



## 2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 4 How God Rescues Us

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

### SABBATH

---

Read Memory Text:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5 ESV).

The lesson starts by recalling the rescue of 18-month-old Jessica McClure back in 1987 who fell down an 8 inch well casing, and how the rescuers piped air down to her and work feverishly for two days and finally rescued her from that well.

Then the lesson goes on to say in the last paragraph,

There's nothing quite as gripping as a good rescue story, and Paul, in Ephesians 2:1–10, gives us an up-close-and-personal view of the grandest, most sweeping rescue mission of all time—God's efforts to redeem humanity. The drama of the story is heightened by knowing that we are not mere spectators of someone else's rescue but witnesses of our own. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 30).

Do any questions come to your mind? Do you say, yes, this is true God is rescuing us—but wait a minute—from what?

Do you instantly think God is rescuing us from:

- Sin?
- Death?
- Satan?
- The carnal nature?

Do you ever think Jesus is rescuing us from the just punishment God must inflict upon sinners for sin? Have you ever thought that Jesus has paid our legal penalty in order to rescue us from legal condemnation and God's eternal punishment?

Understand, rescuing us from sin and rescuing us from inflicted punishment for sin are not the same. These two ideas may sound similar, but that are not.



Rescuing someone from metastatic cancer and rescuing someone from a doctor who will kill them because they have metastatic cancer are not the same.

Thirty years ago, my father unexpectedly died at age 57. His death brought home to me the sickness in this world. I lost my satisfaction for this world. I became very motivated to see Jesus come again, because I realized that when Jesus returns we can be with our departed loved ones again.

I read texts in the Bible about how we can hasten the day of the Lord, and how when the gospel is preached as a witness to all nations then the end will come.

I wanted that to happen, and I wondered why hasn't Jesus already come, certainly the entire world has heard about Jesus. I rejected the theory that there was some hermit in some cave in some isolated part of the world that had never heard of Jesus and if we could find that hermit and tell him about Jesus then we could hasten the day.

Instead, I examined the history of Christianity since Jesus ascended and realized that something changed from how Jesus presented the gospel to how the church presents the gospel.

In my studies, I came to realize that the reason Jesus hasn't returned is that there is a counterfeit version of Christianity that dominates the world and the Christianity that Jesus taught must be presented.

And this week, as I have been preparing for Ralph's memorial, I was convicted again of the need to make plain the true gospel that is to lighten the world and when presented will hasten the day of our Lord's appearing. This is the true message of the true rescue mission of Jesus, to understand from what Jesus is rescuing us and how we can tell others this good news. So in our class today, that is what I am going to do.

Understand, my motivation is not to win an argument; it is not to prove one church right and another wrong; or to win a theological debate. My motivation is to hasten the coming of Jesus and to do that I believe we must advance the true gospel.

Consider what I present in this light and ask, is there merit in what I am presenting? Do you agree or not? It is okay to disagree, every person must be persuaded in their own mind. But if you disagree, please consider what evidence you have for your disagreement, and come show it to me. If you agree with me—then I would ask that you join with us at Come and Reason and begin sharing this healing message about God with those in your family, church, and community, and together we can hasten the day and meet Jesus face to face, and see our loved ones again.

So we must answer the question, from what Jesus rescuing us? Sin itself, or is Jesus' mission to rescue us from God's wrath, from the legal penalty that God in His righteous anger must inflict upon us?

Is any of the following commonly taught in Christianity—and if so, do you believe any of it?



- God is a righteous judge whose holiness requires that He accurately judge sinners and that in order to maintain His justice He must enforce His law
- Therefore, God, in justice, must inflict the penalty of death upon sinners, God must, for all who refuse His salvation, use His power to do His strange act of killing unrepentant sinners so that His law can be maintained and justice can be served
- But God loves us and rather than immediately punish sinners with the just death penalty that we deserve. God sent His Son, and even though His Son is totally innocent, God laid upon Jesus the sins of all human sinners and then punished Jesus by executing Him in our place in order to satisfy His demand for justice and to maintain the integrity of the law. Because of the sacrifice of innocent Jesus, God now proclaims that He can accept the legal payment of Jesus' blood to our heavenly account for all who claim it and He will declare them legally righteous, even though they, in reality, remain unrighteous.

