



## 2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 6 Laying Up Treasure in Heaven

by Tim Jennings

### SABBATH

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The title for this week is “Laying Up Treasure in Heaven” how do we do that?

When you think of treasure what comes to mind?

Think of some of the movies that have been made:

- Treasure Island
- National Treasure
- King Solomon’s Mine
- Treasure of the Sierra Madre

When the idea of treasure comes up, what typically comes to mind?

Do you think that in a world where gold is used as pavement, jewels are used as foundation blocks, and pearls are used for gates, that gold, jewels, and pearls are considered treasure?

What is considered treasure in heaven?

Despite the treasures that the world tries to get your heart to value, in moments of quiet reflection, what are the things you genuinely treasure most?

- The love of your spouse?
- Your 5-year-old, with grass stains on their knees, and dirt on their face bringing you dandy lions with a big smile and “Mommy I love you”?
- Seeing your child give their heart to Jesus?
- Being reborn, having peace with God, freedom from guilt and shame?
- Choosing to serve God and knowing you are useful to God and have a higher purpose than simply accumulating earthly wealth?
- Being part of a movement that advances the kingdom of God and seeing other people freed from the mental and emotional chains of sin and false religion?

What things do you truly treasure?



What do God and the heavenly beings treasure?

Let's look at what Jesus was teaching His disciples about heavenly treasure when a man asked Jesus how to get eternal life. We find this in Matthew 19:16 and we will read through to 20:16:

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" [How does this man address Jesus? Does he acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, the Savior, God in human form? No, he asserts that Jesus is no different than any other Rabbi or teacher of the Torah. And, where is the primary focus of this man's concern? On self, on securing for himself eternal life. Is his question the same as asking, "What must I do to bring honor to God?" Or "What must I do to fulfill God's purpose for my life?" Or "How can I serve God most fully?" Or "How can I know God's will for my life?" How often do religions encourage the same focus as this man? In other words, how much evangelism suggests the primary gospel message is individual salvation? Certainly, Jesus came to save sinners—absolutely true—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." But what does it SAY ABOUT GOD that He loves us so much that He would sacrifice Himself to save us? It is good news that we can be saved from sin, but isn't the better news that God is love? And we are called to bring sinners to Christ for salvation. But can Christianity, if we take the primary focus off of God and His character of love and place the focus on us, become something selfish? Something that burdens people because it is about what they must do, focuses on their behavior, the do's and don'ts with lists of rules, keeping self the center with our fears of sinning, the memories of our past sins with subsequent guilt and shame, our feelings of not being good enough? And can this create a religion of works? Is this man possibly operating from that motive, "WHAT CAN I DO...?" And how does Jesus respond?] So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." [What is Jesus trying to do with His question? When Jesus says there is only One good but God, is Jesus suggesting He is not fully God? No, He is trying to get the young man to recognize that Jesus is in fact good, to get the young man to realize he is talking to God. But Jesus is also saying to the man, "If you don't recognize me as God, if you recognize me only as a teacher, then why are you calling me good—all goodness comes from God." Why did Jesus tell Him if he wants to enter into life He needs to keep the commandments? Is Jesus promoting a legal religion, a system of rule-keeping? Is it possible to have health while violating the laws of health? No! Jesus is trying to help this man understand that life is only possible in harmony with the design laws that God built life to operate upon. The commandments are a succinct description of how love function. Love honors others, love doesn't seek to harm, exploit, take advantage of others, therefore love doesn't murder, or cheat, or bear false witness, or steal, love doesn't even have the desire in the heart so love doesn't covet. Jesus is saying, "if you want to have life, you must be restored to my kingdom of love and then you will keep the commandments." But the man didn't understand. he was still thinking of externals, of behavior, so...]

