from sin.

All of this is confirmed for us by the other text describing the same event as Daniel 8:14, Malachi 3:1-3:

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.**



The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25. {GC 426.1}

What is getting cleansed? The Levites. And who are the Levites? The Priesthood of believers (1Pet 2:5,9).

God is cleansing His people from what? 1) the lies about Him which keep us from trusting Him and 2) when we are won back to trust, He cleanses us from sin. God writes His law of love into our hearts. He restores His character of righteousness in us. This is one part of what is happening during the Investigative Judgment.

But what about the records in heaven? Well, what do we believe is recorded in the records that are being cleansed?

Remember, **your character is being daguerreotyped [photographed] by the great Master Artist in the record books of heaven**, as minutely as the face is reproduced upon the polished plate of the artist. What do the books of heaven say in your case? Are you conforming your character to the Pattern, Jesus Christ? Are you washing your robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb? "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" [Revelation 22:12]. . . . {TSB 62.1}

What is recorded in the heavenly records? Our characters—individualities, the Bible says “names” well in the Bible the name is symbolic for what? Character—so our unique personhoods, our characters are being recorded there.

So, what would it mean to cleanse the records in heaven? What needs cleansing—history or hearts and minds of people?

So, what would need cleansing?

In 1844, Christ began the final cleansing of the data sets of all who died trusting Him and removing from them any residual defects that they had not yet fully overcome prior to death, so that when they arise at the resurrection of the righteous they arise with perfect, sinless, purified hearts. The thief on the cross does not arise with a heart of a thief. Martin Luther doesn't arise with hatred of the Jews. These defects are removed from the “records”—their individualities—which are written or stored in the Lamb's book of life.



WEDNESDAY

God's election—the lesson does a very good job of describing the difference of God electing or choosing all humanity for salvation and choosing specific individuals for tasks or missions.

Read last paragraph, “In Romans 9...” Many people get confused on this point when they read about God's predetermination or election of people and they confuse mission/tasks with salvation.

God chose to provide salvation to the species human, it is available to all human beings; however God does select some individuals for specific missions that He doesn't choose others for.

How do we understand passages like God hardened Pharaoh's heart? Does it mean God was the causal agent, it was God's decision or choice for Pharaoh's heart to harden?

No—God controls what God controls and God controls Himself and His laws. One of those the law of liberty another the law of truth—God presented truth to Pharaoh and Pharaoh had to decide his own response to the truth—if Pharaoh accepts it and applies it Pharaoh is transformed, but if Pharaoh rejects it he is hardened. Thus the Bible is right that God hardened Pharaoh's heart by presented the truth AND sustaining His laws of truth and liberty—but Pharaoh hardened his own heart by refusing the truth.

God will not change His laws to meet sinners in sin, thus He sent Jesus to transform humanity from sinfulness back to righteousness—harmony with His law!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “If we are called by God...” Has God called very human being in history to be saved? Will every person be saved? Why not?

Because of God's design laws—love requires freedom—God's power cannot force trust, loyalty, devotion, love—it can only be won and must be freely given. And some will actually prefer death to living in God's presence.

Can God force, with greater displays of might and power, love and trust?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Multi-Languages: Check out our multi-language section, it is growing every month.

PODCAST: Come and Reason with Dr. Tim Jennings weekly Podcast is now broadcasting, please follow us.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!! January 17-19, 2020, in Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport) we will have a Come and Reason Ministries: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly.

The Remedy Psalms is complete and online and will soon be updated to the free app.

October 9-12, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville. Come and Reason Ministries will have a booth in the exhibit hall sharing our material with the attendees.

November 15-17, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Norwegian SDA Health Worker's Retreat in Oslo, Norway.

November 24, 2019: Dr. Jennings will be speaking in Aachen Germany.

January 17-19, 2020: The Power of Love Training and Equipping Course. If you would like to be prepared to more effectively share this message then come to this course. More details will be forthcoming shortly. Allen Texas (30 miles north of DFW airport). See events.comeandreason.com for more details and to sign up.