Have you ever heard anything like this taught in Christianity? Have you ever believed anything like this?

If you are an SDA Christian—do you believe the SDA church was called into existence to take a special end-time message to the world that is intended to prepare the world for Christ's second coming?

What if I could demonstrate to you from both Scripture, and historical SDA documents, that as long as we present matters in the legal way I just read, we are failing to do that work and thus we are contributing to the delay rather than hastening the day of Jesus' return?

First though, let me be clear for any listeners who are not familiar with the SDA church. When I talk about the mission or calling of the SDA church, understand that its God-given mission is not one of sectarianism. It's special, God-blessed message is NOT—"you must join the SDA denomination because salvation is only found by membership in the SDA church." Such religious narcissism is what the Jews 2000 years ago fell into. The Israelites had also been given a special mission to prepare the world for the first advent of the Messiah, but they falsely concluded that they were blessed with exclusive salvation and only by being Jewish could people be saved (remember Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, the wise men from the East who worshiped baby Jesus?). If we have any idea that we hold an exclusive license to salvation and our mission is to get people to join the SDA denomination in order to be saved, we are off message and delaying the coming of Christ.

The message we have been given is found in the 3 angels and it is a message to call people to worship God as Creator, as the Builder of reality, and to stop worshiping the legal fictional dictator god that comes out of the Romanization of Christianity when Roman imperial law replaced God's design law in the church and which misrepresents God's government as functioning like human governments—imposed laws with a punishing ruler to is required to use his power to inflict punishments on rule-breakers.



The critical question that the entire war in heaven and earth centers upon, is how we understand God's law functions, because whatever we believe about God's law **determines** the character of the God we worship.

If we believe God's law functions like human law, made up rules that require oversight and enforcement, then we believe justice requires inflicted punishment, and God is thought of as the source of pain, suffering, and inflicted death—all in the name of justice of course. And salvation is the means whereby something is done to God to get God paid, appeased, satisfied, propitiated, to have something done to hide us and protect us from God for if we didn't have an intercessor pleading our case before this law-enforcing god then he would be required by his holiness, justice, and his hatred of sin to lash out and torture and kill us—but the torture will be only as much as we deserve.

But if we worship the Creator and realize that God's laws are the laws that reality is built and functions upon, and that life is only possible in harmony with these laws, then we realize that sin takes one out of harmony with God and life and results in death. As the Bible says, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), "sin when full grown brings forth death" (James 1:15), "those who sow to the carnal nature from than nature reap destruction" (Galatians 6:8).

When we return to Creator worship, we realize that the only possible outcome from sin, without divine intervention, is ruin and death and that God is not the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, but God is the source of life, of health, of our healing and salvation.

The question over God's character is determined by how we answer the question over God's law. And this is how Satan began his rebellion in heaven, and how it spread to earth, and how the rebellion has persisted in the church, and it is the issue upon which it will finally be concluded. And if we want to hasten the day of Christ's return then we must get this right.

I will use the writings of E.G. White (EGW) as historical documentation for the message that the Adventist church was supposed to take to the world. I will also support this from Scripture, and then contrast it with documentation from official Adventists publications to demonstrate that the message of God's design law and character of love has been replaced with human law and the penal legal dictator god that comes from accepting the lie that God's law functions like human law. This wrong idea about law distorts all of our doctrines (our correct and right doctrines) to such a degree that this single falsehood has prevented the church from fulfilling its mission to hasten the coming of the Lord.

In the introduction to the book *The Great Controversy*, EGW wrote:

**Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are**



**substituted for the law of God**, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator**, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; **his endeavors to set aside the divine law**, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers. (The Great Controversy x.1)

**The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah**, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. (The Great Controversy 582).

