



2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 2 The Central Issue: Love versus Selfishness

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What a great title—for this is the central issue in the war: love versus selfishness.

And what is the primary emotional driver of selfishness? Fear, fear of punishment, failure, rejection, loss, etc. It is the breakdown of love and trust.

As soon as Adam and Eve believed the lies about God the circle of love and trust was broken and they ran and hid because they were afraid.

Because of God's love and grace God did not abandon humanity to this terminal sin condition, but God immediately began intercession—He put enmity between Satan and humankind, there are two antagonistic principle fighting for every human heart. As soon as Adam sinned, God began intervening in the hearts and minds of sinful human beings to convict of sin, to give a longing for something better, to cause us to feel dissatisfied with sin to woo us back to Him.

Because of God's love not letting go of humanity there is a war happening within the hearts and minds of every human being—a war between love and trust versus fear and selfishness.

We cannot overcome the spirit of fear within our own hearts, the spirit of fear that we inherited from Adam, the spirit of fear that causes us to make fear-based selfish choices. There is no resource we naturally possess that can give us the victory because the victory requires a change in spirit, a change in heart attitude, a change in motivational energy that drives our decisions. We must be reborn from a spirit of fear to a spirit of love and trust and that spirit comes from Jesus.

If you have read my two blog series posted right now: [Salvation and the Cleansing of our Spirit-Part 1](#) and [Part 2 How Jesus Our Substitute Cleanses Our Spirit](#) I encourage you to read it, for it is the conclusion of a long study and is an expansion in my own understanding of what Christ accomplished for us.

And Paul describes these two antagonistic principles:

- There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2 NKJV).

When we are in Christ, which means we are in union with Him, that we have been reborn with a new heart and right spirit, the spirit of love and trust, then we are no longer terminal, no longer dying of sin, thus our hearts are judged as having been set right, put right with God, which is the reality of being justified, like Abraham whose distrusting heart was changed to trusting God and after his heart changed from distrust to trust, Abraham was recognized to be righteous, because he had experienced a real change—his heart was right with God, i.e., righteous.

And thus, we, with the new heart and right spirit live according to the Spirit, which is the Spirit of love and trust and that is the Spirit of life, for God’s laws are the design laws of truth, love, and freedom and once we are restored to harmony with these design laws we are in harmony with the Spirit of life itself, and we are freed from the control of law of sin and death which is the me-first survival-of-the-fittest drive that comes from fear and selfishness.

Thus, as Paul says later in Romans 14, “whatever is not of faith is sin” whatever comes from the spirit of fear and selfishness is sin.

This is the war, going on for every heart and mind, do we love and trust Jesus so much that we surrender to Him, die to our old fear ridden selfish lives and receive through faith a new spirit of love and trust or do we instead cling to fear and selfishness but create all kinds of philosophies to justify our selfishness such as:

- Godless evolution
- All forms of paganism
- Legalism as Paul deals with in Romans that the Jews had fallen into, and which Christianity has also fallen into with its human law lens and the penal legal theologies?

The lesson points to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and Jesus’ prophecy before His crucifixion which blends the destruction of Jerusalem and the events before the second coming, and then the lesson says:

- In the destruction of Jerusalem, we discover a foreshadowing of Satan’s strategy both to deceive and destroy God’s people at the end time. Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 24 clearly outlines last-day events in the context of Jerusalem’s fall. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, *The Great Controversy* p. 14).

Are there lessons for us to learn in regard to the Great Controversy and the current events happening in the world from Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew and its fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem?

