



## 2019 Q4 Ezra and Nehemiah: Lesson 7 Our Forgiving God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

### SABBATH

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The title of the lesson is: Our Forgiving God...

What is forgiveness—how would you define it?

Is God ever unforgiving?

Are we saved by forgiveness?

Can anyone be saved without forgiveness?

Did God forgive before or after Jesus died for us?

Was Jesus' death necessary for God to forgive us?

Is there a difference between God forgiving and our being forgiven?

What is the difference?

Consider those who crucified Christ—did Jesus forgive them? Were they forgiven or did they remain unforgiven despite being forgiven by Jesus?

What law lens are you thinking through?

If the law lens is like human law, then if a judge pardons the accused is no longer under the legal condemnation of the law, the state has no authority to punish they are forgiven and free.

But, if the law is design law is something required beyond being forgiven by the Creator of the universe?

If your child disobeys your rules and plays in the street and gets hit by a car, or drinks some toxin you said not to touch—and they are on the ground injured and dying—will you forgive them? Will your forgiveness save them? Is something more needed?

Does the sinner, in addition to being forgiven by God, also need to be healed, transformed, renewed, recreated, reborn, set-right (which means justified) in heart?



So would this mean the sinner not only needs to be forgiven by God but they need to open their hearts and experience that forgiveness which leads them to repentance and surrender to God for healing and regeneration in righteousness?

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** (1John 1:9 NIV84)

Consider this historic quote

But **forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose.** When God gives the promise that He “will abundantly pardon,” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:7-9. **[What might this be referring to? What are our ways? What methods or laws do we use? But God is Creator, His laws are not imposed rules require legal enforcement like ours. So what might follow in this quote?]** **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.** David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “**Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.**” Psalm 51:10. And again he says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:12. EG White *Prayer* 298.1

Bible forgiveness must be understood through the lens of design law—fixing what is actually broken. God’s personal heart-attitude is always forgiving—the sacrifice of Christ was NOT designed to induce forgiveness in God, or to make a legal loophole for God to be able to forgive, but to be the method whereby God’s love and forgiveness could enter back into the heart of human beings to heal and restore.

Consider this next quote and see if you can unpack the theological language for those who would like to use it to say it is not only God’s love and forgiveness but a legal payment was also necessary and legal accounting is required:

**The atonement of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom he otherwise hated; it was not made to produce a love that was not in existence;** but it was made as a manifestation of the **love that was already in God's heart,** an exponent of the divine favor in the sight of heavenly intelligences, in the sight of worlds unfallen, and in the sight of a fallen race. “**For God so loved the world,** that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” **We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us, but that he so loved us that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us. The death of Christ was expedient in order that mercy might reach us with its full pardoning power,** and at the same time that **justice might be satisfied in the righteous substitute.** The glory of God was revealed in the rich mercy that he poured out upon a race of rebels, who through repentance and faith might be pardoned through the **merits of Christ, for God will by no means clear the guilty who refuse to acknowledge**



**the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour.** It is only through faith in Christ that sinners may have the righteousness of **Christ imputed unto them**, and that they may be “made the righteousness of God in him.” **Our sins were laid on Christ, punished in Christ, put away by Christ, in order that his righteousness might be imputed to us, who walk not after the flesh,** but after the Spirit. Although sin was charged to his account on our behalf, yet he remained perfectly sinless. ST May 30, 1895, par. 6

What do you hear? Do you think through human law or design law?

Quote like this one are constantly used by those who are still struggling under Satan’s lie that God’s law functions like human law, just a system of rules that require infliction of punishment by the ruling authority. But, let’s think through design law for a minute and see the truth of what is actually happening.

- Is there a punishment for sin? –yes
- What is that punishment? –pain, guilt, shame, heartache, separation from God and ultimately death
- From where does that punishment come?
  - The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)
  - Sin when full grown brings forth death (James 1:5)
  - Those who sow to the carnal nature **from that nature reap destruction** (Gal 6:8)
- What is the power to inflict that punishment?
  - the power of sin is the law (1Corinthians 15:56, NIV84)
  - What does this mean? Where does the power to kill someone that jumps off the empire state building come from?
  - Where does the power to ruin health and ultimately kill someone who smokes come from?
  - Where does the power to kill someone who jumps in the ocean with weights tied to their feet come from?
  - **How is God reconciled to man?—By the work and merit of Jesus Christ, who ...** put aside everything that would interpose between man and **God's pardoning love. The law that man has transgressed is not changed to meet the sinner in his fallen condition, [Why? Because it is the law of life, the protocols life is constructed to operate upon. The law of respiration cannot be changed to meet the drowning person, the person must be put back in harmony with the law]** but is made manifest as the transcript of Jehovah's character,—the exponent of His holy will,**[Which is what? Love—the laws of God are for our health, happiness, good this is God's will]** —and is exalted and magnified in the life and character of Jesus Christ. Yet a way of salvation is provided; for the spotless Lamb of God is revealed as the One **who taketh away the sin of the world. [Not the punishment, but the sin is taken away]** Jesus stands in the sinner's place, and takes the guilt of the transgressor upon Himself. Looking upon the sinner's Substitute and Surety, the Lord Jehovah can be **just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. [If your child disobeyed and drank poison and was dying,**