What kinds of laws to humans make? God is Creator and He builds reality, space, time, energy, matter and life—His laws are the protocols reality operates upon.

Created beings cannot do this, so we make up rules and call them laws, but our rules require external policing and enforcement.

The final battle is between the belief in a god who functions no differently than a human dictator, a being who makes up rules and uses external power to enforce his rules—the justice of inflicted punishments for rule breaking versus the Creator God whose law is the very basis of life itself and who uses power not to punish, but to heal, save, and deliver.

In John 13, when Jesus was given all power—He immediately got up and washed 12 pairs of dirty feet. He acted out through this service the truth that God uses power to cleanse sinners from sin, to remove our guilt, shame, rebellion, fear, selfishness, to heal, to make us pure. Jesus did not use power to have a tribunal or to inflict punishment. That is Satan's method based on imposed law.

Notice, the historical record the view the SDA church is supposed to teach regarding Satan's position on God's law from the very opening of the war in heaven:

**In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. (The Desire of Ages 761).

The historical Adventist message was supposed to teach that it is Satan's position that God's law requires inflicted punishment. But instead the church has accepted Satan's view as true, that God's law does require God to punish sin. Accepting Satan's lie results in God being presented as the source of death, the one from whom we must be protected. And our theologies take on a legal dimension with



Jesus working to appease, propitiate, and assuage the anger and wrath of the Father, to hide us from the Father so the Father won't kill us.

"God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not - flattery and deceit. He had sought to **falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government**, claiming that God was **not just in imposing laws** upon the angels; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself. **It was therefore necessary to demonstrate** before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, **that God's government is just, His law perfect**. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works." (Patriarchs and Prophets 42).

Some might argue that the statement "claiming that God was **not just in imposing laws** upon the angels" means that God is just to impose laws upon His creatures, and therefore God's laws are imposed just like human laws. But this is a double lie and demonstrates the sophistication and subtlety of Satan's deceptions.

Consider someone saying, "John is not just in beating his wife"—what is the lie? that John is not just and because we know John is just it therefore must be just for John to beat his wife; or is the real lie the imbedded accusation that John beats his wife at all? The lie here is that God imposes law but presenting it as an unjust thing, leads people who know that God is just to argue that no, God is not unjust, He is just, so they promote Satan's lie that God imposes law. It would be like saying, we know John is just so it is just for John to beat his wife.

We reject the lie that God is not just, He is just; and we also reject the imbedded lie that God imposes laws.

From the historical record what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, EGW, the same author who wrote the quote above, describes the laws of heaven before Satan's rebellion:

**But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.** In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing 109).

What kind of law can be in operation and beings live in harmony with it, but they haven't even been informed about it or thought of it?



This is design law—as I have described before, consider Isaac Newton discovering (not creating) the law of gravity and then telling his friends, “Hey, I have discovered the law of gravity.” And he describes that law. Can’t you see them saying—gravity is a law—“wow, I never thought of that, it is just how things work.”

This is God’s law, how things work, the protocols of life, including the law of love.

Satan’s position is that God is arbitrary and His law is nothing more than made up rules and that God uses His power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. This view of God as a legal enforcer and punisher is what happens when we replace God’s design laws with Romanism, imposed human laws.

Here is the historical message that the SDA church is supposed to be presenting to the world:

Many conceive of the **Christian's God as a being whose attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge**, a harsh, exacting creditor. The Creator has been **pictured as a being** who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, **that He may visit judgment upon them**. In the minds of thousands, love and sympathy and tenderness are associated with the character of Christ, while **God is regarded as the law-giver, inflexible, arbitrary, devoid of sympathy** for the beings He has made. (7LtMs, Ms 41, 1892, par. 1)

**Never was there a greater error. Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love.** It is from Him that we receive every good gift. He is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. **Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature.** Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love... (7LtMs, Ms 41, 1892, par. 2)

Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth.** He had caused truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God.** Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 6)

Jesus, the Word made flesh, God in humanity, revealed the truth about God and He demonstrated in His life and all His parables and teachings that God’s kingdom is not of this world, that God’s



government is not of this world, that God's law is not of this world, and that God does not run His universe like a Roman dictator.