18 He said to Him, "Which ones?"

Jesus said, " 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "



20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” [Where in the 10 commandments do we find “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”? Why did Jesus add this to the end of quoting some of the commandments? This is evidence that Jesus was not reciting a list of rules for a legal religion of rule-keeping, but He was describing what people look like when love is restored in the heart. People who love others don’t murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness. So Jesus added such people love others as themselves. Jesus is revealing that the commandments are not legal, they are not a code of conduct to be legally enforced, they are a description of how love functions and how people who love others function. This is what we will do when we love. We will affirmatively NOT commit adultery, steal, murder, bear false witness because we LOVE them and it would go against all we are as people to do such things. Just think of how offensive it would be to you to even consider harming your own child, abusing them in some vile way. If you have love in your heart you would rather die than do such a thing. This is what Jesus is describing, people who love simply do NOT do these things to others. But how did the man respond? Did he respond by saying, “I have loved like this my entire life”? Or did he miss the point and focus on external behavior, rule-keeping, a legal religion? Now, consider. If this young man had been obeying all these commandments his entire life—why is he asking Jesus what he must do have eternal life? Why does he ask Jesus, “what is it I still lack?” Isn’t the fact he is asking Jesus these questions evidence that his rule-keeping is not sufficient, that he still recognizes something is wrong, that he does not have peace with God, that his conscience is not clear, that his guilt and shame are not removed? And what happens to religious people who keep the lists of rules but who have not found the peace with God that comes from genuine rebirth and a new heart that loves God and others? What kind of people do they become? Pharisaical, legalists, judgmental, critical, controlling of others, imperial just like those religious people who crucified Jesus. Notice what Jesus tells him.]

21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” [We are talking about treasure in heaven today. Is Jesus setting up a new rule, a new commandment that if we want to have treasure in heaven, to be perfect and enter into eternal life then we must sell all we have and give it to the poor? Are we to enter a monastery, nunnery, commune, cloister, or perhaps do like Simeon Stylites who lived in Spain between 390 and 459 AD, and who built a small platform on top of a pillar and lived there for 37 years, he owned nothing, and he did nothing. He did this so he would not sin, since he didn’t interact with anyone. Is this what it means to be perfect? Is Bible perfection about task performance, rule-keeping, commandment compliance, or is it maturity, entering into a mature love/trust relationship with God? It is about maturity of character. Job was described as perfect, because even though Job had many questions, didn’t understand many things, when faced with horrible tribulation and trials, Job never broke trust with God. Bible perfection is about trusting God with our entire being. And this rich man trusted his riches. So Jesus is telling him if he wants to be perfect, then he needs to stop trusting in earthly wealth, stop trusting in rule-keeping, religious rituals, membership into the right church organization, and start trusting in Jesus! How is giving to the poor establishing treasure in heaven? Is there an angelic accountant in heaven that keeps track of all your donations to Goodwill, the Samaritan Center, the Food Kitchen, or your local church, and those who donate to such good programs get credits listed by their names in the books of heaven and



will have more stars in their crowns, bigger mansions, larger estates on the new earth? What is the treasure? Does giving to help others from a heart that loves and trusts God and loves other do something in the heart, mind, character of the one who gives? And is that something to be treasured? Does God treasure that? As a parent if you see your child give something of theirs to help another, do you treasure that?]

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. [Why was he sorrowful? Think about it? What does this reveal? Where did this man place his security, his trust, and what did he value? If you had five children that you love with all your heart and they were kidnapped, and the kidnapper was demanding \$50 million dollars to return your children and if you scraped everything you own together you have exactly \$50 million dollars. Would you go away sad because you have great wealth, or would you rejoice that you have so much wealth? Why would you rejoice? Because your wealth could be used to free your children and you treasure your children more than your possessions. Consider the response of Zacchaeus after Jesus went to his home.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:8-10 NIV84).

Do you notice the difference between Zacchaeus’ response and that of the rich young ruler? Zacchaeus found something he valued more than money and he suddenly found joy in using his money to help others. Can’t you just imagine that after this event Zacchaeus started some community help center and for the rest of his life he was a giver, using his resources to help others?