what is the just or right action for you as their parent to take? **Inflict punishment for their disobedience, or provide remedy to heal and save?**] SD 239.2

- How were our sins punished in Christ?
  - Those who sow to the carnal nature **from that nature reap destruction** (Gal 6:8)
  - Did Jesus take our nature upon Himself? “God made him who had no sin **to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**” (2Cor 5:21 niv84)
  - Did Jesus suffer in His humanity? From where did the suffering come—from God or from the human nature He assumed and from evil people and angels?
  - Why did God separate from Jesus? (Why did Jesus stay away from Lazarus until after Lazarus died?)
  - Could Jesus die still connected to His Father?
  - Could Jesus fix the sin problem, purge the infection of fear and selfishness, fully restore God’s design of love into the humanity He assumed without dying? So, was God’s withdrawal, God’s hiding of Himself, God’s “forsaking” of Jesus, an expression of God being upset with Jesus, God being mad with Jesus, or was it God cooperating with Jesus as they worked together to accomplish their joint mission of saving humanity?
  - Jesus took upon Himself our terminal condition—was tempted in every way just like we are (Heb 2:14) but without sin. Thus, He “destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light (2Tim 1:10) by developing a perfect sinless human character and destroying the infection of fear and selfishness.
  - Thus, once made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him (Heb 5:8)
    - Wasn’t He always perfect—no, he was always sinless
    - Bible perfection is perfect mature character
    - Character cannot be created it must be developed
    - Christ came as the second Adam and as a human developed a perfect sinless human character—the cure and remedy freely given to all who trust God
- So there is a punishment—and it is separation from God resulting in ruin and death—did Christ experience this? Yes, but because Christ, as a human lived a sinless life Christ’s separation from the Father was the means of curing the condition. Whereas, the wicked in the end who reject Christ when they are separated completely from God die of their terminal sin-condition.
- What are the merits of Christ? The perfect human character He developed as a human being on earth.
- Why will God not clear the guilty? It would be like saying “The doctor will by no means say the sick are healthy...They either accept the remedy and are actually cured back to health, or they reject the remedy and remain terminal. But the physician will not clear the terminal, the infected, the sick declaring them to be healthy when they are not.

What about the “imputed” righteousness of Christ? Many still struggling under the false human legal model view imputed as something legally assigned but not actually experience. In other words, imputed righteousness is said to be what we are legally accounted with in the books of heaven, but imparted righteousness is what we experience within us that transforms and heals us.

What do you say to that?



Consider these quotes from the same author above:

He [the Father] would have us comprehend something of His love in giving His Son to die that He might counteract evil, **remove the defiling stains of sin from the workmanship of God, and reinstate the lost, elevating and ennobling the soul to its original purity through Christ's imputed righteousness.** TMK 206

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ. When we take Him as our personal Saviour, this gives us boldness to approach the throne of grace. **By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him.** The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being. {AG 96.4}

Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. . . . In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. **Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just.** He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. {AG 181.4}

We aim too low. The mark is much higher. Our minds need expansion, that we may comprehend the significance of the provision of God. We are to reflect the highest attributes of the character of God. . . . **The law of God is the exalted standard to which we are to attain through the imputed righteousness of Christ.** {OHC 364.2}

Do you notice if we understand design law and we read widely—that reality becomes clear and Satan's legal lie is exposed and we see that God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself and that Christ achieved the cure, the remedy, and provides it freely to us—as something we actually experience when we trust Him and open our hearts to Him. This is not legal accounting in a book declaring something to be one way when it is actually another way; No! It is the actual healing, restoring, regenerating, recreating us back to God's perfect sinless ideal—writing His law in our hearts and minds!

Do we have a forgiving God—Absolutely!!! But we have a God who does so much more than have a forgiving attitude—He provides the remedy to heal and restore us to righteousness.

But have you heard the idea, popular in some circles, that forgiveness costs the person who forgives? That God had to pay a price to forgive us? That while His forgiveness is free to us, it was not free to God?