The Apostles accepted the truth as Jesus brought it and Saul, who prior to his conversion, used the imposed law methods, the power of the state, the idea that justice requires the use of power to coerce, to inflict punishment, but then He met Jesus on the Damascus road, and after his conversion, Paul wrote that "every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind" (Romans 14:5) and that we present truth in love and leave others free. Paul taught that it is from sin that we reap destruction, not from God.

The New Testament church practiced the principles of God's living law of love that transforms hearts and minds and they did not seek political power, to get new governors, or new senators in Rome, or to retaliate and punish those who were persecuting them. Instead, they lived out God's love and the gospel spread across the Roman Empire. So Satan changed his tactics from trying to destroy the believers in Jesus to infecting their understanding of what Jesus did and how God's kingdom works by returning to his original lie that God's law functions like human law, imposed rules that requires God to inflict penalties for breaking.

Eusebius, the first church historian wrote:

With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven." S.L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

Here is another historical quote that presents what the Advent message is supposed to be:

**The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God,** the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. (The Great Controversy 22).

The SDA Church was specifically called into existence to call people back to worshiping God as Creator, this means we reject the Romanization of God's law and government, reject the imperial, imposed view of law and justice and return to understanding God's laws as design laws. This is documented in the historical record:

**There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be, holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed.** To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (Prophets and Kings 625).

Human law can be repealed and changed but the laws upon which reality is built cannot.

The Roman church, in attempting to change God's law, reveals that it believes that God's law is imposed. What church ever voted to change the law of respiration or gravity? Why not? Because they





cannot! So what does it mean if a church does vote to change God's law? That they do not view God's law as design law, but as imposed rules. This is what Rome did, when they deleted the second commandment, split the tenth into two, and changed the fourth to the third and the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday. These changes to the law are not the primary problem or concern, they are the evidence, the fruit, the proof and the result of believing the base lie that God's law functions like human law.

And all Protestant churches still accept this lie about God's law and still promote to some degree a false penal/legal system with God made out to be the source of inflicted torment and death as punishment for sin. Historical Adventism taught that the question over God's law and thus His character and government is the question that brings the controversy to its conclusion:

**Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.** Upon this battle we are now entering--**a battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of **fable** and tradition...(Prophets and Kings 625).

EGW describes in great detail, in many places, that God's law is design law, again I am documenting what the Adventist church is supposed to be teaching and the message that we are supposed to be taking to the world:

**The transgression of the physical law is the transgression of God's law.** Our Creator is Jesus Christ. He is the Author of our being. He has created the human structure. **He is the Author of physical laws as He is the Author of the moral law.** And the human being who is careless and reckless of the habits and practices that concern his physical life and health sins against God (Kress Collection 46.3).

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws** that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, **are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--**a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will.** To transgress His law, **physical, mental, or moral,** is to place one's self **out of harmony** with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. Education 99).

## WEDNESDAY

---

In the lesson's last paragraph is the following quote:

By coming to dwell with us, **Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels...** But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme



into which “angels desire to look,” and it will be their study throughout endless ages. **Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings** will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of **Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love.** [The lesson stops the quote right here, but the next sentence is crucial] In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the **law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven** (The Desire of Ages 19).

But turning from all lesser representations, **we behold God in Jesus.** Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give... "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life.** (The Desire of Ages 21).