But—wait, Zacchaeus only gave half his wealth to the poor and paid back four times what he took fraudulently. He kept some of his wealth for himself. Didn’t Jesus say to be perfect the man must give away all his possessions—Zacchaeus didn’t meet this, he didn’t give away all but Jesus said he found salvation, he found eternal life. What does this reveal? It isn’t about the objective material possessions, it is about the heart’s attitude and connection to those possessions. Zacchaeus had his heart set right, had his love for wealth severed, and his affections reset on Jesus and heaven. The rich young ruler did not.]

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” [Why were the disciple astonished? Because the theology, the belief of the day, was that if you were healthy and wealthy you were blessed of God, but if you were sick and poor you were cursed of God. So to the disciples Jesus was saying those who are the most blessed by God, the good people, will have the most difficult time entering into heaven. It didn’t make sense. That is because they held a false belief about health and wealth. This same false belief was revealed



when they asked Jesus, about the man born blind, “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2 NIV84). Of course, Jesus said neither.]

But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” [Men cannot change their own heart. We cannot recreate godly desires, affections, or genuine love within us. But God can transform hearts, cut away the lust for the things of this world and establish His methods in our hearts—IF we trust Him and invite Him in. We must choose to say yes to God and God does the healing and transforming as we continue to say yes and choose to follow where He leads.]

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” [What is Peter doing here? Where is Peter’s focus? Can you see Peter rubbing his hands together and saying, “Okay, cool, we gave up everything to follow you, YEAH, what are we going to get out of it? What is our reward?” What does this reveal? Doesn’t it reveal Peter still has some healing to do? Don’t you love Peter? I love God, love the Bible, love how the Holy Spirit inspired these accounts to be recorded, love Peter for being so much like me. I have had these same thoughts, and traveled over this same ground. Isn’t this how we think at some point in our journey with God? Jesus doesn’t rebuke Peter. But notice what Jesus says.]

So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first. [What is Jesus saying here? Is He focusing on earthly success, accolades, wealth, or on the new heaven and earth, when Jesus comes again? And when He comes again isn’t it true that every single sacrifice or thing we gave up here for Jesus will pale in comparison to what we receive there? What of the idea that the first will be last and the last will be first? What is valued most in God’s kingdom? When all power was given to Jesus in John 8, what did Jesus do? He washed dirty feet. In Philippians 2 it describes Jesus who was equal with God giving up all His power and position and humbling Himself all the way to death on the cross in order to uplift us—and therefore Jesus is elevated to the highest position of honor and glory. The sacrifice of Jesus reveals the sharp contrast between Satan and Jesus. Satan’s kingdom runs on power over others, taking from others to elevate self—a few powerful elites rising over the masses, making up various rules or laws that are enforced upon the masses to exploit, control, and dominate the masses for the benefit of the ruling elites. This is true of every human government in history. And Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world. In Jesus kingdom the one with the most power sacrifices or gives the most for the benefit of the least. Jesus gave up everything that was rightfully His in order to benefit us. And those who live like Jesus will give of themselves for the benefit of others. Then Jesus tells an incredible parable that doesn’t make sense at all to the thinking of this world.]

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I



will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’

“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” (Matthew 19:16-20:16 NKJV)

[What do you think of this parable? What is Jesus trying to teach? Is the landowner being unfair? Who are the actors in this parable? Who is the landowner? Who are the workers? What are the wages? This is a great parable because it exposes the fallacy of imposed law – the lie of penal (legal) salvation. The workers who worked one hour got the same pay as those who worked all day. What did those who worked all day think? What do you initially think when you hear this story? What if we added to the story that those who worked all day were people of color while those who worked only one hour were white – and they all got the same pay? Is that fair? It is totally unfair if we have an imposed-law view, but if we have a design-law view and understand how reality works, we immediately see just how fair God’s kingdom is. The payment is eternal life; this is the reward. The field is the earth, where we work with Jesus to save souls. Those who worked all day had salvation early in their lives and the privilege of working with God and, therefore, coming to know Him and His truths more fully and growing in character and skill in God’s methods. They applied His methods early in their lives and became more skilled in laboring for Him and applying His principles, which means they became more mature in character than those who worked only an hour. The thief on the cross came at the last hour and got the same pay (eternal life), but he did not have a lifetime of growing in friendship with God. But if one holds the human-law model, the penal lie, then this parable appears unfair. This is why the Pharisees hated what Jesus taught!]