The book, *The Great Controversy*, opens with this prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem. I am going to share with you sections from the 1888 version, the version that came out the year of the great divide in the Adventist church, when the official leadership rejected the advancing light of God’s law being design law and instead held onto the legalism of Roman imposed law, just like the Jews did with their interpretation of law. And if we don’t reject the Romanization of Christianity and

return to worshipping God as Creator whose laws are design laws then we will fulfill exactly the same fate, result, outcome the Jews who rejected Jesus experienced at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now consider this statement—I start with it, because it is actually ambiguous, it leaves itself open to be interpreted a variety of ways and those who cling to the imposed human law way of seeing things will take statements just like this one lift it out of its context and cite it to support their false view that God is required by law and justice to use His power to punish and destroy. I am showing this statement because the author who wrote it, saw things our way and shortly after this statement, in the very same chapter which unpacks the prophecy of Matthew 24 and the destruction of Jerusalem, she describes in detail what this statement means, how it actually functions and occurs and how those who teach God is using His power to punish and destroy are advancing Satan’s lies. Why does this happen? Because this author’s views were rejected and she was shipped to Australia after the 1888 GC.

But here is the first quote that can be misunderstood if one doesn’t keep reading:

- Jesus declared to the listening disciples the **judgments** that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially **the retributive vengeance** that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned his followers: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” [Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20.] When the **idolatrous standards of the Romans** should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay... (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 26 emphasis mine)

The legalists among us, those who believe God’s law functions like human law, will take comments like this one and suggest that God does in fact make legal judgments against sin, and then use His power to inflict punishment for sin. They do this because they truly believe God’s law is nothing but made up rules like creatures make, the sad truth is, those who think this way, and worship a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death inflicted as punishment for law breaking are like the Jews 2000 years ago who sided with God’s enemy to crucify Christ all the while holding membership in God’s church, believing the fundamental beliefs, and advocating for law-keeping.

Jerusalem represents in Bible symbolism the people of God, the children of God, the church of God. To the degree you believe you are a member of the people/church of God, then you are symbolically part of end-time Jerusalem and the lessons that Jerusalem experienced are to be applied to us.

Now, consider what this author describes as the judgment of God and retributive vengeance in the following paragraphs, take note of the unpacking in the same chapter of that language and events and notice what law God functions and operates upon, in other words what kind of law is God’s—

imposed rules requiring God to use power to inflict punishment, or design law that requires God to use power to heal and save and when God lets go then Satan and sin cause the destruction:

- **The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance.** [What kind of law is described here? Perhaps not clear yet, but doing it to oneself is different than an outside authority doing it to you.] In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but **reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown.** [What kind of law is this? Is reaping what one sows a punishment inflicted by an outside authority or the natural consequences? This should be enough to interpret the author's meaning of retributive vengeance, that God let's people go to reap what they have chosen and violating God's design laws result in ruin and death. But the author doesn't leave it here, she goes on.] Says the prophet, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." [Hosea 13:9; 14:1.] Their sufferings **are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God.** [By whom? Who represents these punishments as direct decree of God? All those Christians who believe God's law functions like human law. Martin Luther, the great reformer, took this punishing god view and the legalists within our church who cling to the idea that God's law functions like human law do the very same thing. But note who the author says is the source of this suffering and pain.] It is thus that **the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work.** [Who is the one who brings the pain, suffering, and death? Satan—and who does the Bible say holds the power of death? Satan (Heb 2:14) and who does the Bible say is the murderer from the beginning? Satan, and who destroys death and brings life and immortality to light? Jesus! Understand, much of what is being taught in the church are Satan's lies about God which are the fruit of believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.] By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the **Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them,** and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. [God uses His power to create, heal, and protect. When we reject God we separate ourselves from His life giving presence and place ourselves under the power of God's enemy, the father of lies, the one who holds the power of death.] The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem **are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.** (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 36, emphasis mine)