The mission of the SDA church is to evangelize the world for Christ's return by taking the special message of the three angels of Revelation 14 to the world. **This special message only becomes the final message of mercy when we present it through design law** calling people back to worship God as Creator and stop presenting it through Roman imposed law which presents Him as a dictator. EGW didn't use the term design law for this, she used the term natural law. Notice again the historical evidence for what I am saying, she wrote:

**Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being.** **All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of **the laws that He has established.** And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and the penalty that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will... **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.** (Testimonies to the Church vol. 3, p. 161).

The special message of the third angel given to the SDA church requires that we present all our specific doctrinal truths in their right setting of God's design laws, the protocols that He built reality to operate upon and free them from the Roman imperial law lie.

When we do this, then we will finally present God in His true light. We will then give Him the glory He deserves and will be empowered to call people to make a right judgment about God so people stop



believing God is a dictator, the source of death, and worship Him as Jesus revealed Him to be our Creator, Healer, and Savior—the source of life.

But sadly, the SDA church has failed to do this and in 1888 at the GC when this message came forward, the church leadership instead of embracing it, rejected it and clung to the imposed law construct and has been teaching the Roman view of how God's law functions ever since. The church sadly, through its many publications teaches that God is the legal enforcer of imposed punishment for justice sake. After that tragic 1888 conference EGW wrote the following about the leadership of the SDA church who attended that meeting:

**But all the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ. (1888 1478.2)**

She went on to write:

I tell you, God is testing us now, just now. **The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. That light** is shining now, and how hard it has been for proud hearts to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour; how hard to get out of **the rut of a legal religion**; how hard for them to **grasp** the rich, free gift of Christ. **Those who have not accepted this offering will not understand anything in regard to that light which fills the whole earth with its glory.** Let every heart now seek the Lord. Let self be crucified, for rich and glorious blessings are awaiting all who shall maintain contrition of soul. With them Jesus can abide; they will let nothing interpose between their souls and God. (Lt10-1892.25)

If we reject design law and cling to imposed Roman law, and continue to teach sin is a legal problem, we end up like the Jews 2000 years ago, religiously hardening our hearts against God, while we cling to correct doctrines.

I have documented from the historical record, the message of God's design law, the truth of His character of love, that we are to take to the world. I have contrasted it with Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law that makes God out to be a dictator and the source of inflicted pain and suffering.

Now, I will document from the record, what message the SDA church, in its official publications, has taken and is still taking to the world. Each one of us must decide, which version of God's law, character, and government do we believe is true?

The original transgression created in the human mind a disposition of enmity against God (Col. 1:21). Consequently **we deserve the displeasure of God**, who is "a consuming fire" against sin (Heb. 12:29; cf. Hab. 1:13). The solemn truth is that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), all are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3; cf. 5:6) and subject to death "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).



**Divine wrath is what Scripture calls God's reaction** to sin and unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). Deliberate rejection of God's revealed will—His law—**provokes His righteous anger or wrath** (2 Kings 17:16-18; 2 Chron. 36:16). G. E. Ladd wrote, "Men are **ethically sinful**; and **when God counts their trespasses against them, he must view them as sinners, as enemies, as objects of divine wrath**; for it is an **ethical and religious necessity that the holiness of God manifests itself in wrath against sin**.".. (Seventh-day Adventists Believe 27, p. 109).

For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became 'a **moral and legal necessity**.' God's 'justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute judgment** on sin and thus on the sinner. **In this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner's place, according to God's will**. The atonement was necessary because sinners stood under the righteous wrath of God. Herein lies the heart of the gospel of forgiveness of sin and the mystery of the cross of Christ: **Christ's perfect righteousness adequately satisfied divine justice, and God is willing to accept Christ's self-sacrifice in place of man's death**. [Remember Satan's lie from the beginning, "every sin must meet its punishment urged Satan. And if God should remit the punishment of sin He would not be a God of truth and justice"? Do you hear how this theology promotes Satan's lie?]

Persons unwilling to accept the atoning blood of Christ **receive no forgiveness of sin**, and are still subject to God's wrath... Christ's self-sacrifice is pleasing to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God's wrath on man's sin**. Through Christ, God's wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself. (*Seventh-day Adventist Believe 27*, p. 111).

Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection? (Whidden, W., *Ministry Magazine*, February 2007.

<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html>)

One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty in order to save us is considered a violation of justice. (emphasis mine) (Rodriguez, A., *Adventist World Review*, December 2007; p. 40).

The Hebrew wording in both Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 was the same: 'and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed.' (9:24, NKJV). Consumed what? In the first case, the offering; in the other, the sinners. What a powerful representation of the plan of salvation. **At the Cross, the 'fire from God,' the wrath of God, 'consumed' the offering, and that was Jesus**. (Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, 3 Quarter 2011, Pacific Press, p. 40).



**The fires of God’s judgment burned themselves out on Him [Jesus],** at Calvary, and all who are in Christ are safe forever beneath His wings. At the cross, Christ was judged as a condemned sinner so that we could be judged as righteous citizens of the heavenly kingdom. He was judged as a criminal so that we could be set free from the destructive fires of eternal loss, both figuratively and, yes, literally, as well. (Goldstein, C., *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* Second Quarter 2023, Three Cosmic Messages, Pacific Press, p. 46)

Who do these quotations say is the source of inflicted death upon Jesus?

What is the barrier and problem, according to these quotes, that must be removed in order for sinners to be saved? God’s anger and wrath!

But the Bible teaches that Jesus is,

“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29 NIV84).

Jesus did not come to take away the wrath of God, or the punishment of God for sin, He came to take away our sinfulness, so that we can *become* righteous. Paul wrote,

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84).

Here, from the historical record, is what the SDA church is supposed to teach:

**God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression;** but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, **to reap that which they have sown.** Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, **every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest.** The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left **no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** (The Great Controversy 36).

God uses power to protect and heal, persistent sin results in the destruction of the faculties sensitive to God and God withdraws His power and the result is ruin and death. This is design law, but the church is teaching that God must use power to inflict punishment and become the executioner of the sentence. Which view do you believe is true? Which God will you choose to worship. These two views are not compatible.

God warned us through Isaiah that this very misunderstanding would occur:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet **we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted** (Isaiah 53:4 NIV84).

He took our terminal sin condition in order to overcome and cure it, but God foreknew that we would



misunderstand and teach that God was the One who struck Him, killed Him. That God is the One from whom death originates and that God inflicts death as punishment for sin. But Jesus said to those who would later crucify Him said,

You belong to your **father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your **father's desire. He was a murderer** from the beginning... (John 8:44)

And Hebrews tells us,

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**— (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).

According to Jesus and Hebrews death originates and comes out from Satan. And death comes from breaking away from God and His design laws for life. Yet, when we accept Satan's lie that God's law functions like human law, we teach God is the source of death—even that God killed His Son and we call that—the killing of an innocent to falsely declare the guilty to be innocent—justice.

Again, from the historical record, what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, note how this stands in stark contrast to the various SDA theologians and publications cited above:

**Satan** saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.** (White, E.G., *Desire of Ages*, p. 761).

The special message given to the SDA church is a call to leave behind the religions of this fallen world, to leave behind the methods of God's enemy, to reject the views of God that make Him out to be the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death, to return to worship God as Creator, the One who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water, and this requires that we reject the Romanization of God's law, we reject the lie that God's law function like human law and embrace the truth that God's laws are the very protocols and principles that reality is built by our Creator to operate upon—like the laws of health, gravity, and physics—and also the moral laws.

Consider what this quotation means in light of all we have said about God's law, and the message we are to take to the world:

“You may have seen some in regard to the righteousness of Christ, but there is truth yet to be seen clearly that should be estimated by you as precious and rare jewel. **You will see the law of God and interpret it to the people in an entirely different light from what you have done in the past.** The law of God will be seen by you as revealing a God of mercy and righteousness. **The atonement made by the stupendous sacrifice will be seen by you in an all together different light.**” (Signs of the Times 11-13-1893).



Human law imposes and inflicts punishments, God's government uses power to protect and heal and never uses external imposing power to compel. From the historical record:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** (The Desire of Ages 759).

## MONDAY

---

Read the third paragraph,

The phrase “by nature children of wrath” points to another daunting reality, as well. While still bearers of the image of God, we have come to understand that there is something deeply awry in us. Living the Christian life, then, is not just a matter of conquering a bad habit or two or overcoming whatever “trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1) are currently threatening. We do not just contend with sins but with sin. We are bent toward rebellion against God and toward self-destruction. Humans, by default, are caught in a pattern of self-destructive, sinful behavior, following the dictates of Satan (Eph. 2:2) and our own innate, sinful desires (Eph. 2:3). Believers once were “by nature the children of wrath.” (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 32).

What is the difference between “sin” and “sins”?

Are we in trouble for our sins? Or are our sins merely the symptoms of the sin condition?

When did you choose to become a sinner? Did you ever make that choice? Or were you, like King David, born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5)? And if you were born with this condition, is it your fault? We are not born guilty or legally condemned, we are born terminal, dead in trespass and sin. And this terminal condition we cannot cure and causes symptoms we call sins. And this is why we need remedy, we must be reborn with new hearts and right spirits to live new lives.

## TUESDAY

---

Read Ephesians 2:4-6:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us



up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6 NIV84).

What does it mean that we were made alive with Christ, raised up with Christ, and seated into rulership with Christ?

## **THURSDAY**

---

Read second paragraph,

Unknown to them, they are in a far worse position than simply being without spiritual life or virtue. In company with all humankind, they are the enemies of the true God and are moving toward a day of destiny and divine judgment. They are “children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Eph. 2:3, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 32).

In light of all we have discussed today, how would you now explain this paragraph?

Is there a difference if we understand this through imposed and design law?





## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

---

For the last 9 years Chip Liles has served as the treasurer of Come and Reason Ministries. He has overseen significant growth in our ministry, the purchase and renovation of this building and has helped us efficiently keep up with all of our financial obligation. On July 1, 2023 Chip moved from Treasurer to general board member. Stephanie Land who was our Treasurer for the first couple of years of our ministry has agreed to resume the role and has moved from general board member to be our Treasurer. I want to give thanks to both Stephanie and Chip, but especially thank Chip for all he has done for us the past 9 years.

Our friend and class member, Dennis Hilton passed away June 28, 2023. **Celebration of Life** for Dennis Hilton will be July 9th, 2023 with visitation with family at 4:00pm & service starting at 4:30pm at Hamilton Community Church 7997 Shallowford Rd. Chattanooga, TN 37421. Meal will follow for family.

### **Dr. Jennings' New Job:**

Dr. Jennings has taken the position as Medical Director of [Honey Lake Clinic](#) in Greenville, Florida.

- Honey Lake Clinic is an accredited holistic Christ-centered residential mental health treatment facility situated on a beautiful 5000-acre retreat with spring fed lakes. The program is staffed by licensed and board-certified mental health professionals and treats both male and female adults on one side of the campus and female adolescents on the other side. Patients typically stay for 30-60 days and the program includes individual and group therapies, equine therapy, hydro therapy, massage, spa treatments, exercise and fitness training, brain-healthy meals planned by a nutritionist—all Christ centered with regular worship services available in the on campus chapel.
- How you can help?
  - Continue your prayers and support of Come and Reason Ministries and share the vision
  - Our vision has been whole person healing through the true gospel of Jesus Christ
  - Working with Honey Lake allows for greater opportunity to take God's whole person healing truths to more people
- Thank you for all your prayers, support, and encouragement during this time of transition. And also thank you for your continued support of Come and Reason Ministries as we seek to share the healing message of God's love with others. We will return to our schedule of Dr. Jennings teaching remotely on most Sabbaths and teaching in person on the second Sabbath followed by potluck.