So, what is treasure in heaven?

## SUNDAY

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The lesson is about Noah and how Noah’s life drastically changed when he followed God’s command to build an ark and preach about the coming Flood.



Read second paragraph,

Noah could have spent his time and resources building a home for himself, but he chose to make a drastic change in his life and to spend 120 years of that life in following the call of God to build the ark. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 47).

Yes, Noah had the freedom to choose to spend his time and resources on himself—but he could not do that if he also wanted to:

- Be loyal to God
- Keep open the avenue for the promised Messiah
- Save his family
- Save friends and other humans
- Save the animals
- Save himself

Yes, Noah had a choice, and it was a choice between life and death, not just temporal life and death, but eternal life and death. Noah's choice was made from a heart that loved and trusted God, and a heart that wanted to fulfill God's purpose, a right heart. That is why Noah is described as a right or righteous man because his heart had been set right with God.

Read third paragraph,

Many skeptics today dismiss the story of the Flood as a myth, often based on scientific speculations about the known laws of nature. This is nothing new. “The world before the Flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed. The recurring seasons had come in their order. Heretofore rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew. The rivers had never yet passed their boundaries, but had borne their waters safely to the sea. Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks.” — Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 96. Before the Flood, people argued that a flood could never come based on a faulty understanding of reality; after the Flood, based on a faulty understanding of reality, they argue that it never came to begin with. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 47).

Do we find the same dynamic at work today but in reverse? My blog for the week is [God's Promises and the Climate Change Lies Part 1](#) and is part one of a two part blog on the current climate change lies.

If you approach life from a biblical worldview, then you understand that there are two antagonistic forces at war on planet Earth—God's kingdom of truth, love, and freedom versus Satan's kingdom of lies, selfishness, and coercion.

These two systems originate from two different living beings: our infinite God of love, who is the source of all truth, love, righteousness, purity, holiness, virtue, goodness, and life itself, and



Satan, who is the originator of lies, selfishness, evil, pain, suffering, disease, deformity, corruption, and death.

God's agencies of light battle against Satan's agents of darkness; truth and love war against lies and selfishness. And this battle enters into every phase of our existence.

God is constantly seeking to lead us out of the darkness of misunderstanding, confusion, and error and into the light of truth. But throughout human history, Satan has been persistently and effectively introducing lies, false narratives, which are intended to replace the truth and entrap hearts and minds in fear and selfishness.

In Eden, God warned that breaking trust with Him and violating the laws He built life to operate upon would result in ruin and death. Satan advanced an alternative narrative—that God lied, that sin does not result in death, and that God was not giving the warning to protect humans from self-inflicted injury and death but rather to prevent them from becoming more powerful and godlike so that God could hoard power and control for Himself. Sadly, Adam and Eve believed the false narrative and humanity became corrupted by sin.

Cain also accepted a false narrative and rejected God's directions, substituting his own works in place of God's provision. In doing so, he was unavoidably corrupted; his rejection of truth and God's instructions led to uncontrolled jealousy of his brother Abel, whom he eventually murdered.

At the time of Noah, God sent a message of impending climate disaster: The world would be destroyed by a worldwide flood in 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Noah faithfully preached that message, warning Earth's inhabitants of the coming climate disaster and offering them the only means of escape—getting on the ark he was building (2 Peter 2:5).

