



## 2023 3Q Ephesians—Lesson 5

### Horizontal Atonement: The Cross and the Church

by Tim Jennings

#### SABBATH

---

Read last paragraph,

In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul sees the cross of Christ as making a dramatic difference, destroying such barriers and walls. Vertically, the Cross dissolves alienation, reconciling humans with God. Horizontally, it reconciles people with each other. The Cross removes enmity and brings peace between Jews and Gentiles, making of them “one new humanity” (Eph. 2:15, NIV). Together they become a new temple, “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22, ESV). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 38).

Do you agree? Does the Cross remove enmity and bring peace between different groups of people?

I agree that it is *supposed* to, but I also observe that those who through history have claimed a belief in the Bible, in Jesus Christ as their Savior, who held up the Cross as the symbol of their faith:

- Went on the Crusades carrying the cross into war
- Burnt people at the stake for believing differently
- Held slaves
- Burned crosses in the yards of people of different backgrounds
- Burned down churches of black Americans

And today there are over 41,000 different Christian groups all claiming the Cross of Jesus Christ and within Christian homes that data shows that:

- Addiction rates are no different than non-Christian homes
- Pornography use no different than non-Christians
- Child and spouse abuse rates are no different than non-Christian homes

So, while I agree that the impact of accepting Jesus as our Savior is supposed to result in unity of people, the breaking down of hostilities, the resolution of enmity and division—that is not what history demonstrates has happened nor what we see happening in the Christian world today. So, the question is why?

If the Cross of Christ is supposed to bring unity, peace, the cessation of hostilities why do we not see that among the people who claim to believe in Jesus?



*Because there is a false gospel, a false Christianity, a counterfeit belief system that has taken the place of true Christianity. It is so close to the genuine, just like an effective counterfeit dollar bill is close to the genuine, that most people don't recognize the counterfeit, but it is lacking a key ingredient that gives it the power to change lives.*

Paul described that this would be the state of the church at the end of time:

But mark this: There will be terrible times **in the last days**. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **having a form of godliness but denying its power**. Have nothing to do with them. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV84).

These people Paul is describing are not the godless, this is not the woke left, the atheist, the agnostic—they certainly don't have a form of godliness. Paul is describing people who have a form of godliness, a religion, a religious system, but they deny the power that transforms lives thus in their religion, in their claims to be believers in Jesus Christ their lives are just as divided, hostile, abusive, selfish as the rest of the world.

And what is the power they deny?

I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is **the power of God for the salvation** of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the **gospel a righteousness** from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “**The righteous will live by faith.**” (Romans 1:16-17 NIV84)

There is genuine good news from God that has power in it that results in actual righteousness, a righteousness that we live out by faith. For Paul elsewhere says:

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).

It is through Jesus that we receive the true gospel and through Jesus that we become righteous and live victoriously. The true gospel causes something real to happen within us and we are changed, transformed, the enmity is taken away, we experience peace with God and unity with others who have also had this gospel transformation occur in their hearts.

But what is this gospel power and what is the counterfeit gospel that dominates the world and denies and obstructs this transforming power?

Last week I presented, from the historical record, the irreconcilable difference between the worshipping God as Creator, understanding His law as design law which causes us to recognize the truth that God



is our healer and Savior, versus the Romanization of Christianity with the imposed human law view of God, His government that causes people to worship Him as a dictator who is the source of inflicted punishment and death for sin.

**It is the lie that God's law is imposed and functions like human law that perverts the gospel and how we understand God's character and government.**

I am going to demonstrate that it is this same single lie, that God's law functions like human law, that results in a form of godliness that is devoid of the power of God to transform lives.

In fact, this lie about God's law makes God out to be an irrational being, a being who is contradictory and unjust, an untrustworthy being that causes us to suspend thinking, to believe without evidence, to believe things that don't make sense and to ultimately distrust God and make up theologies to protect us from Him.

The following is from a book entitled *The Cross of Christ*. Several years ago, when I was in discussions with church leaders who cling to the penal legal view, they used this book as the defense for their theology. And it was the basis of their rejection of our view.

“In Romans 3 **justification does not mean ‘to make righteous,’ but rather ‘to declare righteous.’**... The ground of justification is, as Paul points out, Christ's death (Rom. 5:9; 3:24, 25). The means by which it becomes effective for the individual is faith (Rom. 5:1; 3:25; Gal. 2:16, 20; Phil 3:9). Although **people do have a legal relationship to God**, it is also true that that relationship is much more than just a legal one. God's love for humanity impels Him to give people what they do not deserve (grace).” (Knight, G., *The Cross of Christ*, p. 71)...

“Interestingly enough, **His [God's] legal practices are just the opposite of the instructions He gave for human judges**, who were to ‘justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked’ (Deut. 25:1, KJV). Anyone who ‘justifies the wicked,’ we read in Proverbs, and ‘condemns the righteous’ is ‘an abomination to the Lord’ (Prov. 17:15).

“The issue that we must face at this point is **how God can break the rules that He set forth for human judges**. It is that type of problem, Morris claims, that troubles Paul in Romans 3. How can God be righteous if He forgives people who have no right to be forgiven? **One would expect a just God to punish those who deserved it. That is what justice means.** But in the past, Paul claims in verse 25, God did not invariably punish sin. Sinners went on living.” [Under what type of law does justice mean punishing those who deserve it? And according to the historical quotation from the Desire of Ages page 761, whose position is it that God, in order to be just must punish sin?

“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.” DA 761.

The message that the SDA church is supposed to be teaching is that the view that God must punish sin is Satan's lie from the beginning of the controversy in heaven. Recognizing that



God does not stand toward the sinner as the executioner of the sentence against sin, but instructs human governments to inflict punishment for sin, should cause people to step back and inquire—why? What is it different? They should remember that Paul wrote no one will but justified by the law. And in Romans Paul describes righteousness from God that is apart from the law (Romans 3:25). And of course, the obvious answer is that God's instruction to the people were for this sinful world and external behavioral control, to limit the damage of sinful living to both the sinner and the innocent and bring people to conviction, diagnosis and lead them back to God for healing.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God is within you. God's law doesn't work like human law, it heals, transforms, renews, recreates. And it cannot be applied externally. But instead of remembering the Bible which says that God's ways are not like our ways, His ways are higher than ours. Those who cling to the lie that God's law functions like human law, instead corrupt the gospel by insisting that God must punish in order to be just. They then make up a contradictory irrational legal system to pretend that this makes God out to be just and trustworthy, but it doesn't and the impact, the outcome is the division and hostility we see in the church because they are promoting Satan's divisive kingdom rather than the unifying power of the true gospel of God.]

“‘Now,’ Morris suggests, ‘you can argue that this shows God to be merciful, or compassionate, or kind, or forbearing, or loving. **But you cannot argue that it shows him to be just [sic].**’ Because God had not always punished sinners, some would be tempted to doubt His justice.” (Knight, G., *The Cross of Christ*, p. 71-72).

Can you hear in this how the gospel is corrupted by Romanism, the imposed imperial law construct that perverts and distorts the truth in such a way that it denies the power of God unto salvation?

The reason they have problems is because they are trying to understand God's justice, God's righteousness, God's plan of salvation through the lie that God's law functions like human law. And this makes God out to be exactly the opposite of just, a being who punishes the innocent and declares the wicked to be righteous.

This was the problem that the Jews had and one of the reasons they rejected Christ, and when Christians accept the imposed law lie, they also reject the truth that Christ brought about His Father and the kingdom of heaven. Listen to this historical quote, what the SDA church is supposed to be teaching, from the book *The Desire of Ages*, the context is Jesus healing the man born blind and the question was asked who sinned him or his parents that he was born blind. Notice what this author says about the root of why they would think this, and ask is this the view about God and the plan of salvation that is being taught in the church today, and if not why not?

It was generally believed by the Jews **that sin is punished in this life**. Every affliction was regarded as **the penalty of some wrongdoing**, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. **It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted.** [What does this mean? That all nature groans under the weight of sin. That if it wasn't for sin in the world there would be no sickness, pain, suffering of any kind. But not all suffering is a result of some individual act of sin, but from what sin does to God's creation.



A person who drinks water contaminated with some toxin or pollutant, does not sin, but that is still a violation of the laws of health and will cause suffering. In a perfect world, Eden, such a violation would not happen.] **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.** [Our church has rejected only half of this lie. We reject the idea that disease is arbitrarily inflicted by God as punishment for sin, but we still teach that death is inflicted by God as punishment for sin. Why do some teach this? Because they believe the lie that God’s law functions like human law, and therefore they believe that justice requires inflicted punishment. But when they worship a god who must inflict punishment they are worshiping a creature rather than the Creator. Creatures make up rules and enforce those rules by the infliction of punishment, the Creator builds reality and life itself and the breaking of His laws cause death and the Creator uses His power to heal the breach and restore us to righteousness. Death comes when the Creator stops acting, when He steps back and sets us free to reap what we have chosen, separation from Him the source of life. “Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction” Gal 6:8] Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. The Desire of Ages 471.1

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” **was looked upon by the Jews as “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;”** and they hid their faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3. The Desire of Ages 471.2 [And I gave multiple quotations last week where various leaders in our church teach that God was required to execute Jesus to pay the demands of justice. They teach that God struck His Son, or rained fired down upon Him etc.]

**God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.** But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproofed the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ. The Desire of Ages 471.3

It is so simple once we realize God is Creator and His laws are the protocols reality are built to function upon. God is working through Christ to restore sinners to harmony with life, to heal, to recreate and restore, to write His living law into our hearts and minds.

In this sinful world, all human governments operate upon external rules that monitor and punish wrong behaviors. God’s kingdom functions upon the heart. Thus, in this sinful world, God, like a loving parent, gave various rules to protect and diagnose, but these rules are not the way reality works, they are used because of the immaturity and corruption of sinful humans. In other words, the law was added as an emergency measure until we are restored to righteousness. Just as the Bible teaches in Galatians where Paul wrote that the law was added and this is all law, ceremonial and the moral code of the Ten Commandments.

As I pointed out last week, the SDA church had this message brought to at the 1888 General Conference but the leadership rejected it and chose to cling to imposed law. One of the major issues at that conference was this question of law. Jones and Waggoner, who were the proponents of the healing view, of the reality that we *become the* righteous of God by faith message, stated that Galatians



teaches that the added law was the Ten Commandments. The legalistic opposition rejected this. For them to suggest that the Ten Commandments are not eternal undermines the Sabbath Commandment and therefore they took the position that the law that was added was only the ceremonial law.

Here is what EGW wrote after that meeting, and which was supposed to be what the SDA church taught to enlighten the world, but which has been rejected and thus instead of hastening the day of our Lord's return, we delay it. I agree with this position:

I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments...** "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). **In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law.** {Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 233, 234}

I will unpack the reasons for this addition of written law in just a moment, but first let's consider this sentence from the book *The Cross of Christ*, just quoted. It read,

"In Romans 3 justification does not mean 'to make righteous,' but rather 'to declare righteous.'"

This is a classic penal/legal substitutionary statement, that righteousness does not mean what 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, that

"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).

Becoming righteous is healing, it is empowering, it results in victorious living, it results in unity of people regardless of ethnic backgrounds. People who have become righteous do not abuse their families, they give glory to God by living out His righteous character, and are lights to the world demonstrating the difference between God's kingdom which works on the heart and the earthly governments which punish behavior. Thus, the righteous, giving glory to God in how they live call people to make a right judgment about God and to stop worshiping the dictator God and to start worshiping the Creator.

But this truth is denied when people replace God's design law with human law and teach that justification is not actually putting people right with God, not making them righteous, it is declaring them to be righteous when they are still unrighteous.

Not only does this make God out to be a fraud, a trickster, a being who declares things to be different than they actually are—like saying someone is female when they are in actuality male. There is reality, and then there is fantasy, falsehood, make-believe. This penal substitutionary view has a god that lives in fantasy, claiming people are righteous when they are not righteous.

This is not what Scripture teaches. In Scripture, we are told that because of Adam's sin we are all born infected with the sin condition we did not choose (Ps 51:5) and the natural state of the sinful heart is



enmity toward God, distrusting of God, hostility toward God (Romans 8:7). But the Bible teaches us that Abraham trusted God and AFTER Abraham's heart was changed from the natural state of enmity and distrust to one of trust in God, THEN AND ONLY THEN did God declare, account, or reckon—recognize that Abraham was justified, set right, put right, righteous. Why? Because that which was wrong, Abraham's sinful heart that was filled with fear and selfishness and didn't trust God, was changed back to trust in God. This is justification. God NEVER declares someone to be righteous when they remain unrighteous. God is the God of reality, God sets people right with Him, He restores us to trust. He gives us new hearts and right spirits. He gives us a new life, the mind of Christ, writes His law upon our hearts and minds, He removes the dead stony heart and puts in a living tender heart. This is reality.

The penal legal view is a lie based on the lie that God's law functions like human law and it creates a form of godliness with no power.

Let me give you an example of the corruption, destruction, and perversion of this fictional legal theology that dominates Christianity.

But first you must understand the difference between God's design law, and how God in love has met immature, unconverted, sinful humans with the use of law.

God's design laws are the laws upon which reality operations, the various physical and moral laws that God built life to exist upon, the laws of health, physics, and the moral laws. Life and health are only possible in harmony with God and His design protocols for life. You cannot have health while violating the laws of health. The violation of the physical laws causes physical sickness and disease and eventual death. Likewise, the violation the moral laws causes spiritual sickness and disease—disease of heart and mind and relationships that also undermines physical health and eventually causes death. Life and health only exist in harmony with God and His design laws for life.

The plan of salvation is God's work, achieved through Jesus Christ, to eliminate the death causing principle and restore the life causing principle, God's perfect law, back into humanity. This was accomplished for humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. He became a real human being, took up humanity damaged and infected with death by Adam's sin, and purged the sickness, destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light—through the gospel—through the good news about God and God's design law principles that He lived out perfectly as a human (2 Timothy 1:10).

All human beings born since Adam have been born with a terminal sin condition that we did not choose. We are born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalms 51:5). This is not our fault and we are not legally guilty for this. We do not stand under legal condemnation. We are born terminal, like being born HIV positive. We have a condition that without remedy results in ruin and death. Jesus came and cured the condition and offers us His life, metaphorically His blood, a new heart and right spirit, so that we can die to living in fear and selfishness and live in love and trust. We are terminal, not legally guilty, and what brings us condemnation is not being born with the sin condition—but refusing the remedy that Jesus procured that will cure us and free us from this condition.



Notice how clearly Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, yet how the church has perverted this through legalism:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did **not send his Son into the world to condemn the world**, but to save the world through him. **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light** because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:16-20 NIV84).

God loved us and sent Jesus to overcome and cure the sin condition, to provide all that is needed for salvation from sin. Jesus did not come to condemn. Whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned, but those who refuse to believe in Jesus **stand condemned already**—already why? Because they refused to trust. This is the verdict, light, truth, love has come into the world, but men loved darkness, lies and selfishness instead because they were evil, infected, terminal.

They are condemned, not for having the condition, but for rejecting the cure!

Because we have this terminal sin condition, which infects our hearts and minds, and results in all kinds of sinful and destructive actions (sins), God like a loving parent, has intervened to help protect us until we grew up enough to experience rebirth, a new heart, until we actually become the righteousness of God. He gave us various laws, lists of rules, designed to both protect us from adding damage to ourselves, and also to diagnose what is wrong with us.

Paul wrote,

We know that the law is good **if one uses it properly**. We also know that **law is made not for the righteous** but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1 Timothy 1:8-11 NIV84).

The written law is like an MRI, designed by God to expose the sin-sickness in us, as Paul wrote elsewhere,

“I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet’” (Romans 7:7 NIV84).

Paul, prior to Damascus, thought legally, that sin was bad deeds, and that righteousness was wanting to commit sin, but resisting and saying now. It was when he realized what the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment taught, that sin is an issue of the heart, that to be righteous means we don’t even have the desire in the





heart to commit adultery, or murder, or steal, or bear false witness. We don't covet, we rejoice in the successes of others. Paul realized through the diagnostic efficacy of the law that all his legal behavioral religion was worthless because law-keeping cannot cure hearts and minds from selfishness. Saul of Tarsus, had a form of godliness, a legal religion, but without any power to overcome sin.

We can understand this diagnostic function of the law and why God gave it simply by paraphrasing what Paul wrote to Timothy about the law and replacing the "law" with "MRI":

"We know that the MRI is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the MRI is made not for healthy people but for those who are sick and diseased, the suffering, the ill, and all those who are dying, and all activities that are contrary to the principles of healthy living that conform to the model of health that the blessed God has entrusted to me." (*Could It Be This Simple?* p. 102).

God like a loving parent has given us rules, to protect us and to lead us to accept our diagnosis, that we are terminal, dead in trespass and sin, so that we will go to Jesus, our heavenly physician for healing, to be made righteous, not to be declared righteous even though we are not.

So, let me give you this example of why the imposed law lie, with its fictional and false legal adjustment and declaration fantasy has no power to heal sinners and results in millions abandoning the faith.

Loving parents make up and impose rules for their small children that the children must brush their teeth regularly. This rule is not made up by parents in order to create a legal code of conduct that requires legal oversight and enforcement, but is made because of the design law of the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics that if you don't put energy into a system it decays. The design law is God's law, a constant of the universe—how things work. But a child is not mature enough to understand this and not mature enough to be self-disciplined to harmonize with it. Therefore, loving parents will make up a rule of behavior for the child until the child grows up enough to understand and be able to govern self to live in harmony and care for their teeth. The adult child is thankful for the rules their parents had when they were children, and as adults agree with the rules and gladly keep brushing their teeth, not because of a rule, but because of how reality works. They like being healthy.

But, what if a child was raised in a legalistic home in which there were appropriate rules, like brushing one's teeth, or honoring the Sabbath, but the child never ever came to understand the reasons the parents gave the rule to brush their teeth. The only reason the child ever knew was that if they didn't brush they would get into trouble with their parents and would get punished.

When the child finally moves out on their own, what is likely to happen in such a case? They say, "Yeah, free from all those rules. I no longer have to brush my teeth." So they don't. At first they may be anxious and look around in fear to see if some punishment occurs, but after several days of not brushing and no one punishing them, they say "I knew it, I knew those rules were ridiculous. I am glad to be free!" But 8-10 month later they find themselves suffering in terrible pain from tooth decay.



They call their parents in pain and confess,

- Mom, Dad, I am sorry. You raised me better, but I have stopped brushing my teeth. I should have listened, but I didn't, and now I am hurting every day and I don't know what to do."
- The parents respond by love and reassurance and instruct there is a expert at their church who knows how to help people who have gone off into wild living and are hurting.
- You visit with the pastor and he tells you that Jesus came to earth and brushed His teeth perfectly, and flossed too, and never had even the smallest decay. You are told that if you accept the legal tooth brushing of Jesus as your substitute, then in heaven Jesus will go to His Father and plead His perfection in your behalf.
- The pastor tells you that when God examines your heavenly dental records, because you have accepted Jesus, God will not be aware of your pain, suffering, failure to brush, dental decay. Instead, God will only see the perfect record of Jesus' teeth which has overwritten your record of decay.
- God, having heard the pleas from His Son, and having examined your record and found only the perfect dental record of His Son, will declare that your teeth are perfectly healthy, even though they are not. You are told you simply must believe that God has declared it to be so.
- You claim you believe it, but you leave in just as much pain, with just as much disease and decay as when you arrived and you continue to get worse.

This is penal/legal theology that claims we are declared righteous rather than made righteous.

Do you see the problem that we have when we replace God's design law with human imposed law? We have a form of godliness with no power and we remain divided, fractured, fighting among ourselves.

The final message of mercy to the world is the message of the truth about God's character of love, which is only understood when we reject the lie that God's law functions like human law and return to worshiping God as Creator whose law is design law.

Questions?



## SUNDAY

---

Read second paragraph,

- Also, in their past existence, Gentiles were caught up in a grand feud between themselves and the Jews. Paul gives a sense of this entrenched hatred by referring to one symptom of it, name-calling. Jews referred to Gentiles with derision as “the uncircumcision,” and Gentiles referred to Jews with equal disdain as “the circumcision” (Eph. 2:11). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 39).

Do you see this problem being one of name-calling, or is name-calling a symptom of the true problem? What is the true problem?

The Jews were legalists. They viewed God’s law as functioning like human law, and there were rules that needed to be imposed and enforced, and if you didn’t keep the right rules then you were not righteous. The name calling of circumcised or uncircumcised was simply a way to call out those who agreed with and practiced their rules.

What are some examples of this exact same legal religion today? What type of name calling do we see today?

- Sabbath keeper or Sabbath breaker?
- Vegetarian or meat eater?
- Humble Christlike dresser with no makeup or jewelry or Jezebel?
- Tithe to the denominational church or to others presenting the gospel?

In Romans 14 Paul makes the case that the issue is not about legal conformity to rules, but about the purity of the heart. That our behavior doesn’t really matter if our hearts are not fully persuaded to the godly reasons for the behavior. In other words, doing the right thing for the wrong reasons is harmful to the person—like keeping the right day of worship for the wrong reasons results in people rejecting and crucifying the Lord of the Sabbath.

So the issue isn’t name calling, the issue is a legal religion that has a form of godliness but no power and results in greater divisions, rather than unity under one Head Jesus Christ.

## MONDAY

Read last paragraph,

“What does reconciliation look like? How does it feel to be reconciled? Imagine severe estrangement between a mother and daughter, one that has settled in over a period of years. Imagine this rancor being dissolved in a wave of grace and forgiveness and the ensuing reunion



between the two. That is reconciliation. Reconciliation is experienced in the moment when one church member lays aside whatever issue divides from another and acknowledges the other church member as a beloved brother or sister who accepts what has been offered. Reconciliation is not a mechanical or legal term but an interpersonal one that celebrates the mending of broken relationships. Paul dares to imagine Christ's powerful work on the cross as impacting the relationships, between not just individuals but also people groups. He imagines it invading our lives and destroying our divisions, dissolving our quarrels, and renewing our fellowship with and understanding of each other." (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 40).

Questions? Does this sound right to you or is something off?

What about this sentence:

"Reconciliation is experienced in the moment when one church member lays aside whatever issue divides from another and acknowledges the other church member as a beloved brother or sister who accepts what has been offered."

If this is the definition of reconciliation, then wouldn't everyone be reconciled as soon as the offended party forgives and loves? Wouldn't Judas have been reconciled to Jesus because Jesus washed His feet, and forgave Him, and continued to love Him? But was Judas reconciled to Jesus?

This is not reconciliation. Reconciliation is when the two estranged parties are united again in **love AND trust**. This requires the offended party to forgive and certainly to love the offender, but it also requires the offender to repent, which means to address the elements in their heart/mind/character that caused them to offend so that they become trustworthy.

Reconciliation cannot happen from one side. And in the case of our salvation, reconciliation certainly could not happen if God was unforgiving. But God is always forgiving, so there is no barrier to reconciliation from God's side. No, the obstacle to our reconciliation with God is from us, our fear, our selfishness, guilt, shame, distrust of God, the lies we believe about God. We are the ones who need to be changed and put back in harmony with God so that we are again God's trustworthy and loyal friends operating in harmony with His living law of love.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [does this sound like declared to be righteous even though they are not? This is real transformation!] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NIV84). [Now according to Scripture, who is being reconciled to whom? Is God being reconciled to us,



meaning does something have to change in God in order for the estrangement that sin has caused to be resolved? Or is the entire sin problem in human beings and in order to reconcile us we must be changed, not God?]

What happens if we interpret this through Roman imposed law and believe that God's law functions like human law? If we do that, would it change how we understand reconciliation? Would it blind us so much that despite admitting that the Bible teaches we are reconciled to God and God is not reconciled to us, that we would suggest the opposite? Would accepting the Roman view of law cause people to be so brazen as to suggest that the Bible is wrong and God still must be reconciled to us?

Here is another quote from the book *The Cross of Christ*:

“Paul **always** speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He **never** refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side.**” (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74).

Do you see how the lie that God's law functions like human law contaminates the gospel creating a form of godliness with no power because it replaces the truth about God with a false god who is like Satan in character, a being who is the source of pain, suffering, and death, and who must be propitiated, appeased, paid by a blood sacrifice in order not to use his power to kill.

There is another way to describe reconciliation and that is when the offender becomes a friend. Consider the GNT of 2 Corinthians 5:17-20:

“Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 GNT)

And can you turn enemies into friends by law, rules, external force, punishment, threats?

Thus Romans 2:4 says,

“God's kindness leads you toward repentance” (Romans 2:4 NIV84).



## TUESDAY

---

Read Ephesians 2:14-16:

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:14-16 NIV84).

What is this talking about? What law is this that is abolished?

The lesson suggests the following in the last paragraph,

“Instead, any use of the law to drive a wedge between Jews and Gentiles and especially to exclude Gentiles from full partnership among the people of God and access to worship, would be anathema to Paul and a misuse of the divine intention for the law. The “law” in Ephesians 2:14, 15 is either the ceremonial aspects of the law that divided Jew from Gentile, represented in Paul’s complex phrase “the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” (ESV), or it is the whole Old Testament system of law as it had come to be interpreted, augmented, and misused as a wedge to distance Jews from Gentiles.” (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 41).

Do you agree with the lesson or have another view?

What about this view of Ephesians 2:14-16 from The Remedy?

“For Christ himself is the Remedy that heals the species and brings peace. He has removed fear and selfishness that cause division, mistrust, prejudice, and hostility. He did this by partaking of our human condition, and—via the exercise of his human brain—he loved perfectly, thereby destroying in his flesh (in the humanity he partook) the selfish survival-of-the-fittest drive along with the lies of Satan. In this way, he destroyed the need for the law (with all its regulations) to expose Satan’s lies and methods. His purpose was to be the template of a new humanity born out of the unification of the two—our selfish, infected condition merged with his sinless state—thereby purging selfishness from the human heart, and transforming, healing, renewing, regenerating and recreating humanity back to God’s original ideal; and in this new being, to reconcile the human race—regardless of ethnic background—into loving unity with God and each other through the revelation of truth at the cross, by which he destroyed the lies of Satan, reestablished trust, and removed fear, selfishness, and hostility” (Ephesians 2:14-16 REM).

What does this version suggest Jesus took away and how did Jesus take it away?



What is the cause of all the division in the world? Sin, which is fear and selfishness, and Jesus destroyed the infection of sin at the cross and restored God's living law, God's perfection, God's sinlessness and character into humanity as our second Adam. And all who are united, reconciled, to God through Jesus Christ have this change worked in them, they receive a new heart and right spirit, have the law written on the heart and mind, have the mind of Christ so that it is no longer the selfish old person living, but Christ living within, and thus we are all brought into unity under one Head Jesus Christ. United in living out God's living law of love for God and others.

When that happens, then there is no longer any need for the written law, the diagnostic instrument to examine us and expose sin, because we are living in harmony with God and His law and His law lives in us.

## WEDNESDAY

---

The lesson focuses our attention on the peace we have when we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

What do you understand this peace to be? What peace, what aspects does it contain?

- Peace with God
- Peace in our own hearts—peace from guilt, from shame, from fear
- Peace with every other individual who also has been restored to godliness

How do we understand receiving and experiencing God's peace in light of:

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’” (Matthew 10:34-36 NIV84)

What is this? How is it that we are to have peace when we accept Jesus, but Jesus Himself said that He did not come to bring peace but a sword and to turn families against each other?

This is Matthew 10:34-36 from The Remedy:

"Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family." (Matthew 10:34-36 REM).



True peace can only occur by removing sin, fear, selfishness from hearts and minds. Jesus did not come to make peace with sin, but to destroy sin and that requires destroying fear and selfishness in the hearts and minds of people. Thus, the sword is the sword of truth that severs the ties to this world and wins us to love and trust in Jesus.

## THURSDAY

---

Read first paragraph,

“Reviewing Ephesians 2, we recall that verses 1–10 teach that we live in solidarity with Jesus, while verses 11–22 teach that we live in solidarity with others as part of His church. Jesus’ death has both vertical benefits in establishing our relationship with God (Eph. 2:1–10) and horizontal ones in cementing our relationships with others (Eph. 2:11–22). Through the Cross, Jesus demolishes all that divides Gentile believers from Jewish ones, including the misuse of the Law in order to widen the gulf (Eph. 2:11–18). Jesus also builds something—an amazing, new temple composed of believers. Gentiles, once excluded from worship in the sacred places of the temple, now join Jewish believers in becoming a new temple. We all become part of God’s church, “a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:19–22, ESV) and are privileged to live in solidarity with Jesus and our brothers and sisters in Christ.” (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2023, Ephesians p. 43).

I think that this is an excellent description—and what is it describing?

Is it describing a temple made with human hands, by human might and power, or a temple made by God?

And would this temple made by God also be something that God needs to cleanse from sin because the various building blocks are sinners?

And would the Bible describe anywhere a cleansing of the temple as part of God’s plan to of salvation?

It is described in a variety of places, including in the Old Testament feast of Atonement, or at-one-ment, or reconciliation. The feast in which God cleanses the sanctuary from the sins of the people. This is an object lesson of God cleansing His Bride, His true temple that He builds which Jesus as the Chief cornerstone.

We describe this beautiful work in our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming](#) if you haven’t read it you can read it online in our flipbook, you can download it in a pdf, or if you are in the US and want a paper copy to read or copies to share you can email us at [requests@comeandreason.com](mailto:requests@comeandreason.com) and request free copies that will be shipped to you at no cost. You can also request copies on South Africa at [comeandreason.sa@gmail.com](mailto:comeandreason.sa@gmail.com) and also in Australia at [australia@comeandreason.com](mailto:australia@comeandreason.com)





## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

---

### 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.

### The God Shaped Heart,

has just been released in German in Germany, *Herz voll Gott*, published by the Adventist publishing house in Germany.

### New Address:

Come and Reason Ministries is closing our PO Box Address. Please update your records to our building address for all future mail and shipping. Our street address is:

**Come and Reason Ministries**  
4922 LA COLLINA WAY, #100  
OOLTEWAH, TN 37363