



## 2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 3 When Your World Is Falling Apart

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

### SABBATH

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What do you think of the title? In what ways can someone's world fall apart?

Could it be the loss of various resources and supports that a person depends upon to provide for their safety, sustenance and nurturance?

Could the description of one's world falling apart be used by those:

- Whose community is destroyed by natural disaster?
- Who have lost people of importance?
- Who have lost their financial support and are homeless?
- Who have had the infrastructure of their country destabilized?
- Who are living in a war zone?
- Who have been kidnapped?
- Who have been falsely imprisoned?
- Who lose their health or abilities?

While most of us have faced loss of loved ones, and some of us have experienced loss of resources such as a home destroyed by fire, or job loss or bankruptcy, most of us have still had other supports (people who care) to assist us in times of stress or difficulty and very few have experienced multiple such events at the same time.

Consider Job, I can't imagine what it would be like to simultaneously lose one's financial support (not just excess wealth, but all the resources to live on), have all 10 children die, have multiple employees/servants that he knew for years killed, and lose his health and suffer in terrible pain. Then to have those who would be supportive verbally turn on him and accuse him of being a sinner and bringing this on himself and his wife telling him to just give up and die for God had forsaken him. Do you think Job's world fell apart?

Why do you think Job didn't lose it? What enabled Job to hold himself together and not become suicidal, or despondent, or hopeless in the face of his world falling apart?

Because he had one support, one connection, one lifeline that remained and that was his connection, knowledge, trust and love for God.

- Did Job know why the tragedies were happening to him?
  - But did he know God?
- Did Job deserve what was happening to him?



Suffering and pain in this world sometimes happens because of:

- Our sinful choices—i.e. gambling and having financial problems, or doing drugs and having health problems
- Our misunderstanding or ignorance—eating unhealthy foods and having health problems
- Accidents, like motor vehicle accidents
- God disciplining us because we need it

Were any of these the reason Job was suffering? No!

In Job's case it was because of evil forces, both human and demonic—this is why Job suffered.

But why would God allow this to happen? If God is all powerful, if Job is obedient to God, living in harmony with God's plan, purposes, design laws, why would God not protect him?

- First, how does love function? Can love exist without freedom? Would you protect your children from their own selves by injecting them with nanochips and programming them to do as you want? Why not? All of humans the righteous and wicked are God's children. And God loves all of them. He won't make them robots.
- What would it say about God if He were to use such methods? Would the mistrust of God be eliminated in the minds of the onlooking universe if God did use methods that violated freedom?
- But, is there another reason—a reason beyond just the innocent sufferer like Job, and beyond the onlooking universe?
  - Are we in a war zone? And what type of war? A war for hearts and minds over love and trust versus fear and selfishness. How does love and trust win?
  - Can love and trust win by threats, by intimidation, by force, by violence?
  - Does God love every person on earth? Does God want to reach all people?
  - Will He need people to reveal His character of love to those who don't know His character? Is that revelation only didactic? Or, is that revelation to be lived out?
  - Do we see a lesson in the story of Saul of Tarsus and Stephen? Was Stephen's stoning because Stephen deserved it? Did God reach Saul through the witness of Stephen?
  - Are there stories of others being reached for God's kingdom through the witness of martyrs?

Is there a lesson here for us?

I want to suggest that God is waiting for a people, the sealed of God, who are so settled into the truth about Him that they cannot be moved. He is waiting for a people who will love their enemies, pray for those who spitefully use them, who will turn the other cheek, who will defeat the methods of Satan with the methods of God, who will defeat:

- lies with truth
- selfishness with love
- injustice with forgiveness



- violence with gentleness and peace
- cruelty with kindness

people who will:

- turn to God and not the state for deliverance
- trust God and not themselves
- align with the kingdom of God and not the kingdoms of this world
- use the methods of God and not the methods of this world

We are in the final days of this world's history. Events are going to progress more rapidly and things are going to get worse. As people become more frightened, they become more controlling because they want to feel safe. As they get more controlling liberties are undermined—as liberty is taken away love is damaged, individuality is eroded, fear increases, survival drives become stronger, and others, particularly those who don't agree with us, are seen as threats to be avoided or eliminated, love grows cold, society fragments. Someone or some group needs to be blamed and those who trust God and follow Him will be blamed. Even our constitutionally protected freedoms will be taken away.