But the ungodly, following Satan's leading, rejected God's warning and presented an alternative narrative. You can imagine these deniers of God mocking Noah as an extremist, an alarmist, a crazy person. They would point to the "science" that proved rain had never occurred, that the waters of the seas and rivers had never left their shores. They would claim that it was scientifically impossible for a flood to happen. They would counter God's revelation with scientific measurements from nature, claiming that there were no such things as floods.

What happened? Jesus shed light on this, saying:

**As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood** came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).





Despite Noah's preaching of the impending flood for 120 years, the people didn't know, they didn't understand, they didn't recognize what was about to happen. Why? Because they accepted the false narrative and rejected the message of truth coming from God.

If you lived back in Noah's day, with your current belief in God and the Bible, who would you have believed: Noah or the media and scientific experts of the day?

Jesus said something similar would happen in our day: As His second coming approaches, people will be unaware of and will be unprepared for His return. Why? Because they, like the wicked antediluvians, will reject the message of God and, instead, choose to believe the false narrative that comes from Satan.

And one of Satan's false narratives deluding the world today is a direct denial, rejection, and replacement of a promise given to humanity by God in the aftermath of the Flood:

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV 84).

God's promise is that our climate and seasons will continue stably until the second coming of Christ—that is, "as long as the earth endures."

But the lie of Satan, the false narrative of this corrupt world, is that of "climate change," climate disaster, the ending of human life through the destruction of the climate.

And just like the antediluvians, we must decide which view we believe: the godless, the evolutionists, the pundits of this world, the same people who foisted COVID mandates upon the world, restricted our liberties, and injured our children—or our Creator?

What is the impact on people who believe the climate change falsehood? Does that message inspire people with hope, reduce fear, bring people together in love, and result in greater freedom and liberty—or does that anti-biblical message incite fear, stir conflict, inspire restrictions of liberty, and lead to coercion and control?

Understand this clearly:

- **We are not facing a global climate disaster—we are facing a global spiritual disaster.**
- We are not facing man-made global warming—we are facing man-made global coldness of heart; Jesus said, "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Satan blinds people to reality by getting them to focus on something emotional as a distraction to what is really happening:



The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV84).

Satan's end-time push is active and aggressive and turns the mind away from God, away from the Bible, away from the hope of a new heaven and new earth, to a future in which we supposedly destroy ourselves through overpopulation and climate disaster. Thus, we must save ourselves through activities that actually harm the people—the many various solutions proposed by the so-called “green” movement. Their proposed solutions are anti-human, anti-science, and anti-liberty, and they are pro-elite, designed to help the ruling class dominate and control others. The green movement of climate change propogandists is a movement of the godless bent on destroying the image of God in people and the liberty of conscience.

The purpose and goal of the climate change proponents is to increase chaos, disorder, confusion, uncertainty, and fear so that people, longing for security and safety, will accept a totalitarian ruler who uses force to restore order.

So when you hear the climate change fear purveyors, remember God's promise that the seasons will not change “as long as the Earth endures,” reject their lies, and cling to the truth as it is in Jesus.

In my blog this next Thursday I will unpack in part 2 the lies about CO2 and how burning fossils fuels is not destroying the planet, but doing the exact opposite, making the planet more habitable, more green, more human friendly, which Satan hates and the godless, the evolutionists, the green movement purveyors are not advancing God's kingdom—but Satan's anti-god, anti-human thriving, false narrative designed to incite fear and justify totalitarian beastly control.

## **MONDAY**

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The lesson focuses on Abraham trusting God, leaving his home, and following God's calling in his life.

The lesson emphasizes that through Abraham all the families on the earth would be blessed. Why? What is that about? It is about the promise of Genesis 3:15, the promised Messiah that would crush the serpent's head and save humanity from sin. God reveals in this promise to Abraham that it is through Abraham's descendants that the promised Messiah would come.

God gives Abraham, in addition to the promise that all the nations or families of the earth would be blessed through the Messiah, that his descendants would inherit the land. And the lesson points out that this promise was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is important because Abraham had other children and this makes it clear the promises were not given to Ishmael, or to Esau, but through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



But what about the land of Israel today? Is the nation state of Israel today part of this same promise?

