



## 2022 Q4 On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope—Lesson 9 Contrary Passages?

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

### SABBATH

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Read the first paragraph:

Peter warns us: “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV). Paul adds, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2, 3, NKJV). This being the case, we should look not only at those passages that easily can be explained to fit our beliefs, but we should also deal with passages that are commonly used to teach something different from what we believe. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 72)

- If two people understand the Bible differently on various doctrines, does that mean one of them is not right with God?
- How is it that good hearted people can read the same passage of Scripture yet come to completely different understandings of what it means?
- When Jesus returns will any of the saved correctly know every single detail of Scripture?
- What is the primary purpose of the doctrines we hold—the most important reason we have doctrines?

The primary purpose of each doctrine is to reveal the truth about God. Every doctrine is to be directly connected to our understanding about God, what does this doctrine reveal to us about God, His kingdom, His methods, His design laws for life. They should be like spokes on a wheel, every single one of them connected to God and leading to greater intimacy with God.

But sadly, all too often, our doctrines become stand-alone litmus tests of orthodoxy that we prove with a series of Bible texts and then apply our interpretation to behavior and use this to test the faithfulness of others all of which turns the focus away from God onto self; and worse, such an approach misrepresents God as punishing and vengeful. This is exactly how the Jews in Christ’s day approached Bible study, not as a book designed to reveal the truth about God, but as a code book that listed certain laws or truths that were to be obeyed in order to have salvation.

Read our memory text:

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39–40 NIV84).



Notice, the Jews were searching Scripture for the keys to eternal life, approaching it as a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned, but they failed to realize that Scripture is designed to lead us back to a knowledge of God.

Remember life eternal is knowing God. That if we have the Son we have life, life is not found in having the right list of doctrinal beliefs.

If we have the **correct** doctrine, teaching about some subject, say method of baptism, or Sabbath day, but that doctrine is not connected to the truth about God then that doctrine can be used to mislead and obstruct the plan of salvation.

Jesus said:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Did these Jewish lawyers and theologians that Jesus was speaking to have the wrong Sabbath day, eat the wrong foods, have the wrong religious festivals, the wrong tithing percentage, the wrong sanctuary? What did they have wrong? They failed to connect the doctrines to the truth about God and instead set the doctrines into the setting of human governments and human laws, imposed rules requiring legal accounting and management, and behavioral monitoring.

So as we look at these contrary passages, we need to keep in mind that our Christian friends in other traditions may very well interpret some of these passages differently than us, and we may be quite correct in disagreeing with their interpretation, but that doesn't mean they don't know God or that we do. Our love and knowledge of God is unfolding, and they, like us, may hold beliefs that have never been fully examined and traced through the entire record of Scripture and linked back to God—asking what does the belief say about God? And this is the most important question on all of these passages: **What do the various interpretations say about God?**

## **SUNDAY**

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Read Luke 16:19-31:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity



on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

“ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ” (Luke 16:19-31 NIV84).

Is this a literal story or is this a parable?

Why would people believe this is a literal story rather than a parable?

- Preconceived ideas—if one already believes that souls go to heaven in some conscious way, then this story seems to describe that process, so it doesn’t trigger cognitive dissonance, it doesn’t make one pause and question, it is read literally because it seems to fit an underlying belief.
- But what are the reasons that indicate this is not a literal description of reality and supports the idea that this is a metaphor or parable?
  - This is describing disembodied souls or spirits, yet the rich man asks that Lazarus dip his “finger” in water to cool his “tongue” both of these are *body* parts. Spirits don’t have fingers and tongues.
  - If this describes reality in which the dead are conscious, then those in heaven and hell can see and communicate with each other. And if that is how heaven functions, what would the experience be like for the various saved who have loved ones crying out to them from the torments of hell for all eternity? Would King David be filled with joy and peace and without any grief or tears if for all eternity he sees and hears his son Absalom crying out to him from the torments of hell?
  - What would it say about the saved if we could be in heaven and watch any living being, animal, human, or angel, being tormented and crying out in pain and look upon that and feel satisfied, feel good, feel “yes, that is right, glad to see it”?
  - And if this is literally the way things are in God’s universe, that some are tormented in the fires of hell for all eternity and the righteous, for all eternity, watch and hear their screams of pain what kind of place is that for the righteous? Would you be happy there?



