



2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 12

Worship That Never Ends

by Tim Jennings

Read second paragraph,

- In the Psalms, Israel is not simply a nation but “the great assembly” (Ps. 22:22, 25, NKJV; Ps. 35:18). This reveals Israel’s primary calling to praise God and to bear witness about Him to other nations because the Lord wants all the world to join His people in worship. The Lord’s people are identified with the righteous, who worship the Lord and whose hope is in Him and in His love. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 92).

What is this “great assembly” referenced in the psalms? Is this referring to the feast days assemblies that the Jews were supposed to attend in Jerusalem each year or something grander, larger, more significant—something of which Israel was only an object lesson, something that the various Israelites coming together in assembly were mere actors on a stage enacting?

The lesson references Psalm 22:22, which reads,

- I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you (Psalm 22:22 NIV84).

What is this psalm referencing? Is it king David saying he will declare the name of Yahweh to the Israelites in worship? Or is it something much bigger, larger?

Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm, it is about Jesus, and we find this very verse quoted by the writers of Hebrews in chapter 2:12:

- So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” (Hebrews 2:11-12 NIV84).

Does this suddenly expand our understanding of this psalm, do we realize it goes far beyond local worship, far beyond Israel? Does the psalm suggest Jesus will uplift the name of His Father before the grand assembly, the heavenly counsel, the assembly seen in the first chapter of Job?

The lesson also references psalm 35:18, let’s compare that from the NIV and REM:

- I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. (Psalm 35:18 NIV84).

Is this speaking of king David giving praise during some worship assembly in Jerusalem, praising God among the Israelites, or is this something much more significant, something to do with the great controversy? Again, this is a Messianic psalm, it is referencing Jesus, so I paraphrased it as:

- I will glorify you in the great cosmic assembly; among the mighty throng I will praise you. (Psalm 35:18 REM).

Consider the assembly described in Hebrews chapter twelve, is this the true assembly that the psalmist is describing?

- But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 NIV84).

Is the psalmist only referencing assemblies in ancient Israel, or are those assemblies symbolic of something much more significant?

Here is how I rendered Hebrews 12:22-24 in the Remedy:

- But you have come into the reality (of which the symbols only pointed to), to Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem — the heavenly city of the living God — and you are part of that city. You have come to join millions upon millions of angels rejoicing in God's presence, into the heavenly sanctuary — the true church of Christ — whose identities are stored in heaven. You have come to God — the source and standard of righteousness for all people; to the archived individualities of righteous human beings perfectly restored into Christlikeness of character; to Jesus — the conduit and administrator of God's healing plan; and to the reality of God's true nature and character, which was much more potently revealed and disseminated when Christ died than in the symbols offered by Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 REM).

Do we read the entire Bible as a whole, a revelation from God of the plan of salvation, that the events recorded in the Old Testament are a lesson to us, not primarily about historical earthly governmental systems or ceremonial religious rituals, but teaching larger realities, teaching through object lesson and symbolism the plan of salvation?

So, the title of the lesson is worship that never ends—what is that worship? What does that worship look like? Is worship that never ends a religious event, people coming together in a congregation to sing hymns, read Bible verses, join in corporate prayer, partake of communion? Is this what worship that never ends means?

Or does worship that never ends mean we for all eternity worship, admire, esteem, value, study, aspire to be like, adore, stand in awe, revere God and grow every more like Him in all we do—a

never ending journey of love and discovery as we finite beings worship the infinite one and in that love trust relationship with our infinite God we are restored to Christlikeness of character and live out God's principles and methods in how we treat others? Does it mean that we practice and apply God's design laws to our lives, especially in how we treat others and thus give glory to God? And is one small sliver of such worship coming into congregational meetings to share our love for God and each other in song, in praise, and telling of God's deliverance in our lives?

But is there a counterfeit worship—a worship of forms, ceremonies, rules, rituals, dress codes, attendance requirements, behavioral modifications that is detached from the truth about God, that instead of bringing us into closer intimacy, trust, and friendship with God teaches us to distrust God while we trust in the legal mechanics put in place to protect us from this punishing law-enforcing god?

Read last paragraph,

- Praising the Lord in the congregation is perceived as ideal worship. This does not mean that the prayer and praise of the individual in Israel assume a secondary meaning. By contrast, the individual's worship of God feeds the communal worship with renewed praise (Ps. 22:22, 25) while in turn individual worship develops its fullest potential in close relationship with the community. The worshipping community also is called the "assembly of the upright" (Ps. 111:1). The upright know God (Ps. 36:10) and are known by God (Ps. 37:18), and this experience permeates every aspect of their existence. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 92).

What do you think of the first sentence, "Praising the Lord in the congregation is perceived as ideal worship"?

What is it that makes praising the Lord in congregation ideal worship?

- Is it simple attendance to a group worship service? We show up and sit in the pew, sing the songs, listen to the sermon and this is the ideal?
- Is it obeying the commandments of God? That God commanded we worship one day each week and we, as good and obedient servants, follow God's commands and come to church to worship God when He said we should and thus we have a group of compliant and obedient people who are all unified on the right rules and the right way to keep the rules? Is this God's ideal, that people obey Him without question and do what He tells them?

What is the ideal that Israel's assemblies were to symbolize?

Is Jesus' prayer in John 17, where He prayed that we would all be one as He and the Father are one, suggestive of anything about what it means to have ideal worship and what coming together as a people is to be in reality?

Consider what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until **we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the **fullness of Christ**. Then we will **no longer be infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the **whole body, joined and held together** by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11–16, NIV84, emphasis mine). .

What do you hear? Is there a joining together, a unity, a corporate worship described here? What is it? What is the purpose of meeting together, worshiping together, studying together, working for gospel ministry together? It is for the purpose of people developing within themselves Christlikeness, of people becoming thinkers not reflectors of others thoughts, of people being cleansed from fear, selfishness, guilt and shame, of people assimilating into their hearts and minds the truth and love of God, the design laws of God becoming the living law that animates and invigorates their being.

In such an experience we are united with Jesus and the Father having been restored to at-one-ment with them. We all value and practices the same methods and principles in how we live our lives. We who are united in Christ:

- May not eat the same foods, for our bodies are different, but we apply the same principles of seeking to be the healthiest we can be and make lifestyle choices to keep ourselves healthy.
- May not be ceremonially baptized in the same way because our understanding of the ceremony is different, but we all experience the same immersion of heart and mind into the Holy Spirit for cleansing of the inner person.
- May not dress in the same way because we have different beliefs about jewelry or head coverings, but we all have our characters dressed in the fruits of the Spirit.
- We respect the individuality of others and therefore we do not try to control what others think, we present the truth in love and allow every person to be fully persuaded in their own minds.
- We stop approaching life like children, infants, focused on rules, laws, fear of punishment, we stop teaching that God is a rule-maker leaving behind the penal legal way of thinking of things and return to reality and worship God as Creator understanding His laws are design laws.
- We enter in a unity in our faith—meaning the natural outcome of returning to reality, to God, and His designs for life.

Consider this historical quote, from the book *The Desire of Ages*, and the question of unity and ideal worship, does it have any application?

- It is His [God's] plan that every part of His work shall depend on every other part, as a wheel within a wheel, all acting in harmony. The humblest worker, moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages. (The Desire of Ages 822).

Does this describe something related to a unity in our faith? What? There is an energy, a chord, a harmonic, a principle of living, the law of life—truth, love and liberty—that originate in and emanate from God and through which all reality is built and operates and it is only as we receive and unite with this energy through the Spirit of God, the life of God, the vitalizing power of God, the presence of God, the truth of God that we are restored to being part of the body of Christ and experience the unity, the oneness, the harmony that is automatic when we are united with God. And thus when we act in accordance, in harmony with the design law principles of God we touch the invisible life-giving chords our Creator built reality to operate upon and are connected to all others who are in harmony with God, a unity in our faith?

But is there a form of congregational worship that is antagonistic to what God wants, that works against what God is trying to achieve, that is destructive rather than redemptive?

What about religious worship that teaches things like:

- God said it, I believe it, that is all there is to it?
- The pastor or priest is God's anointed and who are you to question?
- Salvation is a legal process of adjusting record books in a heavenly courtroom in some far off corner of the universe and not the actual process of cleansing hearts and minds from sin here and now?
- God's laws are rules He makes up and justice is God punishing rule-breakers?

Is there a religious approach to the Bible that rather than building people up to be thinkers, instead dumbs people down to be followers, to surrender their thinking to the religious authorities?

- Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"
 "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.
 "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:45–49 NIV84).

Is there a form of corporate worship that rather than seeking to build up individuality, rather than respecting each person's ability to reason for themselves and seeking to help them grow in their God-given abilities, instead seeks conformity, seeks to use the corporate body to put group pressure upon people to surrender their thinking, to not question, to go along with what leadership says in order to avoid being ostracized, shunned, or disfellowshipped?

Has Satan infected Christianity with an authoritarian form of Christianity, the idea that truth is found in the office of leader, whether pope, or conference president, or some special counsel of theologians, such as the Counsel of Trent or the Biblical Research Institute and that true worship is surrendering our minds, our individuality, our thinking to those with theological degrees, to those in leadership, those holding church office, to the General Conference vote?

Consider these historical quotations from one of the founders of the SDA church, who wrote the following after the SDA church leadership at the 1888 GC rejected the design law truth and chose the imposed human law lie, and has been leading our church into the wilderness of a dead legal theology ever since:

- “The church is in the Laodicean state. **The presence of God is not in her midst.**” (Ms 156, 1898 – Notebook Leaflets from Elms haven Library, Vol.1, Need of Self- Sacrificing Effort, p. 99, emphasis mine)

Two years before she wrote the following to Uriah Smith, who was editor of the Signs, and he was one of the leaders who in 1888 rejected the design law truth, rejected the idea that the 10 Commandments were added. What she wrote did not fit with his legal, imposed-law mindset, so he filed this missive and it was found in the Signs files in the 1950’s and published in the Selected Messages.

- **We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself.** His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, **men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.** (1 Selected Messages 235; 1896, emphasis mine)

She is calling for a rejection of the imposed law lie with its penal/legal view of God as a punishing god and return to worship God as our Creator and Redeemer whose laws are design laws. We must reject the Romanization of Christianity. Here are more quotes:

- “It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God.” (Manuscript Releases 17, p. 216, 1898; Last Day Events, p. 50.3 1901)
- "It is working upon **wrong principles** that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. **Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the Voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought that it was almost blasphemy....**We have reached the time when the work cannot advance while **wrong principles** are cherished." (Manuscript 37, 1901, emphasis mine)

Principles are design laws, not imposed rules. But authoritarianism, central government with a few people in power dictating orthodoxy to be accepted as a test of fellowship and enforced through various compliance committees and censoring is worldly, it is how Rome operates. God wins His

case by the truth presented in love and leaving people free, as Paul wrote, every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5)

1902 Ellen White writes to her sons Edson and Willie,

- "I have but very **little confidence** that the Lord is giving these **men in positions of responsibility, spiritual eyesight and heavenly discernment**. I am thrown into perplexity over their course; and I desire now to attend to my special work, **to have no part in any of their councils, and to attend no camp meetings**, nigh or afar off. **My mind shall not be dragged into confusion** by the tendency they manifest to work directly contrary to the light that God has given me. I am done. **I will preserve my God-given intelligence...**(Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 4, 5, emphasis mine)

My voice has been heard in the different Conferences and at camp-meetings. I must now make a change. **I cannot enter the atmosphere of strife and then have to bear testimonies that cost me much more than those to whom they are sent can imagine**. When I attend the different meetings, I am compelled **to deal with men standing in responsible places who I know are not exerting an influence that God can endorse**. And when I bear a testimony in reference to their course of action, advantage is taken of this testimony. **These men have not clear understanding**. Should I say the things that I know, they would not, with their present experience, use this instruction wisely and would bring upon me inconceivable burdens. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 6, emphasis mine)

I shall, therefore, leave them **to receive word from the Bible, in which the principles** upon which they should work are laid down in straight lines. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 7, emphasis mine)

There are those who look upon themselves as the Lord's servants, but who, **as shown by the way in which the... work has been handled, are working away from the light that God has for years been giving**. I have pity for them, but I cannot be forever pointing out for them the way of righteousness. They are brought no nearer right actions by what I say than if the words were never spoken. **So long as those in responsible positions see things through a false medium, they will put a wrong construction on my work**. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 8, emphasis mine) **[The false medium is the imposed law lie, and then using her writings to promote a penal legal fantasy theology rather than the design law healing truth]**

The light I have for our ministers is: Seek God. Stop your whisperings and your evil surmisings, instigated by Satan; and see **if the love of God will not fill heart and soul**. And I will go on with my writing. This is the light given me, and I shall not depart from it. (Letter W-186, 2 Dec. 1902 to Edson and Willie White, p. 9, emphasis mine)

This is quite profound, she takes the position that she has given her witness, she has presented the truth, and those in leadership of the church have rejected it, and for her to continue to go to their meetings, submit to their leadership, listen to their sermons it would throw her mind into confusion and in order to preserve her God-given intelligence she must stop being part of assemblies where she is convinced the truth is not being presented and where they are working contrary to the principles of God—and she said this about SDA meetings!

Is this only applicable to her, or is there a principle here for each of us in our own journey, our own growth with Jesus? Are we to be thinkers or are we to surrender our thinking and become reflectors of what the church officers tell us?

Remember, we have said it over and over again, we at Come and Reason Ministries are not here to tell you what to think. You have your own mind, your own individuality and you must develop it for yourselves. We are here to challenge you to think, to provide evidence and perspective and reason for you to weigh out for yourselves and as Paul wrote in Romans 14:5 to be fully persuaded in your own mind. We want you to come to your own conclusions. We believe that God is Creator, the builder of reality, that His design laws are constants and that when we come to know God we enter into reality-based living and there is a unity that is automatic in that way of thinking and living.

So, when we think about assemblies, we are to consider the assembly and use our own judgment as to whether such an assembly is a place where God would have us attend, and if so for what purpose? Are we going there to be a witness for God, like Elijah at Mount Carmel, or are we going to an assembly to fellowship because the people are already unified upon the truths of God's kingdom of love?

SUNDAY

The title of the lesson is “Lift Up Your Hands in the Sanctuary,” what do you think of this title?

Does it mean we need to build a tent sanctuary like Moses built? Does it mean we need to go to the wailing wall in Jerusalem? Does it mean we need to lift our hands upon in church assembly?

Or, is the sanctuary Moses built and later the Temple Solomon built, symbolic representations of something else—is there a true sanctuary of which the earthly ones were only symbolic?

The Bible certainly references in many places a heavenly sanctuary—and we believe there is a reality to this, but what are the building materials of the sanctuary in heaven?

Read the last paragraph,

- “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:4, 5, NKJV).

What we see here, in the words of Peter, is a New Testament expression of the same ideas presented in these psalms, that of God's people, now a holy priesthood, offering praise and thanksgiving to their Lord Jesus Christ, their Creator and Redeemer, for all the good things that He had done for them. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 93).

The lesson rightly identifies believers as a holy priesthood, but doesn't comment on the other elements taken from the sanctuary metaphor and applied to us by the Bible writers. Peter also says that the stones in the temple were representative of you and me, the believers in Christ with Jesus as the living stone.

Paul wrote:

- Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV84).

What do you think? Is the heavenly sanctuary real? And from what is it made? Is the heavenly sanctuary made out of dead material, like stones, planks, gold, and silver, or is it built out of real, physical, living beings?

Consider, based from these Bible texts, the following historical quote from EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church who was integral in formulating the heavenly sanctuary doctrine:

- The first tabernacle, built according to God's directions, was indeed blessed of Him. The people thus were preparing themselves to worship in the temple not made with hands--a temple in the heavens. The stones of the Temple built by Solomon were all prepared at the quarry and then brought to the Temple site. They came together without the sound of ax or hammer. The timbers were also fitted in the forest. The furniture was likewise brought to this house all prepared for use. (3 Manuscript Release 231.3)

Even so, the mighty cleaver of truth has **taken out a people from the quarry of the world and is fitting this people, who profess to be the children of God, for a place in His heavenly temple.** We want the cleaver of truth to do its work for us. **We are taken from the quarry of the world. The material must not be a dead substance but living souls, and these souls must be brought out of the quarry of the world, where the hand of God can fit them for the temple in heaven.** We are here as probationers, and we must pass under the hand of God. All rough edges and rough surfaces must be removed and **we must be stones fitted for the building.** We are brought into church capacity with defects of character, but we must not retain them. **We must be fitted and squared for the building. We must be "laborers together with God," for we are "God's husbandry," we are "God's building."** In view of this we must see that our temple is not defiled with sin. We should be lively

stones, not dead ones, but live ones that will reflect the image of Christ. We must be worshipers in spirit and in truth. (3 Manuscript Release 231.4, emphasis mine)

What do you think? Is she describing the sanctuary in heaven as being built out of living people? So, if the heavenly sanctuary is made out of living people what would it mean to cleanse it or set it right? Wouldn't it simply be the cleansing of the hearts and minds of all the people who are being saved?

There is nothing penal legal going on in this process, it is Jesus the groom cleansing His bride and preparing her for entering into His full unveiled, life-giving presence. That is the work Jesus accomplishes immediately prior to His second coming, the work going on by our Savior right now. And we describe this cleansing work in our magazine

[The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming](#)

TUESDAY

The lesson asks who can enter the Lord's tabernacle or worship in His presence, thoughts?

In the first paragraph, the lesson answers with this:

- The sanctuary was a holy place, and everything in it, including the priests, was consecrated. Thus, holiness is a mandatory requirement for entering the presence of God. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 95).

What does this mean? What does it mean to be holy? Is holiness something that is declared or actual? In other words, do we become holy or are we merely proclaimed to be holy while we are not actually holy?

In the OT system did the consecrated priests become holy through the ceremony of consecration or did the ceremony merely symbolize becoming holy?

Some would say that the consecrated priests did become holy because they could then go into the sanctuary and do their office work—but what about the Nadab and Abihu and other priests who were consecrated in the ceremony but who did wicked things at the temple? Were they actually holy people or just, within the theatrical system, symbolically represented to be holy?

And then when their behavior was so far off script from what they were to act out—so unholy after being theatrically represented to be holy—God had to remove them from the stage play, and in so doing demonstrate that holiness cannot be achieved through ritual, ceremony, or declaration, but holiness is only achieved through actual transformation of the person. And this was symbolically taught through the ceremonies the priests went through, such as washing, putting on new clean white robes, sacrificing animals and placing the blood on the altar and also on earlobe, right thumb and right great toe. All was symbolically taught actual healing and transformation of a sinner through the

life, the righteousness, of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit being applied to the sinner who becomes a priest in God's kingdom when their hearts and minds are washed from fear, selfishness, guilt, and shame, when they are reborn through that washing with a new heart and right spirit, when they partake of the divine nature and begin choosing to live out the principles, motives, and desires of Jesus and they develop mature Christlike character they are robed in the righteousness of Christ.

So what does it mean to be holy? It simply means that we have been restored in heart, mind, motive to unity with God—we have died to fear and selfishness and have God's living law of love written upon our hearts so that we are united with God in heart, in mind, in desire—we love what God loves. Holiness in other words is restoration to God's healthiness for life, the restoration of God's design laws within as the mode of our action, and thus we are lovers of truth—listen for the leading of God (blood on the ear), we use our energies in our daily works of life to honor God by apply His design law principles (blood on the right thumb) and we go where God leads us walking the way He would have us walk through the roads of life (blood on the right great toe). There is nothing declarative going on, nothing penal legal going on, it is actual real healing, real purifying, in real people by a very real and righteous God.

The second paragraph states,

- “A perfect heart” is the worshiper's greatest quality before God. The Hebrew tamim, “perfect,” conveys the notion of “completeness” and “wholeness.” A “perfect” vine is whole, undamaged, and healthy (Ezek. 15:5). Animals offered as sacrifices had to be tamim, or without blemish (Lev. 22:21-24). “Perfect” speech is entirely truthful (Job 36:4). A “perfect heart” thus is a “pure heart” (Ps. 24:4) or a heart of integrity (Ps. 15:2). It seeks God (Ps. 24:6) and is restored by God's forgiveness (Ps. 51:2-10). A blameless life springs from the acknowledgment of God's grace and His righteousness... (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 95).

What does it mean to be perfect? Jesus said we are to be perfect as the Father is perfect, what does this mean?

Have you heard the following:

- Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. (Christ's Object Lessons 69).

What does this mean? Have you heard this in the past and been frightened, made fearful, anxious, insecure?

Do you recognize this as the same thing as the cleansing of the sanctuary which is the cleansing of the bride that Paul speaks about? Or do you think the cleansing of the sanctuary and the cleansing of the bride of Christ are different? What does it do to our ability to cooperate with God for the

reproduction of His character in us if we believe that the cleansing of the sanctuary is not something happening in us but something happening in record books way off past Orion?

What law lens do you hear words like “character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people” through? If you think God’s law functions like human law then what do words like perfect mean? Does it mean perfect performance, perfect behavior, perfect rule-keeping? And do such ideas bring peace or greater anxiety and fear? And does that lead to teaching that the statement “character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people” means to have Christ’s character reproduced in our legal documents in the courts of heaven during the judgment, but that such reproduction doesn’t happen in us, we are declared, based on the merits of Jesus to be legally righteous in the judgment while we remain unrighteous in reality here on earth? Do you see, how the legal view actually works against what God is working to achieve—God wants to reproduce Jesus in every heart and mind, to cleanse us from all sin, but the legal view puts up barriers in our hearts and minds that obstructs this.

But if we understand God’s law as design law then what do such words mean?

When we return to worshipping God as Creator, we realize that the basis for life in God’s universe is God and the law upon which He constructed life to operate. We realize that we sinners must be restored to unity with God. And we read Jesus’ words about being perfect in their full context, allowing Jesus to inform us of what He meant:

- You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus Himself describes what being perfect means: to love everyone, consistently and reliably, just like the sun and the rain treat everyone exactly the same. But it is understood that this is only possible by first being restored to a love and trust relationship with God, as Jesus said multiple times:

- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37–40 NIV84).

And how does God’s love get restored into our hearts so that we can be perfect? It is by trust—that is, faith—in God. Thus, as the apostle Paul wrote:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

And how is trust restored so we open the heart to receive the new heart and right spirit, to allow God to write His law upon our hearts and minds? By the gospel, which is the good news about God that wins us back to trust.

Bible perfection is not about deeds or tasks; it is about love and trust, about maturity of character. Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews states:

- During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, **once made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:7–9 NIV84)

But wasn't Jesus always perfect? Jesus was certainly always sinless, but Bible perfection isn't about sinlessness. Adam and Eve in Eden were sinless, but they were not perfected. Bible perfection is about maturity of character, which is about coming into a love and trust relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake us from it. The "perfect" are those who remain faithful, loyal, and true to God in their heart's devotion no matter what. They might have questions, they might misunderstand, they might be confused about why things are going the way they are; they might cry out like Jesus did, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45 NIV84), but also just like Jesus, they still trust God and won't break trust with Him.

There are examples of people who achieved such perfection—they were not sinless beings, but they were sinners who had come to love and trust God so fully that nothing could shake them from their faithfulness to Him—thus, they were described by God as being "perfect."

- Job: no trial, hardship, or theological lies by compassionate friends could cause him to break trust with God
- Daniel: He would rather be thrown into the lion's den than betray God.
- Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego: They would rather be thrown into a fiery furnace than betray God.

These "perfect" people were not sinless; they were settled into such faithful loyalty to God that nothing could shake them from it. They would not compromise love for God and others in order to advantage or protect themselves.

Those who have been perfected in their loyalty to Jesus will not compromise their faith in Him in order to hold on to their assets, whether those assets are personal wealth or institutional wealth. They will not compromise the principles of God's kingdom to hold on to their church properties, hospitals, schools, clinics, or publishing houses. They will stay faithful to Jesus even if, like Daniel, they end up captives of a godless power and are thrown into a lion's den.

This is exactly how the Bible describes the righteous people who are ready for translation, the true last generation:

- They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11 NIV84).

The perfect, those who are ready to meet Jesus when He returns in the clouds, are not those with perfect deeds or tasks, but those whose hearts have been restored to *perfect trust* in God. They are settled in their relationship with God so deeply that nothing can shake them from it. No trial, no tribulation, no temptation, no lie, no pain, no loss, no attack will cause them to break faith with God. They are sealed to God in heart, in mind, in soul—and they trust God with their future.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 96, you can follow along in any version, I am going to read it from The Remedy—consider if this is not a message the world needs today, a world that by and large no longer believes in God, a world that believes in evolution, that the strongest survive, that it is right and just to make up laws and enforce those laws upon people. Consider how we have a message of our Creator God whose laws are design laws that flies in the face of the world's wisdom, but how the **penal legal theologies have resulted in billions rejecting Christianity** because they make God out to be no different than a petty dictator, a power monger who is the source of inflicted punishment against all those who won't bow to him.

- Sing to the Lord a new heart-song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, praise his character of love; display his healing and restoration in you each and every day. (Psalm 96:1-2 REM)

When we experience God as our Creator, surrender to Him and are transformed to have mental/spiritual health, peace, joy, and Christlikeness, we reveal in our lives truth that cannot be denied. The godless have no peace, they have no joy, they struggle from addiction to addiction, fear to fear, relationship to relationship, seeking power and control, something to bring peace to their tormented souls. Our lives of godly joy and peace are songs that draw all who are not hardened beyond healing and give us opportunity to tell the truth of our Creator God who can heal all who come to Him. Another metaphor from Scripture, taken from the sanctuary service, the burning of incense that was to waft out over the tribes which represented the unconverted peoples of the world is:

- But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us **spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him**. For **we are to God the aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, **the fragrance of life**. (2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Continuing with Psalm 96:

- Take the truth of his glorious character and methods of love to the entire world, tell everyone of his marvelous works, for supreme is the Lord and most worthy of adoration; he is to be awed, admired, and esteemed above all gods. For every god of this world is a worthless fraud, but the Lord is the Creator who made the heavens. (Psalm 96:3-5 REM)

God is to be esteemed because He built reality and His laws are the laws of health, the laws of life, the laws upon which reality function and operate. Whereas all the false gods make up rules that require legal oversight and external enforcement—and therefore incite fear, fear of punishment. God is the source of healing love that casts out our fear.

- Majestic love and splendid truth emanate from him; power and glory fill his dwelling place. Recognize the Lord, all peoples of the world; recognize the Lord as glorious and almighty! Give your Creator the adoration his character of love deserves; bring yourselves into his presence, offering your love and devotion. Worship the Lord with your hearts renewed with the beauty of his holiness; abide in his presence all the earth! (Psalm 96:6-9 REM).

The law of worship, it is by beholding we are changed, to experience the healing of God, to be freed from fear and selfishness, to be transformed we must humbly surrender to God and place Him at the center of our hearts affections, what we esteem, adore, awe, admire, and look up to.

- Say to the nations, "The Creator built reality, and he sustains and rules over it." The world is firmly established on universal laws that cannot be changed; his design laws apply equally to everyone. Let the earth and sky rejoice; let the oceans roar in victory, and everything within them. Let the fields celebrate, with their lavish crops, and then, all the trees in the forests will exclaim with joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he is coming—he is coming to govern the earth! He will govern the world, restoring it back to his perfect design, and the people will live in truth—in harmony with his character of love. (Psalm 96:10-13 REM).

God's laws do not discriminate, God's laws are constants and treat everyone the same. The world is divided, constantly fighting because one group gets advantage over another, because the human law systems are rigged to benefit some while disadvantaging others. The message of God is that He is the Creator and He is not a respecter of persons, He loves all and treats all the same and His laws do not discriminate, we are either restored to harmony with them and we thrive or we stay out of harmony and suffer and die. The world needs to know the truth of God, to stop judging Him to be like Satan alleges, a being who makes up rules like we do and uses power to punish rule breakers. Why would anyone want to live eternally in such a kingdom?

MONDAY

What does it mean to sing to the Lord a new song? Let's compare Psalm 98 from the NIV and REM:

- Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3 NIV84).
- Sing a new heart-song to the Lord, for what he has done is astounding: Jesus—his right hand and holy agent—is the cure for sin. The Lord has made his remedy known and revealed his perfect and right design for life to the nations. He has kept his promise to pour out his love and truth upon his people; the entire world has seen the healing power of our God. (Psalm 98:1-3 REM).

Do you hear these exactly the same? As you compare them to you find anything in the Remedy that cannot be understood to be in the NIV but one has to do more interpreting in the NIV, for instance God's right hand and holy arm worked out salvation, a person has to think about that and realize that Jesus was God's agent to work out salvation for us. Jesus is God's right hand, the action arm of the Godhead who has left heaven to act in human history. Also, Israel, in this text, is not speaking of genetic descendants of Jacob, but Israel here represents the faithful of God, those whose hearts have been circumcised by the Holy Spirit, thus the rendering as "his people."

- Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King. (Psalm 98:4-6 NIV84).
- Let everyone make their life a joyful song unto the Lord! Let the beautiful music of love burst forth from your hearts renewed; make the melody of love for the Lord, resplendent like the sound of the harp; let your love resound with the harp and singing. With trumpets and horns, proclaim your joy for the Lord our King. (Psalm 98:4-6 REM).

Thoughts about making a joyful song? What is it that God wants? Doesn't God want our lives to be restored to harmony with Him, to live lives of love that are melody of heaven? Isn't that the meaning more so that acoustical melodies? And that corresponds to the quote we read earlier about touching chords that connect all of God's creation together, we are in harmony, make a melody, our lives are beautiful music to the Lord.

- Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:7-9 NIV84).
- Let the sea and everything dwelling in it rejoice along with the entire world and all who inhabit it. Let the rivers celebrate and the mountains shout for joy; let them sing to the Lord, for he comes to restore his governance to the earth. He will govern the world in love and heal the people to live in harmony with his design for life. (Psalm 98:7-9 REM).

Let me make this clear—the NIV is not wrong; the truth is all there to be understood of one reads the NIV with God’s design law in mind. The Remedy just makes the design law truth easier to recognize and see.

THURSDAY

The title of the lesson is “When God Does Not Delight in Sacrifice”

Has God every delighted in animal sacrifices?

What is the sacrifice God does delight in?

- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:17 NIV84).

What God wants is us to sacrifice our fear, selfishness, pride, to die to our carnal fear driven lives and be reborn on the altar of His love and grace.

Then what was the purpose of the animal sacrifices? Teaching tool, to teach the plan of salvation, that sin severs God’s design law for life and results in death and life would only be possible by restoring in humanity God’s living law of love and that only our sinless Creator God could do this work. Thus Jesus dedicated Himself to become the second Adam, partake of humanity terminal in sin and eradicate the sin infection and restore God’s living law of love perfectly into the species.

And the only way to do that was to take the infection to the cross and kill it, which He did.