There is no doubt that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob promising that that region of land would be given to them and their descendants and that through them the promised Messiah would come. But does that mean the nation-state of Israel today is part of that promise, or is it possible that we may have missed a larger promise from God because we have remained focused on that smaller regional promise? Is it possible that this promise to Abraham and his descendants is a dual-fulfillment prophecy and we have not fully appreciated its larger applications?

The Bible is filled with dual prophecies and promises:

- Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the second coming of Christ (Joel 2:28–32) is also applied by Peter to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–21).
- Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 both start out referring to an earthly king and then transition to the fall of Lucifer.
- Jesus' prophecy about the second coming is also blended with the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).

In all these dual-fulfillment prophecies, there is a lesser application and a greater application—the lesser is regional; the greater is global.

The promise given to Adam and Eve is the promise given to the entire human race, for all humans were in Adam and Eve. The promise given to Abraham was a regional fulfillment of that global promise. It was the promise that through Abraham's family the earlier promise would be realized; that through Abraham's genetic family, the Seed of the woman that will deliver the descendants of Adam from sin and death will come. This is the focus of Scripture, the plan of salvation. This is why the Bible's focus is on Abraham's children and not the Chinese or Eskimos, not because God doesn't love all people—He does—but because the Messiah was not going to come through those other branches of the human family. The Bible even continues to narrow our focus as we get closer to Christ's arrival. We don't follow all of Abraham's descendants, such as Ishmael's or Esau's children, but only Jacob's line because it is through Jacob's children that the greater promise would be realized. And eventually, we follow only Judah, the ten tribes to the north being assimilated and dispersed.

And what was the promise given to Adam and repeated to Abraham? That a Descendant of theirs, a real human, would come and destroy sin and Satan and save the human race from eternal death.

The covenant with Abraham is the same covenant that was given to Adam, but with Abraham we now have the identification of the specific branch of the human family through whom the Messiah would come. And with the recommunication of the covenant to Abraham, God gives a dual-fulfillment prophecy concerning the land: 1) A smaller, local, regional promise that Abraham's genetic descendants would inherit the land of Canaan in order to fulfill their mission to be the genetic family through whom Jesus would be born; and 2) the larger, global, spiritual fulfillment, that the true descendants of Abraham, those who are like Abraham in faith and character would inherit the entire earth!



The covenant with and promises to Abraham focus on two promised lands. The local application is the one in which Abraham's genetic decedents are the branch of the human family through whom God accomplishes the promise of Genesis 3:15 and through whom the Messiah is born. This local regional promise to Abraham informs him that his children would inherit the land in Canaan for the purpose of fulfilling their mission of being the avenue through whom Messiah would come so that Jesus can fulfill God's greater promise, the covenant of grace given in Genesis 3:15, and crush the serpent's head so that the "meek will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)—the true Promised Land.

- The genetic descendants inherited Canaan in order to be the avenue for Jesus our Savior to be born and fulfill the covenant given to the entire human family in Genesis 3:15 so that ...
- ... the spiritual descendants of Abraham—all those who have faith like Abraham—will inherit the entire planet, the earth made new.

Satan has tricked much of the Christian (and Jewish) world today into believing that the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's children to inherit the land are exclusively to genetic descendants occupying a small strip of land in the Middle East. God's promise is much bigger than that. The promise for the genetic descendants to occupy the small land of Canaan has been fulfilled—Jesus has come. Jesus has confronted Satan, and Jesus has won the victory. Now the promises to Abraham are to be fulfilled on the global, not regional, scale when Jesus returns and we, the faithful, finally inherit the earth.

Here is the biblical evidence for this position:

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7).

This is the regional promise for the genetic descendants to occupy Canaan for the purpose of being the branch of the human family through which the Messiah would be born.