We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and **protection which we enjoy.** **It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan.** [This is how God uses power, to protect, to heal, to redeem, to restore, to build up not tear down, not destroy. Satan is the destroyer Jesus is the restorer. Oh how God must weep when the people who are called by His name promote a false god with the attributes of His enemy!] The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in **holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one.** But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, **that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression;** but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to **reap that which they have sown.** [What law is described? How does it function? God is not the executioner

of the sentence against transgression—executioners are required in human law systems, in Satan’s kingdom, when laws are nothing but made-up rules. But in God’s kingdom, breaking His design laws results in ruin and death unless the Creator heals, restores, fixes the damage. But God can only do that with our consent, with our agreement, with our cooperation, because it is the only way God can save our unique individuality. If God were to use divine power to override our freewill choices He would erase us, replace us with a programmed simulation of a person, a robot, a computer. But it would not be us. Thus, God seeks to win us by the methods of His Spirit, truth and love, to freely surrender to Him and cooperate with Him for healing of our hearts and minds. But if we refuse Him, He sadly lets us go to reap what we have chosen and we suffer and die from sin, not as an inflicted punishment from God. But God’s enemy has infected the church, the temple of God, with the lie that God’s law functions like human law and it is taught from the pulpits around the world that God’s justice is the infliction of punishment for sin. Oh horrible deceit, demonic lie!] Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, **is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.** [Again, do you see how this author keeps emphasizing that God is not the destroyer, the punishment does not come out from God, that the punishment is the natural result of sin—just like the Bible teaches. Yet, almost all of Christianity has accepted the Romanization of Christianity that God’s law functions like human law and teaches God is the source of inflicted torture and death. We have a message that is to lighten the world and prepare the world for Christ’s return a message to return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we reject the imposed law lie and recognize all of God’s laws are design laws.] The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace, and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God’s hatred of sin, and to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty. (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 36, emphasis mine)

The Saviour’s prophecy concerning **the visitation of judgments** upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. [What kind of judgments visited Jerusalem? Were they arbitrary decrees? Were they judicial, legal, judgments? Or were they the diagnostic judgments of what actually is? What God says in Hosea 11:7 “my people are bent on turning away from me.” God diagnoses them as hardened in rebellion, what more can He do, so He lets them go to reap what they have chosen. He places them in the hands of the god they prefer.] **In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God’s mercy and trampled upon his law.** [And this is the entire world of the unsaved, those who claim there is no God, and those who claim to believe in God but like the Jews 2000 years ago prefer a god who is like Satan in character, whose god makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers]. Dark are the records of human misery that earth has witnessed during its long centuries of crime. The heart sickens and the mind grows faint in contemplation. Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the

future. The records of the past,—the long procession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions, the “battle of the warrior, with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood,” [Isaiah 9:5.]—what are these, **in contrast with the terrors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and Satanic wrath! The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan's rule.** (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 37, emphasis mine) [What happens when God removes His restraining hand? And we are seeing that happen more and more every day. And why is the Spirit withdrawn? Where is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit on Earth? Our hearts and minds, the Spirit temple. So what happens when billions harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is slowly withdrawn. This is not an arbitrary decision on God's part, it is the natural result of people preferring Satan and his methods to God's.]

So, what is God's retributive vengeance? God's letting go and allowing people to reap what they have sown. It is when God stops using His divine power to hold at bay what Satan and sin do to sinners. Is this how you have always heard it presented in the church? Now let's consider this paragraph again, with the explanation of the author in mind and consider its application to our situation today:

- Jesus declared to the listening disciples the judgments that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially **the retributive vengeance** that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned his followers: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” [Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20.] **When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground**, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. **When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay...** (The Great Controversy 1888 ed., p. 26, emphasis mine.)

What is the abomination that causes desolation?

The abomination of a false god with a false law and a false **standard** of righteousness—and when we see that false standard standing on holy ground we know the warning has been given and it is time to flee.

And what did we see during COVID? We saw the false standard of made up rules, human laws, imposed upon people to coerce consciences standing on the holy ground of church institutions, in the holy place of human hearts and minds when leaders of churches embraced the lie that it is righteous to coerce the consciences of their own members, employees and students—in a worldwide lockdown and assault against truth and love all under the guise of doing what is right and just. It is an abomination of truth, of righteousness, of love and billions embraced it as right, and sadly within the

church this method of governing, this type of law has replaced God's design law and it is taught that God's justice is God using power to inflict pain, suffering, and destruction.