This past week in Arizona two churches were fined \$10,000 for holding a Christmas Eve service. The governor called such services selfish.

Think about this:

- The US Constitution protects freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. There is nothing in the law that gives the states the right to restrict religious practice in this way. Yet it is happening.
- The Christmas Eve services were not mandatory, no one was pressured or forced to attend. The churches left their members completely free to stay at home if they felt that was best for them, yet the state issued fines and restricts the liberty of those who want to attend.
- Then, the governor calls a service celebrating the birth of Jesus an act of selfishness. Hmm...who calls God selfish?

Some of you may think that this is about COVID—it is not, it is about the great controversy between God and Satan. It is about the erosion of liberty. It is about the forming of the beastly system of Revelation—globalism, a global coalition of forces (governments, religions, corporations) that organize together to advance Satan's kingdom of force and coercion.

If we were to go back in time to the fall of 2019 and I asked you all, what do you think Satan could do to get Americans, including Christians, many SDAs to support governmental shutdown of churches—would you have said, “Christians and certainly, SDA's won't support governmental restriction on religious liberty”? Yet many are supportive of the restrictions imposed by government and fail to see the beastly methods involved.

How do we war against this? By truth, love and freedom. We are to witnesses in word, but also in deed.



- We will not use methods of violence
- We will not use deceit
- We will not use coercion
- We will not be marked in our minds with the beastly methods because we won't accept them and
- We won't be marked in our hands with the beastly methods because we won't practice them.
- We will be sealed of God with truth, love and freedom.

Let's talk about resilience. The ability to face crisis, trauma, major stressors, losses and overcome, bounce back, make it through is known as resilience. Much research has been done on resilience and what enables some people to have much more resilience than others. What are those factors?

Some people start out life with more resilience than others, they have advantage because of what they inherited from their parents, biologically. This includes:

- The genes one inherits
  - A variety of genes have been identified that have single gene polymorphisms. This means one letter is difference in the gene coding alters the outgoing product. Consider the word "love" if we substitute and "i" for and "o" we have "live" which is still a readable word, but it has different meaning than the original. In our genes single letters can be changed like this altering the various gene products. These genetic differences can confer greater sensitivity to the environment. So if someone experiences childhood adversity—trauma, severe poverty, neglect—the genes one has will make one either more sensitive or more resilient to the abuse.
  - However, if one has a nurturing environment then the genes that enhance sensitivity causes positive brain changes and results in greater resilience to stressors down the road than the genes that protected from early childhood traumas.
- The epigenetic markers that one inherits
  - We pass along not only the gene sequences but the markers that tell the genes how to express themselves. People who have experienced trauma, or who have abused illegal drugs etc. will alter their gene expression and pass on epigenetic markers that reduce resilience in their offspring.
- The biological changes that happen in utero
  - Multiple studies show that the fetal brain and resilience is impacted by what happens during gestation.
  - If the mother is highly stressed her stress hormones will cross the placenta and alter gene expression through epigenetic modification causing a more sensitive fear circuitry and the child will be born more anxious, irritable and socially impaired
  - Foods choices will also alter the developing brain either positively or negatively depending on whether the choices are healthy or not
  - Alcohol and drugs are damaging to the developing brain

So resilience is either enhanced or undermined before we are even born.



EGW, one of the founders of the SDA church, wrote the following over 100 years ago, before DNA was even discovered:

What the parents are, that to a great extent the children will be.

The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are to a greater or less degree reproduced in their children.--MH 371 (1905). {1MCP 138.5}

**The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children.** In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations....

Through the indulgence of appetite and passion their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations. **Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil.**

Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, **imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character.**--MH 371, 372 (1905). {1MCP 139}

But, this is a starting point at our birth, and after birth, early childhood experiences further alter gene expression and brain development conferring either benefit or greater harm, enhancing resilience or undermining it.

- Loving, emotionally responsive, consistent and reliable childhood experiences foster resilience—
  - because they positively impact brain development, alter gene expression in ways that are adaptive, grow brain circuits capable of calming fear circuits. It fosters learning, adaptation, expectation of hope and the development of skills and abilities to problem solve, calm oneself, self-soothe, form new and secure attachments, sustain and maintain friendships, form a realistic sense of self and self mastery and self-confidence, and ability to overcome life's challenges
  - But when childhood caregiving is stressful, neglectful, abusive, chaotic, overdevelopment of fear circuitry in the brain occurs, underdevelopment of prefrontal circuits occurs, problem solving is impaired, ability to connect with others is undermined, gene expression is altered in ways that increase inflammation, diminish neuroplasticity and undermine learning, all reducing resilience and increasing likelihood of collapse under stress.
  - Do you see why Jesus said “if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6 NIV84)



- Research shows that social rejection, isolation, and loneliness activate the brain's stress pathways that increase inflammatory responses, decrease immune responses, makes people more vulnerable to viral infections, cancer and also less resilient to life stressors.
  - In contrast positive social supports and connection calms amygdala, reduces inflammatory cascades, alters gene expression improving immune system reducing viral infections and cancers and increases resilience.
  - Positive social support and connectivity increases oxytocin, which enhances social cognition, including facial recognition, understanding of social cues, perception of trustworthiness and ability to bond. Further, social connectedness with increased oxytocin reduces anxiety, fear and stress. All of this has a protective effect when dealing with life stressors.
  - Conversely, social isolation increases both physical and mental health problems and undermines resilience, increases all causes of death in a similar to obesity or smoking.
- Other factors that can increase individual resilience include all variables that improve physical health, such as healthy diet, physical exercise, education, cognitive training, adequate sleep, spiritual development, reframing of events or perception and perspective. (Southwick, S., et al., Why are some individuals more resilient than others: the role of social support [World Psychiatry](#). 2016 Feb; 15(1): 77–79.)

How healthy spirituality confers resilience:

- Develops the prefrontal cortex which calms the fear circuits reducing inflammatory cascades improving health
- Better self-care, e.g., take care of spirit temple so less substances of abuse, better diet, more likely to get adequate sleep and exercise all of which confer resilience
- More likely to forgive and not hold grudges, which calms fear circuits and reduces inflammatory cascades
- More likely to engage in altruism, which calms fear circuits
- Greater perspective on reality, higher purpose, meaning for life and often have a meaning or purpose for the trials
- Connection with God to trust Him with outcomes rather than all on self
- Hope of deliverance

In crisis, under stress, people seek relief from the stress—there are adaptive and maladaptive ways to deal with stress.

Adaptive ways include:

- Being truthful, dealing with reality, confronting, problems solving, seeking help from others when needed
- Prayer and seeking God's wisdom and guidance and trusting God without outcomes
- Maintaining healthy routines, diet, exercise, sleep, meditation and rest
- Music, humor, reframing
- Finding meaning or purpose





Maladaptive ways of coping include:

- Fleeing or escaping or avoiding through
  - denial, distortion, externalization
  - substances—alcohol drugs prescription medications
  - excessive sleep
  - entertainment
  - physically running away
- Attacking or accusing or blaming others
- Seeking to control others or make others feel your pain or suffering
- Becoming helpless, disengagement, surrender, giving up
- Yelling, screaming, self-harm

As we consider the methods and principles of God versus the methods and principles of Satan, how would you describe the difference and what impact do they make on our ability to cope or on how we cope?

Does our understanding of reality make a difference?

Does our understanding of God's law make a difference? For instance, if we have an imposed law view, when we get stressed, struggle with trials, what might we do? Might we examine our lives to find something we did wrong, some rule we broke and be tempted to believe we are being punished?

If it is larger than just us, say something happening to the entire region or nation, might we conclude that the hurricane came because of sin in the city and God was punishing the city? Might we want to protect the nation by stopping the evil that we think is the cause of the punishment?

Read first two paragraphs in Sabbath's lesson, "One Sabbath Connie..." Did the duck have a wrong understanding? How many people are like this duck...seeing though they do not see?

I saw a Gunsmoke episode in which an old man was choking to death and the doctor tried to do a tracheotomy (whether that was actually known medical science back then or not I don't know, but the TV show had him doing it) and several family members came in and saw him cutting on the man's throat and the man died anyway. They arrested the doctor for murder because he cut the man's throat.

How many people misconstrue and misunderstand what they see because of their immaturity, ignorance, indoctrination, lack of insight, too narrow a view?

This happens all the time and is so sad, people, rather than trying to understand what others are actually saying or what they actually mean, all too often assume they know and end up drawing false conclusions and get upset, make accusations and attack, verbally or sometimes physically.

In our world today those who want to manipulate others for their own power and agenda utilize this weakness of jumping to conclusions all the time. This is how propaganda works, people hear allegations, accusations, reports, pieces of data and are led to certain conclusions without



investigation, without evidence and are rallied to causes they might never support if the full facts were known.

For instance, in the aftermath of this most recent presidential election there have been allegations of fraud. Texas filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court regarding the changes to the way the election was conducted in Pennsylvania, alleging it was unconstitutional because those changes did not go through the PA legislature, which the constitution requires. The Supreme Court rejected the lawsuit based on lack of standing to bring it, saying that TX had no say in how another state conducted its internal business.

But when some in the news media reported this their headlines were written to suggest a certain meaning that wasn't the case: "Supreme Court rejects Texas fraud claim" and many people falsely believed that the Supreme Court found there was no fraud. That is not what happened. Whether there was fraud or not was never evaluated, no court that I know of has yet had an evidentiary hearing, all the rulings that I know about have been procedural rulings, whether a person or group has a right to bring a case, or filed before a deadline etc., not whether there was actual fraud or not.

The methods of God are the methods of truth, love, freedom—truth doesn't fear inquiry, truth doesn't fear investigation, truth doesn't obstruct pursuit of facts. I haven't seen the evidence, but I don't fear it one way or the other. I don't care who won the election, but I do care about honesty, integrity and the ability of people to discern, to see what is actually happening and recognize when they are being misled.

But worse than the propaganda is forming an opinion and then being unwilling to hear facts or evidences that would refute the perspective being held. In other words, not loving truth!

When your world is falling apart, will you maximize the likelihood of having a good outcome by denying facts, truths, evidences?

No, one of God's principles is truth, those who will be saved in the end are those who love truth, those who are lost are those who do not love truth, they love their ideas, beliefs, religions, politics or power, but not truth.

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "While Ahaz was weighing..." What do you think of this idea that God had allowed the trouble to come on him to discipline him and bring him to his senses?

Will God do this and for what purpose?

What does God want for each of us? Isn't it victory over sin? Isn't that we receive new hearts and right spirits, that we are restored to righteousness?





Can God do this in us without our participation? No, why not? Because it would destroy our individuality for God to use power to force a change in our hearts and minds. This means we must choose the right and reject the wrong. While we don't have the power to free ourselves, we must choose to be free and then we receive the power to follow through.

Therefore, God will bring a person over the same ground again and again until they either gain the victory or have destroyed within themselves the very faculties that respond to truth and love and are beyond healing.

Consider this quote:

There are those here upon whom great light in warnings and reproofs has shone. Whenever reproofs are given, the enemy seeks to create in those reprov'd a desire for human sympathy. Therefore I would warn you to beware lest in appealing to the sympathy of others, and going back over your past trials, you again err on the same points in seeking to build yourselves up. **The Lord brings his erring children over the same ground again and again; but if they continually fail to heed the admonitions of his Spirit, if they fail to reform on every point where they have erred, he will finally leave them to their own weakness.** HS 137.4

**God's work of refining and purifying must go on until** His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory... **God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ** and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves. 4T 86.2

Read second paragraph, "Ahaz would be startled..." What method does God use with Ahaz? Why doesn't God use force?

Why do so many people think it is right and just to use force to coerce others to comply?

## TUESDAY

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Read Isaiah 7:11-17:

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, 11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right.



16 But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. 17 The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.” NIV84

First part, dealt with in TUESDAY’s lesson is about the invitation to ask the Lord for a sign.

Read second paragraph, “At first glance...” Why didn’t Ahaz take the Lord up on His invitation and ask for a sign, such as having 7 cows float over the palace for 20 minutes or something?

Why do you think Ahaz didn’t do it? Was it because:

- he didn’t believe in God—was an evolutionist and it would be foolish or silly?
- he thought God would answer and He didn’t want the answer from God?
- he didn’t trust God and was afraid of what God would do when He made the request?

What about the idea that his view of God was the view of any unconverted person who believes that God exists or who is religious but unconverted—they believe in a distorted god, a being who is like them, power over others, selfish, coercive, severe, unforgiving and Ahaz didn’t want to get near such a terrifying untrustworthy dangerous god.

So, Ahaz doesn’t trust God, has a deeply flawed view of God and based on many distortions and lies he sees God functioning like Satan alleges, and won’t even engage with God to give God the opportunity to refute the lies and win him to trust.

How many people are just like this? See how the Pharisees in Christ’s day were just like this. I see people like this all the time, unwilling to engage and discuss because their own false views will be exposed.

Read last paragraph, “Isaiah pointed out that...” Ahaz chose the god of fear, of intimidation, of coercion and rejected the God of truth, love and freedom and thus cut himself off from God’s blessing. God merely acknowledge the choice.

The lesson asks “In the end, even if God had given Ahaz any sign that he had wanted, do you think Ahaz would have believed?”

Is there evidence that signs won’t change minds? What about Pharaoh, what about when Jesus restored Malchus’ ear?

Why did God offer to give a sign to Ahaz if God knows the future and that Ahaz would not accept the offer and act as he did?

What is the only chance Ahaz had for salvation? To engage with God, to reason with God, to connect with God, and while God knows what Ahaz will do, God still provides Ahaz every opportunity to be



saved, to connect with Him. God always does what is right, the loss is by Ahaz's choice, not God failing to give him opportunity.

## WEDNESDAY

Wednesday's lesson asks who is the woman and the child in the prophecy of Isaiah 7 and gives several possibilities.

Read numbers 1 through 4, "Because..." So, what is your understanding of the young woman in Isaiah 7 and the child?

If this is referring only to Jesus how would that be helpful to Ahaz as a sign that the two armies threatening him would leave?

If it referring only to Isaiah's son how would that child fulfill the meaning of Immanuel?

So, what is the solution?

This prophecy refers to two children, that is why the Hebrew for young woman can be a virgin or not, because the first child was specifically for Ahaz's benefit. This is the child who will still be too young to tell right from wrong when the armies leave. But there will be a second woman and a second child who will be God with us. This second woman will be a virgin as confirmed by the New Testament writers, and this second child will be Immanuel and will be further described in Isaiah 9.

## THURSDAY

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Read first two paragraphs, "Like the name..." What is the connotation of "God is with us"?

- God is with us in heart
- God is with us in substance, human, like us
- God is with us in struggle, pain, suffering
- God is with us in overcoming
- God is with us to comfort and encourage

Who is "us"? Is it Israel? Is it all humanity? Is it only those who believe?

What is the difference between God is with us and God is for us?

What do you say to those who suffer and call out to God, when they ask, "where is God? I thought He would be with us."



Many Jews after the Holocaust stopped believing in God because of this idea, because He didn't deliver them. What would you say to them?

Read the last paragraph, "Even when the Lord..." What are they trying to say? He wasn't going to take that sitting down?

Standing up indicates one is taking action—is that what Stephen saw, Jesus taking action, is that what the author means? What action? It is a sign of respect, was Jesus paying Stephen respect? Was it shock, Jesus was stunned and stood up on shock? What is the implication?

## FRIDAY

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Read question 3, "Russian author ..." I read a book that had this philosophy in it for the heroes, "Journey before destination; life before death." This meant, in the book, that the way one travels, how one gets to where one is going matters, that the way one lives is more important than whether one dies for all eventually die, all eventually end up at the same destination—the grave, but the journey, how one lives, the life one has had, that is what makes the difference.

## SUNDAY

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The lesson examines the decisions of King Ahaz, who when threatened with invasion from Ephraim and Aram, rather than going to God for deliverance, went to Assyria and asked for help.

Is there a lesson for us?

When we see problems coming do we go to God or to the world? Do we use the methods of God or do we use the methods of the world? What is the difference?

When is it appropriate to seek help from others? What is the difference between seeking help from others and seeking help from the world? It is about motive and methods. God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and love serves, it is relational. So it is absolutely righteous for us to help each other. It is false that the righteous only pray and seek to handle life's problems by themselves, alone, with only God. No, we pray, seek wisdom, but often will obtain the help in from or through others that God is using to minister and serve.

But we will not pursue relief of our problems by the methods and principles of the world any examples?

- If in debt we won't embezzle, steal, or commit fraud to deal with our debt. We won't borrow intending to not pay back.
- If we are attacked we don't attack back. We speak truth, when appropriate, but we don't enter into conflict, battles, wars.



- If we have health problems we ask for God's healing, but we also diagnose the problem, identify the cause, remove contributing factors, bring remedies or therapies to bear, seek medical professionals to help, and trust God with the outcome, but we don't merely pray and fail to practice what we know is health. We don't hurt others to advance ourselves, such as buying a kidney on the black market.

What caused King Ahaz to seek help from Assyria? A threat, which caused what emotion? Fear, and why didn't Ahaz go to God for help?

What about today? Is there messaging bombarding us that incites fear? And what are we being told we need to do? Where are people going for help? Are most people turning to God and seeking to follow His will, methods and principles, or are they turning to man, to the government and using the methods of this world?

And when the methods of this world are used do we experience greater unity, harmony, and peace, or greater conflict, division and erosion of love? Do the methods of the world actually work?

Every system of the world that seeks to impose its way always causes some level of harm, even when its goal is to help. The methods of the world while helping one group will harm another. This is Satan's domain. He is the divider.

Consider:

- Is there any injustice in the legal justice systems of this world? Is there any legal justice system in this world that gets every case right, that applies the laws fairly to all people all the time? Is there any human system in which innocents never get convicted or the guilty never get away with it?
- Social reforms—if we seek to help one group, say make rules that give easier admission to university to some, do we make it harder for others? If we want to help people who are struggling in poverty can we harm others if we take their resources and give it to those in need? What about if we use the government to make all kinds of rules to prevent the spread of a virus, could this benefit some by protecting them from getting the virus, but injure others whose business fails and they end up homeless, or because of the increased stress they become depressed and commit suicide?

The point I am making is not arguing for the righteousness of any of these good goals, but demonstrating human governments are Satan's domain and their methods are beastly, so even when they seek to do good they simultaneously cause harm, injure and divide. That is the fallacy of the imposed law methodology, that someone can get righteousness by more imposed laws, rules and rule-enforcement. It is a lie!



## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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