Wouldn't such an experience destroy tenderness of heart, cause either demoralization or hardness and callousness of heart?

- And what kind of God would God be if He created a universe in which people are born into a world they did not choose, born into sinfulness that they did not choose, and experience child abuse they did not choose, and are murdered before they ever accept Jesus as their Savior and God sends them to hell to be tormented for all eternity—a short life in sin with no opportunity for salvation followed by eternal torment. What kind of being would God be if this were true?
- So, does taking this story literally say anything good about God?

What did Jesus tell this story? What truths was He trying to get across? I think there were several truths Jesus wanted to convey to the people of that day and, as I list them, consider if these were falsehoods that the Jews struggled with that this story exposed and truths we need to remember today:

- Health and wealth are not good indicators of salvation, righteousness, or standing with God
- Poverty and sickness are not good indicators of who is out of favor with God or cursed of God
- There is a chasm that separates the righteous from the unrighteous and when it becomes fixed it cannot be crossed—and that chasm is the chasm between love and selfishness. Once a person has become fixed in heart and mind into either camp they cannot cross over to the other side.
- There will be a day of recognizing, a day when all parties will realize the difference between the two camps, and the lost will be terribly dissatisfied.
- God reveals Himself to us via Scripture, nature, revelation and if we will not believe the evidence God provides through His divine agencies during this lifetime, we will not be changed even if we have the testimony of someone returning from the dead, which the Jews proved true when Jesus raised a man named Lazarus from the dead and they still would not believe.

So this is how I paraphrased it, see what you think?

"You know the circulating story of a wealthy man dressed in fine clothes and who lived in luxury every day. At the entrance to his estate was a beggar named Lazarus, who was sick and covered in sores. He would have been happy with the scraps from the rich man's table. He was so badly off, the dogs licked his sores.

"As the story goes, when the beggar died, angels transported him to heaven and sat him next to Abraham, but when the rich man died, he was buried in the ground. The rich man looked up while being tormented in hell, spotted Abraham millions of light years away, and noted Lazarus beside him. So he cries out, his voice carrying over the expanse of the universe, 'Oh Father Abraham! Take pity on me and send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue because I am in agony in this fire.'

"But, as the story goes, Abraham replied, 'Son, don't you remember all the wealth and health you had during your lifetime while Lazarus suffered in poverty and sickness, but now he is rejoicing here and you are in agony. Besides, the kingdom of love and the kingdom of



selfishness are separated by such a chasm that those fixed in one cannot cross over to the other.'

"He answered, 'Then please, Father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers who need to know. Have him warn them so they won't end up fixed in selfishness and suffer in torment.'

"Abraham replied, 'They have the Scriptures — it contains all they need to know.'

" 'No, Father Abraham,' he pleaded, 'they need more than the Scriptures. If someone from the dead goes to them, they would turn away from selfishness, partake of the Remedy, and be renewed in love.'

"Abraham said to him, 'If they don't value the Scriptures and won't listen to the instructions God has provided therein, they will not be convinced even if someone returns from the dead.' "  
(Luke 16:19-31 REM).