The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you" (Genesis 13:14–17 NIV84).

This is the larger, global, promise—that the entire earth (east, west, north, south, all points of the compass) will be given to the people of God; the earth will be made new, and those who are like Abraham in character, in faith, whose hearts have been circumcised from sin, will be heirs to this promise and inherit the earth.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin and a highly trained Jewish theologian of the first century, wrote:



You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26–29).

Jesus Himself explicitly told the Jewish leaders of His day these very truths, that genetics did not determine who is considered an heir of Abraham and who would inherit the promise. We find Jesus' explanation to the Jewish authorities in John 8:34-45:

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. [If we don't experience freedom from sin through Jesus, then we are not part of the family of God—that is, not part of Abraham's family.] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." [Jesus tells them plainly that even though they are genetic descendants of Abraham, God doesn't see them as being children of Abraham, but children of a different father. Note, the Jews, to whom Jesus was speaking, understood this point and protested, claiming their genetic heritage.]

"Abraham is our father," they answered. [Jesus' response disallows their genetics as being a valid basis for being considered a descendant of Abraham.]

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. [Those recognized by God as children of Abraham are those who have the same faith in God as Abraham did and who act on that faith as Abraham did.] As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." [Jesus again tells them that their heritage is not determined genetically but characterologically. Who do they look like, whose image do they bear, that of God or that of Satan? They have embraced another father, but again, they protest and claim a higher father than Abraham.]

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." [The Jews claimed God as their Father because God created humanity. But Jesus disallows this claim as well, for we are born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and Jesus already said that those who remain slaves to sin have no permanent place in the family of God. Only those who, through Jesus, are freed from sin become part of the family of God and are considered children of Abraham. Note Jesus' answer.]

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a



liar and the father of lies” (John 8:34–45 NIV84). [Jesus unequivocally destroys the idea that genetics determines who is an heir of Abraham, and He makes it clear that it is all about faith, character, love, and trust like Abraham.]

The dual-fulfillment promise to Abraham had two starting points and two ending points.

- The starting point of the global promise was in Eden, in Genesis 3:15; the starting point of the regional promise was with Abraham when he was called out of Ur.
- The ending point of the global promise is when Jesus recreates the earth and the meek inherit it; the ending point of the regional promise for the genetic people to be the avenue for the Messiah and take the gospel to the world was when they crucified Christ and Jesus said to them, “Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38 NIV84).

Jesus masterfully weaves these two aspects of the promises together in His prophetic description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming as described in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. The destruction of Jerusalem occurs because the regional fulfillment of the promise has ended. The genetic descendants kept open the avenue, Messiah had come, but they rejected Him and now there is no further purpose for a regional land to be occupied by them. The gospel must now go to the world. It is time for the global application, which culminates in the second coming and the meek inheriting the earth.

Israel as a political entity today is not the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a great nation. That great nation is the global nation whose ruler is from the line of David. As the angel said to the virgin Mary about her Son, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:32, 33 NIV84).

And the writer of Hebrews agrees with our assessment. Hebrews tells us that the faithful of God in Bible times—Abel, Enoch, Noah, along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived “in the promised land” (Hebrews 11:9)—“did not receive the things promised” (Hebrews 11:13), that they were “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). “All of these people” of faith “did not receive the things promised; they saw them and welcomed them from a distance. ... They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

The Bible says that “all of these people” did not receive the things promised; note who is included on that list—Enoch, who was taken to heaven! Enoch, who has already received eternal life, a glorified body, who currently lives in heaven with Jesus, surely he has received the promise, hasn’t he? Not in its complete and fullest sense. What was Abraham promised? That his spiritual descendants would inherit the earth. This promise will not be realized until Jesus comes again, all sin and sinners are eliminated, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and the earth is made new to be the home of the righteous. Then the promise will be realized and we, who have faith like Abraham, will receive our inheritance of a goodly land, a beautiful home, perfect and flawless that God intended Adam and Eve to possess. It is true that the meek will inherit the earth, for what God has promised He will fulfill.