This idea is also a distortion of reality based on accepting the imposed law lie. If God's law functions like human law, then sin requires a punishment be inflicted in order for justice to occur and God could not be just without inflicting the punishment; therefore, God in order to forgive had to provide an innocent and punish Him and thus God's forgiveness cost Him the life of His Son.

No—this is not true. God's forgiveness was free—but His personal forgiveness, did not provide the remedy to our condition. It wasn't God's forgiveness that cost God—it was because "God so loved the world" and God forgave the world and chose to save the world that His chose to fix the damage, solve the problem, heal the condition that sin caused and **providing the remedy** to sin cost God a price we can never fully comprehend.

In order to resolve the sin problem God had to not only be forgiving—which He was—but also had to provide the solution, the cure and the cure has two elements: truth and a perfect character of love.

Jesus came as a human to reveal the truth in order to destroy lies and win us to trust and also to develop a perfect human character built upon God's design law of love. This cost Jesus because there was no way to do this other than be tempted in all ways like we are yet choose to love perfectly—thereby revealing the truth of God's character, exposing Satan as a murderer and fraud, and curing the condition.

## SUNDAY

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Nehemiah 9:1-3 describes how the Israelites humbled themselves and repented with sackcloth and ashes and separated themselves from all foreigners...why? What is going on? What is the purpose? What is the object lesson that applies to us?

We are to humble ourselves and confess our sinfulness for healing and to separate ourselves from all attachments to sin, selfishness and people who are foreign to God's kingdom.

Does this mean we don't minister to people to try and bring them into God's kingdom? No, it means we don't bond with them and make them part of the "tribe" the "family" the trusted ones. We don't allow those who are not reborn to be on God's team—but we continue to recruit them seeking to bring them into a trust relationship with God to be renewed in heart and thereby join God's team.

Why did God have them build a wall?

Was it cruel and uncaring for them to build a wall? Weren't there people outside the wall who could have benefited from being within the city gates? Was it a lack of human compassion, a violation of human rights to build a wall?

What was the purpose of the wall? Was it to allow God's agents to organize, reconstitute as an effective team, gather resources, produce disciples, grow in godliness, become a bastion of godly success—in order to minister to those not of Israel God's blessings and thus help people?





Would as many people be helped by Israel if they didn't build a wall? Why not? Is there a lesson for us in this today?

First rule of care-giving is the health of the care-giver.

- If a farmer refuses to eat any food so he can donate all the food from his farm to the hungry—how many does he feed?
- If the doctors at Pearl Harbor donated their blood to save some of the dying soldiers, each doctor giving 3-4 pints of their blood to save a hemorrhaging soldier—what would have happened? Would more or less be saved? Were the doctors selfish for refusing to donate their own blood on that day?
- What of a nation that establishes border walls today—could this be done out of selfishness, because the people or leadership of that nation don't care about suffering people who are not of their nation? But could it also be done by caring people who realize they have a responsibility to help the less fortunate in the world and want to establish a sustainable health of the nation in order to help as many people as possible?
- When God had Israel build a wall was God doing this so Israel could hide behind the wall and ignore all the other people in the world, or in order to rebuild His team to go out into the world and evangelize and thus bless the world?

And, during Nehemiah's time could people who were not of genetic descent of Abraham become part of Israel or were they forbidden?

What was required to become part of Israel? They had to assimilate.

So, was God saying they should keep out all foreigners or keep out only those who refused to become part of Israel? Why?

Was Israel called into existence by God to be a model for how earthly governments should be run? Or was Israel called into existence to be an avenue for Messiah and conduits of God's saving truth, principles and methods taught and acted out in illustration?

Do we err by taking the lessons God intends for our spiritual renewal and try to apply them to human governments?

In other words, can the Christian achieve God's goals by trying to merge the church and state in order to reform the state to apply God's methods?

What do you think of this commentator's thoughts on the subject, from the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*:

When men indulge this accusing spirit, they are not satisfied with pointing out what they suppose to be a defect in their brother. If milder means fail of making him do what they think ought to be done, **they will resort to compulsion.** Just as far as lies in their power they will force men to



comply with their ideas of what is right. This is what the Jews did in the days of Christ and **what the church has done ever since whenever she has lost the grace of Christ. Finding herself destitute of the power of love, she has reached out for the strong arm of the state to enforce her dogmas and execute her decrees. Here is the secret of all religious laws that have ever been enacted, and the secret of all persecution** from the days of Abel to our own time. MB 126.2

**Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him.** The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. **When the church begins to seek for the support of secular power, it is evident that she is devoid of the power of Christ—the constraint of divine love.** MB 127.1

## MONDAY

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Read second paragraph, “In the first part...” What do we mean when we refer to the “name” of God?