## MONDAY

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Read first paragraph,

One of the Bible passages most widely used to try to prove the immortality of the soul is Luke 23:43 — “He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise’” (NRSV). Almost all Bible versions (with few exceptions) translate this text in a similar way, giving the impression that on the very day Christ died, Christ and the thief would be together in Paradise. This should not surprise us because those translations were made by biblical scholars who believe in the dogma of the natural immortality of the soul. But is this the best translation of the text? (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 74)

The lesson makes a great admission, that Bible translators bring in their biases, preconceived ideas, and beliefs into the translation and will introduce those biases as they translate. This is one place that demonstrates this process—where the translators choose to place the comma. But the bigger distortion to Bible translation is the bias that translators bring about God’s law, the idea that God’s law functions like human law, imposed rules that require God to inflict punishment and thus God is represented as the source of death. When the translators hold this assumption then they translate this legal distortion into the text. This legal distortion is introduced honestly, with great integrity, without malice or deceit because in many places it is linguistically permissible. Such as translating the Greek *δικαιόω* [*dikaioo* /*dik-ah-yo-o/*] in various places like Romans 3:24 as *justice, justify, justification, justified, rather than righteous, righteousness, or set right and put right.*

This one Greek word can legitimately be translated either way and the translators decide based on their own understanding, their own biases. If they view God’s law like human law, they will often translate in ways that introduce the legal sounding language. But if they understand that salvation is about



relationship to God, knowing and loving God, then they interpret more often as righteous and righteousness.

The Remedy paraphrase is purposely written to interpret through the lens of design law not imposed law.

Back to our verse for today: Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43 NIV84).

This is a straightforward verse to figure out. The question in this translation is where to place the comma, before or after the word “today”?

- Punctuation is not in the original Greek but is supplied by the translators, meaning the comma is not inspired by God.
- Moving the comma, one word over, changes the meaning from going to heaven on that day, to being promised on that day that he would go to heaven. “I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise.”

Both options are permissible grammatically, so which is it? We need other evidence from Scripture and the Scripture provides it:

John 20:17, Jesus speaking to Mary:

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. (John 20:17 NIV84).

If Jesus hadn’t returned to the Father by Sunday morning, that means He and the thief were not in paradise on Friday, so the comma should be placed to emphasize the promise given that day.

## TUESDAY

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Read Philippians 1:21-24:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (Philippians 1:21-24 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do you explain it?

Do our biases and preconceived ideas impact how we read it?



If Paul meant that some part of him would go to heaven in conscious form and be with Jesus, would that idea contradict anything Paul wrote elsewhere? Paul describes very clearly when we will be alive and conscious in the Lord's presence:

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus **those who have fallen asleep in him**. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that **we who are still alive**, who are left till the coming of the Lord, **will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, **we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18NIV84).

Paul is saying here that we meet the Lord together, that those who are alive will not precede those who have fallen asleep. Those with the Lord are in a state of sleep and not conscious, but are being brought back with Jesus to become alive again.

How do we reconcile this text with the Philippians text?

A living functioning human being requires three parts, body, soul, and spirit, like a computer requires hardware, software, and energy. And when the body dies, it returns to dust/dirt, the spirit—life energy—returns to God from whom all life originates, and the software/soul goes into a state of sleep, just like a computer that runs out of power. And just like a computer can have its data backed up on a cloud, so too, our individualities, souls are stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life, waiting for download into new bodies at the second coming, but they are in a state of sleep. Just as the Bible describes.

But what about 2 Corinthians 5, which seems to suggest when we die we do go to the Lord:

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the



judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10 NIV84).

How do you explain this?

What would it say about God if we interpret this to mean disembodied spirits in a state of consciousness going to be in the Lord's presence at death? Is the emphasis about disembodied spirits, or is Paul actually talking about new bodies, heavenly bodies that we will live in?

From *The Remedy*:

Now, we know that this earthly body is like a tent or hospital gown that wears out easily and leaves us exposed. And if this earthly body—which our individuality currently occupies—is destroyed, we have an eternal body that will never wear out; a heavenly dwelling place for our individuality, but not built by human hands. Meanwhile, the older we get, the more we groan, longing to be free of this deteriorating body and to be clothed in our perfect heavenly body, because when we have exchanged this mortal body for our heavenly one, we will not be found sick, dying, and exposed. For while we are in this collapsing tent, we groan with the burden of aging and slow decay. We don't want to die to be rid of this worn-out body, but we want to be translated directly into our heavenly body so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by eternal life. God's intention for us has never changed: He created us to live eternally and — as the first phase of our restoration — has given us the Spirit to heal our minds, guaranteeing our future complete re-creation.

We certainly know that as long as this frail body is our home, we remain away from the Lord; but we live by trusting God with how things will turn out — not by waiting to see the future restoration. Therefore we are confident while in the mortal body, even though we prefer to be translated into our heavenly body and be at home with the Lord. Our goal is to be pleasing to him by living in harmony with his design for life — whether we are in this mortal body or our heavenly one — for we will all appear in Christ's examining room so that each one may be accurately diagnosed and receive what their condition warrants, whether from compliance or non-compliance with God's treatment plan.

## WEDNESDAY

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Read 1 Peter 3:13-20:

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than





for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water... (1 Peter 3:13-20 NIV84).

How do you explain this?

Why do we not take this to mean Jesus went to some place in an alternate reality where living souls are being tormented and preached to them for three days?

- It contradicts the Bible teaching on the mortality of the soul
- It contradicts the Bible teaching that sin causes death and replaces it with the idea that God causes eternal torment
- It contradicts the idea of the first death is a sleep
- It contradicts the idea that salvation must occur during this life and suggests that some souls could be saved after this life is over—this opens up the possibility for false doctrines like purgatory
- And if taken literally, what about all the other souls who died without the knowledge Christ after the Flood, didn't Christ care enough about them to preach to them also?
- And what would this say about God if a place of conscious torment really existed?

Then what does the text mean? Who are spirits in prison that are being referred to and how did Christ preach to them?

The Bible says "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14 NIV84).

Do angels have bodies or are they disembodied spirits? So the term spirit can mean many things, including the intelligent being, as in this case.

Did Jesus come to set captives free? Free from what? Does the Bible describe that those without Christ are slaves to sin? So this is describing the reality that all sinners are captives of sin and death and only in Christ are we set free from sin and death. And every human since Adam was born enslaved by sin with a terminal sin-condition; then how did Christ preach to those before the Flood?

Notice the text says that Christ preached to those people who died in the Flood through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative and agency on Earth through whom Christ brings truth to bear upon every human heart and mind throughout all human history. And the Holy Spirit was active prior to the Flood when Noah was preaching bringing the truth to bear upon their minds, just like He has been active through all human history. Remember David prayed in Psalm 51, "take not your Holy Spirit from me" and in Genesis one the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep. God's Holy Spirit has always been active.



So from *The Remedy*:

Don't you see that if you are genuinely committed to God and eagerly practice his methods of love, you cannot be stopped? Even if you are attacked or persecuted for doing what is right, by forgiving and loving others you reveal God's true character and simultaneously are advancing to be more like him. So "do not fear for this mortal life as the world fears; and don't be frightened for a minute," but make Christ the center of your heart, mind and character. Always be prepared to talk about God's character of love, as revealed in Jesus, to anyone who asks why you are hopeful in the face of persecution, trial, and difficulty. But be sure to do it with gentleness, kindness and respect, with a pure heart and clear conscience, so that those who lie, gossip, and spread rumors about your ministry for Christ may be ashamed of their malicious ways. It is better, if God permits, to be persecuted for doing good than to suffer the results of doing evil, for that is exactly what Christ did. He suffered terribly and died once in order to cure sinfulness—to provide a Remedy for all humanity and restore us to unity with God. In Christ, love vanquished selfishness, and righteousness overcame unrighteousness. He allowed the sin-sick to kill him, and in giving himself freely, he triumphed over the infection of selfishness and fear, and was renewed to life by the Spirit of love and truth. It was through this same Spirit of love and truth that he preached to all humans, who were held in the bondage of sin. Yes, it was Christ, working through the Spirit, who preached to those bound by sin in Noah's day. He was so patient with them, working constantly to reach them as Noah built the ark, yet only eight people responded and had a new life on the other side of that great flood. (1 Peter 3:13-20 REM).

## THURSDAY

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Read Revelation 6:9-11:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. (Revelation 6:9-11 NIV84).

How do you address this text?

First—this is symbolic not literal! It is important to remember when reading Revelation almost everything is presented in symbolic language. When we read about a rider on a white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth—we are not to take that literal. When we read about lamb slain, we are not to take it literal, the lamb represents Jesus.



We must move away from the symbolism to what the symbols represent.

How would you explain this?

First option is to decide what altar is being referred to, is it the golden altar in the Holy Place, or the brazen altar in the courtyard?

Read the first paragraph,

The opening of the fifth Apocalyptic seal reveals an unusual scene. The souls of the martyrs were seen metaphorically “under the altar” crying to God for vengeance (Rev. 6:9-11). Some commentators are inclined to identify this “altar” as the altar of incense mentioned under the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1-6). But the reference to “blood” (instead of “incense”) in Revelation 6:9-11 leads us to see here an allusion to the altar of burnt offering, where the blood of the sacrifices was poured (Lev. 4:18, 30, 34). As the blood of those sacrifices used to be sprinkled around the altar, so the blood of the martyrs was symbolically poured at God’s altar when, by remaining faithful to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 6:9, see also Rev. 12:17, Rev. 14:12), they lost their lives. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

The lesson takes the position that the altar is the brazen altar, not the golden, what do you think?

I think this is wrong for several reasons:

- Their reason is that the blood of the sacrifices was poured out around the brazen altar not the golden and therefore this must indicate the brazen altar. However, the blood was also applied to the horns of the altar. If a non-priest brought the sin offering then the blood was applied to the horns of the brazen altar and the blood poured out at the base of the brazen altar. But if a priest brought the sin offering then the blood was applied to the horns of the golden altar with the remaining poured out at the base of the brazen altar.
- In the OT sanctuary theater, who do the priests in their white robes represent? They represent the priesthood of believers. And to which group do the martyrs, those who died for their faith in Jesus, belong—to the non-believing group or the believers in Christ? So, the sacrifices of the non-priests would not represent the martyrs, it would be the sacrifices of the priests which would represent the martyrs and that blood was applied to the golden altar. And these martyrs were given white robes, just like the daily priests wore, which symbolically represents the righteousness of Christ. And this symbolizes the cleansing of their individualities, hearts, minds, characters from all sin and defect perfecting them for eternity.
- And what does the blood symbolize? It symbolizes the life. And in this context, the sinner confessing their sin, not their deeds, but their sinfulness, their sinful life upon the lamb, symbolically says I surrender my life to you Jesus and Jesus takes our place and overcomes our sinful condition where we could not. The blood is applied to the golden altar symbolically registering our name—character, individuality, our life in the Lamb’s book of life—as a life cleansed by Jesus, a life in which the carnal has died and the righteousness or life of Christ has been infused.



- The Bible uses the symbolism of the blood for the life, the life of the righteous call out to God for Him to finish His work and restore them and the world to sinlessness. The Bible uses this symbolism all the way back in Genesis when Abel's blood called out to God from the ground.

The lesson makes a very good point in the second paragraph,

The “souls” under the altar are also symbolic. By taking them literally, one would have to conclude that the martyrs are not fully happy in heaven, for they are still crying out for vengeance. This hardly sounds as if they are enjoying the reward of salvation. The desire for vengeance can make your life miserable. But your death, as well? (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

If we take this literally, would these righteous people be in a place of happiness and bliss or where sin has not yet been fully eradicated?

And will the righteous actually have a desire for vengeance in their heart? If the righteous really wanted God to punish the wicked wouldn't they be disobeying Jesus when He said we are to forgive those who wrong us, love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us?

- But the text says their lives call out for vengeance, so how do we understand it?
- What is the Bible definition of this vengeance?
  - “Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities (Isaiah 1:24-25 NIV84).
  - These saints are calling upon God to finish His work of destroy sin, wickedness, and all sin from them and all other humans who open their hearts in trust to God! They are calling for the completion of the plan of salvation and the complete eradication of sin from God's universe, not for God to use power to hurt others.
  - But this is all symbolic, not to be taken literal.

Read the third paragraph,

Also, it's important to remember that John was not given a view of heaven as it actually is. “There are no white, red, black, or pale horses there with warlike riders. Jesus does not appear there in the form of a lamb with a bleeding knife wound. The four beasts do not represent actual winged creatures of the animal characteristics noted. ... Likewise, there are no ‘souls’ lying at the base of an altar in heaven. The whole scene was a pictorial and symbolic representation.” — The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 778. (Adult SS Guide 4Q 2022, p. 77)

This is well reasoned and I agree with it, but find it quite interesting that when it comes to the heavenly sanctuary many SDA's take the opposite position, that John or EGW were shown a view of



heaven as it actually is. No, this is correct, Bible prophets are given visions that are not literal windows into heaven, but symbolic representations of heavenly realities.

Read bottom pink section:

Who (especially of those who have been victims of injustice) hasn't cried out for justice, which has not yet come? Why must we, by faith, trust that ultimately the justice so lacking in this world will nevertheless come? What comfort can you draw from this wonderful promise?

Thoughts? What does this mean? What is justice? What determines what is just or right? Does the law have any role in defining and determining justice?

And if we believe God's law is made up rules like humans make, then how is justice described? It is God using power to inflict punishment upon the unrepentant. God becomes the cosmic enforcer the source of pain, suffering, and death.

But, if we understand God's law as design law, we recognize justice is doing what is right, and the right thing is to heal and save from sin, but for those who destroy the faculties that respond to the Spirit of love and truth, then the only right or just action for God to take in regard to them, is to set them free to reap what they have chosen—separation from Him who is the source of life. God let's them go and they die of their unhealed terminal sin condition just as the Bible teaches, sin when full grown brings forth death, and those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction.

God is just, sustaining and supporting and maintain the constant operation of His design laws, including the law of liberty and giving people freedom to die if that is what they insist upon, rather than force them to stay in His presence which would be a place of torment to those who have solidified themselves in wickedness and selfishness.

## FRIDAY

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Read first paragraph, which is a quote from *Christ's Object Lessons*:

“In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. During probationary time the grace of God is offered to every soul. But if men waste their opportunities in self-pleasing, they cut themselves off from everlasting life. No after probation will be granted them. By their own choice they have fixed an impassable gulf between them and their God.” — Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 260.

What makes the gulf impassable? Why can't God use His infinite power to bridge the gap?



Read question two:

Reflect on the contrast between the unnegotiable religion of the Christian martyrs and the flexible religion of our postmodern generation. In other words, what are things worth dying for? However, if one has a view that all truths are merely relative, or cultural, then why die for any of them? At the same time, what can we learn from those who were willing to die for causes that we believe are false?

Does the fact someone is willing to die for their faith mean what they believe is correct? Consider the Branch Davidians, those who died in Jonestown, those who fly planes into building for their cause?

Can people be so settled into lies they will die for those falsehoods and false causes?

What is the difference between the righteous who will not compromise, who do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death, and the wicked who will die for their cause?

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and love, it is the combination of these two elements that is evidence of God's kingdom. Satan's kingdom is built on lies and selfishness and Satan will mix his principles with God's.

Satan will mix lies with love and selfishness with truth to create corruptions that can appear appealing and seduce people into practicing them.

Can you think of any examples of this mixture?

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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**Christian Psychiatrist Wanted:** If you are a Christian psychiatrist, or know one, who is interested in coming to Liberty University to be part of our team in building a world-class scientifically sound but biblically consistent treatment program and residency program, then contact me at [trjennings@liberty.edu](mailto:trjennings@liberty.edu).

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