## TUESDAY

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The lesson focuses our attention on Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the last paragraph the lesson points out that Abraham bargained with God to spare the city.

When God revealed to Abraham His plan to destroy Sodom and the other cities, why didn't Abraham say, "God said, I believe it, that's all there is to it"?

If Abraham had faith in God shouldn't Abraham have simply said, "If you say so sir"?

Was God upset with Abraham for questioning Him?

Is this an example for us? Does God want blind, unthinking, servant-like obedience, or does God want understanding friends who obey because we agree? And if we don't understand what God has said, and we still love God and want to obey Him, does God want us to ignorantly go along or to talk to Him, to question Him?

The lesson points us to Genesis 18, let's read some of this from The Remedy:

When the men finished their meal, they stood up and headed off toward Sodom. Abraham walked with them for a while to say his goodbyes. Then the Lord turned toward his two companions and said, "Should I hide from Abraham the therapeutic action I must take in order to protect Abraham's descendants from corruption, so that they will become a great and powerful nation – a blessing to all the peoples of the earth – through whom I will fulfill my promise of grace? For I know Abraham and have chosen him to head the family through whom I will fulfill my promise to save humanity. He will teach his children and their families to live in harmony with me and my design for life, to do what is right and exercise good judgment, and I will fulfill through Abraham what I promised him I would do."

So the Lord said to Abraham, "The wail of discord, caused by deviations from my design of love, coming from Sodom and Gomorrah, is so great and their selfishness so malignant that no more time given them will do any good. I have come in person to examine if their selfishness is beyond healing. If not, I will know."

The two angels, in the appearance of men, left and headed toward Sodom, but God stayed with Abraham. Abraham's heart was heavy with concern for the Lord, and in empathy he said, "In the act of cleansing, will you sweep away the spiritually healthy, godly people, together with the malignantly unhealthy – the terminally selfish, who are beyond healing? What if there are fifty spiritually healthy, godly people in the city? Will you really eradicate the whole city rather than seek to uplift it through the righteous? Let it never be that you would do such a thing; you would never destroy the spiritually healthy in order to eradicate the terminally selfish. You would never treat the godly like the wicked – never! Surely, the Ruler of all the earth will do what is right!"



The Lord said, “If I find fifty spiritually healthy, godly people in Sodom, I will not remove it.”  
(Genesis 18:16-26 REM).

And Abraham keeps negotiating all the way down to ten and God keeps agreeing all the way down to ten.

What does this tell us about God?

## WEDNESDAY

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The lesson focuses our attention on Jacob who becomes Israel.

How did Jacob become Israel?

When did Jacob become Israel?

What was necessary for Jacob to become Israel?

Could Jacob become Israel on his own?

What took so long?

Is there a lesson in this for us?

## THURSDAY

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The lesson focuses on Moses—how old was Moses when he started his ministry for God—when He went back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and lead the people out of bondage?

He was 80 years old! Does this mean perhaps, that Moses, while choosing God over the riches of Egypt, still had some things to learn, some maturing to do before he was ready to fulfill the mission God had for Him?

Does the fact that Moses used his own might to murder an overseer at age 40 give some evidence to the fact that while Moses was choosing God and his people over Egypt, he still had some spiritual maturing to do before he was ready to fulfill the mission?

And what does it tell us about how God determines who is useful in His cause versus how humans determine who is useful?

- What are the chances today, that an 80-year-old murderer would become the president of the general conference?
- What about a known cheat and fraud who tricked his own father in order to steal his brother's birthright?
- What about an adulterer and murderer who seduced a friend's wife, got her pregnant, and then had the friend murdered to try and cover it up?





- What about an uneducated fisherman who publicly curses and swears that he doesn't know Jesus?

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

When Moses returned to Egypt, was he immediately received as a hero and leader by the Hebrews?  
Or, perhaps some remembered him as a murderer?