We have seen the armies of the world join forces with the church to coerce consciences and now the armies have stepped back, just like in AD 70, and we have a few moments of peace to flee—but not geographically because the finally events are worldwide, it is time to flee spiritually, to cut our heart ties to systems that use beastly methods, to establish our affections, faith, loyalty and devotion only to God and unite with all peoples who worship our Creator and practice His design laws methods.

Read last paragraph,

- We will study Satan's twofold strategy both to deceive and destroy God's people. What the evil one fails to accomplish through persecution, he hopes to achieve through compromise. God is never caught by surprise, and even in the most challenging times He preserves His people. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 14).

Satan's strategy is actually more than two-fold, it is a stepwise progression that follows a certain pattern. Here are the steps that Satan uses over and again, we will examine them from Bible stories and see how he uses these same methods on us:

- **Deception**—Satan lied to Eve in Eden, and he approached Jesus as an angel of light. He is the father of lies and he always seeks to deceive, to lie and get us to believe his lies.
- **Inducements**—bribes, offers of something to make us more or reward us in some way, typically appealing to ego, esteem, power, prestige, position. Something to introduce and inflame that lie that we can't trust God with our position, our calling, our mission, we need to act in self-interest. It is often accompanied by fear, fear of losing the opportunity if you don't act for self. He offered Eve to become like God. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world.
- **Miracles**—Eve was presented with the miracle of a talking serpent; Jesus was miraculously transported to the temple and then tempted to call upon God to perform a miracle by throwing Himself off the temple. These miracles by Satan were not illusions, not pretend, they were real. And Satan can perform certain miracles and will do so again before Christ returns.
- **Threats**—Jesus was threatened repeatedly by the Jews at the instigation of Satan, was threatened with rejection, abandonment of friends, betrayal, His reputation was tarnished, eventually threatened with death by the Jews and threatened by Pilate before Pilate finally condemned Him to death.
- **Physical assault, abuse, torment**—acts of real injustice and wrong.
- **Death**

What is the goal of Satan's attacks and strategy? He wants to displace God's law of truth, love, and freedom from the hearts and minds of people. He wants to efface the image of God in humanity and

replace it with the law of fear, selfishness and coercion, making us in the satanic image. Notice how his strategies are designed to do this.

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness corrupting the character.
- Accepting inducements to do wrong inflames selfishness and breaks trust with God, incites fear and selfishness and corrupts the character
- Believing miracles over the truth and evidence God has given surrenders the mind leading to choices that breaks the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness corrupting the character
- Threats are designed to incite fear undermine trust and lead one to act selfishly to protect self, after all isn't self-defense right? Then why did Jesus say we should turn the other cheek?
- But the big one which is right now being employed as we approach the final events before Christ's return, the strategy that is going to deceive all but the elect, is the perpetration of real wrong, real injustice upon innocents, which is designed by Satan to cause a real sense of outrage, righteous indignation, and a desire for justice, which tempts the righteous to embrace and practice Satan's methods to make things right, to use might and power, the power of force to inflict punishment upon the wrong doers. This was the temptation Jesus faced during His trial and crucifixion, injustice upon injustice, to the One who held all power. Would He use power to punish injustice or would He forgive His wrongdoers? And this is what is happening in the world today. Satanic forces are doing more and more injustice of all kinds and the goal is to inflame outrage in the people of God to get them to choose to embrace and join with the beastly powers of this world to use the power of the state to do justice, to punish wrong doing. But Jesus said we are to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us.
- And finally, if Satan cannot get God's people to choose his methods and become like him in character then he will inspire those who are like him and who do value his methods to seek to destroy, even kill, those who refuse to be corrupted, all under the guise of doing what is right. The wicked always end up persecuting and seeking to kill the righteous. Take their influence away. And when it is led by churches and governments, it is always couched in some way as doing something for the greater good, to stop evil.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph,

- It is difficult to understand such an event as the destruction of Jerusalem in the light of God's loving character. History reveals that tens of thousands died as the Roman general Titus led his armies against the city. Jerusalem was devastated. Men, women, and children were slaughtered. Where was God when His people suffered so greatly? The answer is clear but not easy to grasp fully. God's heart was broken. His eyes were filled with tears. For centuries He reached out to His people. By their rebellion against His loving-kindness, they forfeited

His divine protection. God does not always intervene to limit the results of His people's choices. He allows the natural consequences of rebellion to develop. God did not cause the slaughter of innocent children in the destruction of Jerusalem; the tragic death of the innocents was Satan's act, not God's. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 15).

This is very well said, I am so happy to see this in the quarterly and it demonstrates that there are those in the church who are advancing the true gospel, who have not rejected the design law of God and who see God's character in its true light. This is so encouraging to read.

Read bottom pink section,

- Reflect on the following statement: we do not judge God's character by events we see around us; rather, we filter all the events we see through the prism of His loving character as revealed in the Bible. Why is this such good counsel? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 15).

I think this a good idea, a good process, but what is the problem with this approach? What if one has the wrong view of God's character? What if one views God as the source of pain and suffering, as an authoritarian dictator whose justice requires him to punish sin? If one believes God functions like this and then they interpret events through the lens of such a character, what conclusions do they draw?

My point is that it is right to understand events through the lens of God's character rather than understanding God's character through the lens of events—but what is the basis of determining if we understand God's character correctly?

It is His law—that is the determining factor. If we believe God's law functions like human law, then that believe requires that we view God's character as authoritative and the source of inflicted punishment and death. But if we view God's law as design law then we view things in their right light, God is our Savior, Healer, Deliverer and Friend and is never the source of pain, suffering, and the wages of sin death.

Some people will say Jesus is the lens, and of course He is as He is God in human flesh and He told us that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father. However, millions who believe that Jesus is God the Son and who say they believe He is the exact representation of the Father still view the Father in a different light than Jesus. They see Jesus as a loving Savior and the Father as a stern judge, a punisher of sin who needs to be pled with by Jesus, why? Because despite saying they believe Jesus reveals the Father, the lie that God's law functions like human law causes them to teach that the work of Jesus as our Savior is to protect us from God's just punishment. But that representation is false. We must come back to worshiping God as Creator and reject the Romanization, the human law infection from our beliefs about God.

MONDAY

Read third paragraph,

- God is sovereign and overrules events on earth for the ultimate accomplishment of His divine purposes. Although at times God alters His original plans based on our human choices, His ultimate plan for this planet will be fulfilled. There will be times when the people of God experience hardship, persecution, imprisonment, and death itself for the cause of Christ. But even in the most challenging of times with Satan's most vicious attacks, God sustains and preserves His church. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 16).

Any thoughts or questions about this? Have you ever struggled with the idea of God's sovereignty and His use of divine power to govern things on Earth?

Does God make things happen the way He wants them to? If so, did God want Adam and Eve to sin—some people teach that yes, God did, but did He? I do not believe so, I believe God wanted Adam and Eve to stay sinless, faithful, and loyal.

So what is the balance between God's sovereignty and our freedom, God's will and our will?

Does God alter His plans because of our choices?

- God feeds the children of Israel manna but they beg for meat and what does God do?
- God's plan for Israel coming out of Egypt to occupy Canaan was for Him to send in the hornet and pestilence ahead of the people and as the inhabitants slowly leave the land the Israelites would occupy it, but what did the people want and what did God do?
- God warned them not to have kings, His preference was that He would be their God and lead them, but what did the people insist upon and what did God do?
- God wanted Israel to become a nation of priests to evangelize the world, but that nation chose to reject Christ and crucify Him, so what did God do?
- Other examples?

Do we see God's plan being worked out despite human rejection, rebellion, and interference with it? And how is God working out His plan, with might and power to force His way, or with truth, love, and freedom to win all who will choose life?

TUESDAY

The lesson is about the new converts, Christians being faithful during persecution—what enabled them to be faithful?

To what or who were the early Christians faithful? Were they faithful to an organization, a denomination, a creed, a list of fundamental beliefs, or were they faithful to their Friend Jesus Christ? Is it that the early Christians came to know Jesus personally and experienced His presence in their hearts and minds and they had been won over to God’s methods, character, principles, and standards that they had experienced both in their relationship with God—in how God had treated them—but also in their own personal lives having applied those principles to how they treat others? And thus they had a reality-based experience with God and the things of God and the threats could not cause them to believe evil is good, or up is down, or wrong is right?

What about as we face the final events on planet Earth, what will enable us to remain faithful?

What does it mean to be sealed?

What does it mean for probation to close?

What does it mean to stand during this time without an intercessor?

Does our law lens impact our understanding of these concepts?

WEDNESDAY

The first sentence for the lesson states,

- The early Christian church grew not only because its members preached the gospel but also because they lived the gospel. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 18).

What does it mean to live the gospel?

Does it matter what we think the gospel is? What is the gospel?

The message of the 3 angels of Revelation 14 is the message of the eternal gospel—what is the eternal gospel and how do we live it?

Is the eternal gospel only eternal good news for eternity future, or is it also eternally good news in eternity past?

And in eternity past, before humankind was created, was it true then that Jesus needed to die for our sins at that time? So the death of Jesus as our Savior is part of the good news, but the good news is something more than that, what could it be?

Isn’t the eternal good news the good news about God Himself, that God is love, that God is not like Satan alleges, that God’s laws are design laws and God is reliable, trustworthy, the same yesterday,

today, tomorrow and His character, government, and laws never change and are the protocols of life, health, and happiness—and that He gives us real freedom?

So, we live the gospel by living out the design laws of God in a love/trust relationship with our Creator. In that relationship we experience the spirit of courage and love and no longer are controlled by the spirit of fear we inherited from Adam. And we live the gospel by practicing the methods of God in governance of self as we interact with others. In other words, we live the gospel by implementing the design laws of God in how we treat others, truth, presented in love, leaving others free. We do not use human law to coerce consciences of people.

Satan is the one who seeks to incite fear, for the more fearful we are the less we are able to think and love. The easier we are to manipulate and the more likely we are to choose the methods of selfishness and coercion to make ourselves feel safe. This is how Satan works to trick people into cooperating with their own destruction.

Just look around the world at all the lies about climate change which is something people cannot see, smell, touch, measure, or identify with the senses God has given them. It is an invisible threat that they can only recognize by believing voices of authority—and those voices are godless voices who don't know Jesus and reject the Bible. Because the climate change propaganda is all a lie from the father of lies. It is exactly the opposite of God's promise in Genesis that the seasons and harvest would not change as long as the Earth continues.

- As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV84).

And it denies the science that the planet, since the burning of fossil fuels has become more green, more human friendly, the deserts and uninhabitable spaces are reducing and the planet is become more lush and habitable for us.

If you haven't read our blogs [God's Promises and Climate Change Lies Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) I encourage you to do so.

But the lies constantly bombard people to the point they react to the lies with fear and go along with decisions that take their freedom, take their wealth, and undermine their actual health and happiness.

Understand, what is happening in the world under the spectrum of protecting the climate has nothing to do with protecting the climate—it has to do with taking away your freedom, to limit your ability to travel freely and cheaply, to limit your ability to provide for your family, heat your home, and be autonomous while simultaneously shifting wealth from the people to the few elites of business who are behind these so called climate saving interventions. But in reality almost all the changes are more harmful to the environment and planet Earth than the use of fossil fuels. Woe be to those who harm the Earth, these godless exploiters of the planet and the people are going to one day have truth come

bearing down on them and there will be a weeping and gnashing of teeth—but the bigger question is how many billions are being deceived by these lies to cooperate with their own destruction? Will our church, like they did with COVID, join forces with the godless governments and Earth worshiping green movement leaders to form a coalition to force such changes upon us that are contrary to God’s design, kingdom, and promises? Watch for it.

It is incredible to watch so many good people colluding voluntarily with their own destruction.

Read bottom pink section:

- Discuss: What role does the church have in cooperating with Christ in proving Satan’s charges wrong? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 18).

Thoughts? Do we have a role? What role? What do you think of this text?

- The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20 NIV84).

What does this mean? Satan being trampled under our feet? How? Is this literal, that the physical body of Satan will be walked on by us or is this a metaphor?

What does it mean to trample God’s law under our feet? Doesn’t it mean we don’t value it, we walk all over it, ignore, discount, reject, and override it?

What does it mean to trample Satan under our feet?

What is under our feet? Dirt, trash, refuse, the things we throw away, the things we scrape off the bottom of our shoes.

So, to trample Satan under our feet means that we have come to revile the things of Satan, his methods, principles, actions, attitudes, motives, desires, and laws are sewage to us. This happens when we are freed from the imperial law concept and in a loving relationship with God have a new heart and right spirit, the things of this world grow dim, we want to scrape the things of Satan off our feet, we walk in supremacy and purity above the dirt of this world.

Have you heard of last generation theology? The idea we must be perfect as a people before Jesus returns. Is the idea of us being perfect a human or godly idea?

Jesus said,

- Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48 NIV84).

What does this mean? What law lens do we understand this through?

If we have a human law model then this means deeds, performance, actions.

But if we have a design law model this means heart motive and intent, do we love God with all our hearts minds souls and strength, are with mature in heart, not perfect in task performance. Are we faithful friends of God's who will not break trust with God no matter what the trial, tribulation or temptation?

Examples of this in history are:

- Job
- Daniel
- Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego
- The apostles who died as martyrs

And the final group who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes are described in Revelation as:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11)

They overcame Satan and his demonic forces by the life of Jesus (symbolized by the blood) which they have internalized thus they have a new heart and right spirit that loves God and loves the truth and their testimony is the same testimony that Jesus gave about God and they do not love self so much that they would use the methods of this world to try and save themselves.

THURSDAY

Read the second through fifth paragraphs:

- One of the greatest revelations of God's love was demonstrated when two devastating pandemics plagued the early centuries around a.d. 160 and a.d. 260. Christians stepped forward and ministered to the sick and dying. These plagues killed tens of thousands and left entire villages and towns with scarcely an inhabitant. The unselfish, sacrificial, caring, loving ministry of Christians made a huge impact on the population. Over time, thousands, and eventually hundreds of thousands, and then millions in the Roman Empire became believers in Jesus during these two epidemics. Love, outgoing concern, and organized, selfless care of the sick and dying created an admiration for these believers and the Christ they represented.

Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity* is a modern historical narrative portraying these historic events in a new and improved light. In it he describes how during the second epidemic the whole Christian community, which was still heavily Judeo-Christian, became a virtual army of nurses, providing the basic needs for the suffering community to survive.

“At the height of the second great epidemic, around a.d. 260, . . . Dionysius wrote a lengthy tribute to the heroic nursing efforts of local Christians, many of whom lost their lives while caring for others.

“Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains.”—The Rise of Christianity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 82. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 19).

Isn't that a beautiful description of the love of Christ displacing fear and selfishness and people no longer loving their own lives so much as to shrink from death. Instead they loved God and others more than self and sacrificed themselves to help others. And the gospel spread!

Now, contrast that with what we saw from many churches during COVID?

What was dominating the landscape? Did we see Christian hospitals, schools, and churches protecting the consciences of people or did we see them more concerned for their safety and financial success to the point that they were willing to betray sacred trusts and coerce people to comply?