Do we mean certain syllables, or do we mean attributes—character?

What if we take the name Christian but don’t reveal Christ in how we treat others?

What if we take the name Christian but want to take control of governments in order to pass our laws to compel others to live by our religious beliefs?

Did Christ give us freedom to reject Him? Should we leave people free in society to reject our religious views?

Does that mean we don’t have any laws in our society—we just leave everyone free to do whatever they want? No! God has ordained that earthly governments establish order over the selfish, to provide structure, to prevent rampant chaos and anarchy, and to allow the gospel message to go forward to change hearts. But, we must remember all human governments run on imposed law and do NOT represent heaven or function the way God’s kingdom does. God’s kingdom “is within you” in other words human governments use compulsion to control behavior with external force. God’s kingdom is truth and love and works to transform you from within so you live in harmony with God and His design laws for life. When this happens, no external monitoring or force is needed.

Why is it so important to know the truth about God’s character? What law is involved—the law of worship—by beholding we are changed.

Read bottom pink section—“Why is the doctrine...” Why is it important to remember God as Creator? What kind of law does a Creator use to build reality?

First—because we remember God’s laws are design laws, not imposed rules and are the protocols our life and health are built upon. Only harmony with them brings health and happiness, breaking them is damaging.





Second—the Sabbath—what is its purpose? It is a gift to humanity; the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath—to assist us in holiness—how?

By helping us to remember the truth about God’s character of love and His design laws—so that we choose to honor God by remembering all week what the Sabbath represents and then practicing our trust in Him and His methods by not seeking to advance ourselves every seventh day. In other words, we choose to resist the selfish drive and practice love for God and others, trusting God with our lives.

## **TUESDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “The prayer transitions...” Why is it good to remember history?

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, 196

Is recounting the failings of the past the same as being responsible for the failings of previous generations?

Are we responsible for the sins of past generations? Are we to make amends for past generations, bear the guilt, and required to repent for previous generations?

The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. (Ezekiel 18:20 NIV84)

What about movements that try to make people pay for the crimes of their ancestors—is this Godly or not?

Read third paragraph, “Of course, here is where the gospel...” How do you understand this—through what law lens?

What is the punishment for sin—from where does it come? How is it possible to remit the punishment? By healing the disease, how is this done? By trust we receive the indwelling Spirit and Christ’s perfection is reproduced in us.

## **WEDNESDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “The next section...” What is the object lesson for us?

They entered Canaan and possessed a land ready to be possessed...



“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:1-3 NIV84)

When we enter heaven, Jesus has already prepared a place for us!

Fat is a metaphor or symbol of selfishness—this is why in the sacrificial system the fat from the internal organs was removed and burned. It symbolized the victory of Christ destroying the internal carnal drive of fear and selfishness and why in the Bible the burning of the fat is described as sweet aroma to the Lord. Why? Because of the reality to which it points; it is sweet to the Lord to destroy fear and selfishness and restore trust and love, and this was symbolized by the burning of the fat—the fat of fear and selfishness is burned out by the fire of the Spirit of truth and love.

Read second paragraph, “The people might...” Review from last week:

- From where does happiness come? From healthiness in all domains
- And from where does healthiness come? From living in harmony with God’s design laws
- And from where does the ability to live in harmony with God’s design laws come? From Jesus’ victory and the work of the Holy Spirit
- And what is the Bible term for being restored to perfect godly healthiness, for living in harmony with God’s design laws? Holiness!

## THURSDAY

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Read first paragraph, “Once again...” What is the covenant?

Is the covenant with Israel different from the covenant with all of humanity or is it the fulfillment of the covenant to all humanity?

The bottom of the lesson asks us to read Romans 5:6-8 and asks “How do these texts reflect what the Israelites were asking of God?”

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NIV84)

## FRIDAY

read and discuss questions



## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Questions:** If you have questions please email them either at [requests@comeandreason.com](mailto:requests@comeandreason.com) or [topics@comeandreason.com](mailto:topics@comeandreason.com). If you post on Facebook it is likely they will not be answered as I often miss questions posted on Facebook.

**The New Paradigm about the Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment Has been Changed:** Thanks to your feedback I have rewritten portions of this document making it friendlier and less likely to cause offense. The new title is *The Heavenly Sanctuary and Investigative Judgment for the Modern World*. It has a new cover, new introduction, the call to action section has been removed and other edits to clarify potential misunderstandings have been made throughout. It is already up on our website and print versions will be available November 14. **Please throw away any of the first edition you may still have in your possession and use this version going forward.**

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

**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](http://events.comeandreason.com) for more details and to sign up.

**March 27,28, 2020:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACCC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>

**April 17,18, 2020:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH.