



2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 6 The Two Witnesses

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Revelation 11:3-6:

- And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. (Revelation 11:3-6 NIV84).

Who are the two witnesses?

The lesson cites several lines of evidence that leads to their conclusion in the last paragraph. These include the prophecy of Zechariah chapter four of two olive trees giving oil into the golden lampstands, how oil represents the Holy Spirit, and how the Psalms tells us that God’s word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. And that these two witnesses prophecy or bear witness to God and advance God’s truth and kingdom.

We read their conclusion in the last paragraph,

- Who are these two witnesses? In view of these biblical points and the characteristics given in Revelation 11, we can conclude (not dogmatically, however) that the two witnesses are the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, communicating God’s light and truth to the world. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 47).

I really like how the lesson said that their conclusion that the Old and New Testaments are the two witnesses is not a dogmatic one, meaning they are open to change that view with new evidence or better explanation—that is a very healthy attitude.

What do you think? Is there a better explanation for the two witnesses than the Old and New Testaments? I think there is. I think the Bible, both old and new testaments together, is **one** of the two witnesses.

If I am right, what is the other witness?

- “**You** must be on your guard. **You** will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me **you** will stand before governors and kings **as witnesses to them**. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever **you** are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for **it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit**. (Mark 13:9-11 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. **But before all this**, they will lay hands on **you** and persecute you. They will deliver **you** to synagogues and prisons, and **you** will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. **This will result in your being witnesses to them**. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. **For I will give you words and wisdom** that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. (Luke 21:10-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- [Jesus] said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But **you** will receive power when the **Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:7-8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

So, could the two witnesses be, the Bible and the people of God who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to give witness to the truth contained in the Bible?

Do the other elements of the prophecy fit for the people of God who are empowered by the Holy Spirit and enlightened by the Scriptures?

- And **I will give power** to my two witnesses, and they will **prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth**.” These are the **two olive trees** and the **two lampstands** that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, **fire comes from their mouths** and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. **These men** have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and **they have power to turn the waters into blood** and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. (Revelation 11:3-6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Do the following elements fit the people of God witnessing His truth?

- They receive power from God to be His witnesses.
- They give His true message, i.e. prophecy, for 1260 clothed in sackcloth, meaning in mourning cloth because they are not free, they are persecuted, hunted, and have to do so secretly.
- What about the two olive trees, representing the Holy Spirit, are the people of God empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for God?

- What about the two lampstands—do they represent the people of God?
 - Jesus said “**You** are the **light** of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a **lamp** and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before men**, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).
 - In the sanctuary service, from where the lampstand imagery is taken, the lampstand had a central stand of gold, which represents Jesus our perfect sinless human substitutionary Savior, who is the Word made flesh and the source of truth and light—the light that lightens all men. But attached to the central stand were six lamps. The number six represents humanity who was created on day six. Thus the lampstand, represents our perfection when united with Christ—as six plus one equals 7. And we become lights that give light of God’s kingdom of truth, love, and freedom as we are infilled by the Holy Spirit that flows into us through Jesus, the central stand, the connecting link between heaven and Earth. And, in the sanctuary rituals each morning and evening the high priest, and only the high priest (who symbolically represents Jesus our heavenly High Priest), trimmed the wicks on the lamps, symbolically acting out how Jesus works in our hearts to trim away the old sinful habits, lies, lusts, biases, prejudices, wounds, and crud of this world so that we burn more brightly for Him.
- What about fire coming out of their mouths to devour the enemies? What comes out of the mouth? Truth, this is the fire of truth that devour lies and represents the fire of God’s infinite glory that we give testimony and witness to, the truth of His character of love and truth, which consumes all out of harmony with it.
- What about shutting up the sky so it won’t rain?
 - Revelation is a symbolic book, most of this is symbolic not literal and the book is pulling from the Old Testament to help inform us of the truth for the prophetic future of when John was writing.
 - We have an object lesson from historic Elijah when he did this, but what is the application to our day?
 - Malachi also prophesied about this:
 - “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:5-6 NIV84)
 - These witnesses will give the testimony or witness of Elijah—and what was Elijah’s message? Why did he call for there to be no rain? Because they were worshiping a false god that they believed brought the rain and thus no rain showed he was powerless. And at Mt. Carmel Elijah called for them to choose which God they would worship, Yahweh or Baal. The final issues are the same, a call to leave Baal worship behind and return to Creator worship. Remember who Baal was—the god of rain, thunder, lightning, weather and harvest, the son of El, the god who fought the great serpent, the leviathan, who fought against Mot the god of death, who in his battle with Mot dies and rises again to bring life to the land. What was wrong with worshiping this god? Baal required payment, appeasement or else he would punish. Baal was a god of imposed rule, of inflicted punishments, it is the god of imposed law. We find

ourselves in the same situation today. And God's two witnesses at this time in history call people back to worshipping the Creator.

- What about turning water to blood and call plagues—this is referring to Moses when he stood before Pharaoh and, and like Elijah, confronted pagan, false god worship and called people back to worship the true God. Which is what we are to do by presenting the message of the 3 angels, to call people to, like Elijah did, judge God correctly, to stop worshipping a pagan god who makes up rules and uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking and needs sacrifice offered to him in order not to punish or hurt, and return to worshipping the Creator whose laws are design laws and who is the source of life.

Thus, this is how I rendered Revelation 11:3-6 in the Remedy:

- But I will empower my two witnesses—the true Church and the written Word—to proclaim the truth about me, though covered with a shroud of human traditions, for 1260 days." These two are like lamps—standing firm for the Lord, proclaiming my word on earth; like two olive trees—filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit. If anyone tries to obstruct their work with lies and distortions, the fire of truth will be spoken and consume all such enemies—this is how all who want to destroy truth will die. These witnesses have the power that exposes false ideas about God—the same power that Elijah had when it would not rain, thus exposing Baal as false; the same power that Moses had when water turned to blood and plagues covered the land, exposing the Egyptian gods as false. (Revelation 11:3-6 REM).

What do you think of the idea that the two witnesses are 1) the people of God enlightened by 2) the Word of God?

Consider this quote in **FRIDAY**'s lesson from the Great Controversy:

- “When the **Bible** was proscribed by religious and secular authority; when **its testimony** was perverted, and every effort made that men and demons could invent to turn the minds of the people from it; when **those who dared proclaim its sacred truths** were hunted, betrayed, tortured, buried in dungeon cells, martyred for their faith, or compelled to flee to mountain fastnesses, and to dens and caves of the earth—then the **faithful witnesses prophesied in sackcloth**. Yet **they** continued their testimony throughout the entire period of 1260 years. In the darkest times there were **faithful men** who loved **God's word** and were jealous for His honor. To **these loyal servants** were given wisdom, power, and authority to declare His truth during the whole of this time.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 267, 268. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, *The Great Controversy* p. 52, emphasis mine).

Does this quotation support the idea that the two witnesses are the Bible AND the faithful men of God who loved God's word and faithfully witnessed the truth?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the portion of the prophecy of Revelation 11 where the two witnesses are killed, with this interpretation starting with the third paragraph,

- In the French Revolution, the government officially established the Cult of Reason as a state-sponsored atheistic religion, intended to replace Christianity. A Festival of Reason was held nationwide on November 10, 1793. Churches across France were turned into Temples of Reason, and a living woman was enthroned as the Goddess of Reason. Bibles were burned in the streets. God was declared nonexistent, and death was pronounced to be an endless sleep. Satan worked through godless men to kill God's two witnesses. Their dead bodies would "lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev. 11:8, NKJV).

Egypt was a culture of many gods that denied the true God (see Exod. 5:2). Sodom represents gross immorality. In the French Revolution, God's two witnesses—the Old and New Testaments—lay dead as a result of the atheism and immorality that ran rampant as normal restraints were loosed in revolution and bloodshed.

Revelation 11:9 says that the bodies of God's two witnesses would lie unburied for "three-and-a-half days" (NKJV), i.e., prophetic "days" representing three and a half literal years. Atheism was at its height in the French Revolution, at least for about three and a half years. This period extended from November 26, 1793, when a decree issued in Paris abolished religion, to June 17, 1797, when the French government removed its restrictive religious laws. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 49).

I believe this is another dual fulfillment prophecy, like Jesus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was not the end of the world, but the events there hold lessons for us as we approach the end of the world. Likewise, Revelation is not about the French Revolution, it is a warning for the events leading to the second coming of Christ and thus the events of the French Revolution are a local regional fulfillment of a larger global event yet to come.

Multiple prophecies exist like this in Scripture:

- Jesus' prophecy of destruction of Jerusalem/end of the world
- Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—local regional fulfillment at Pentecost, global fulfillment before the second coming
- Isaiah's and Ezekiel's prophecy about human kings (local regional fulfillment) pointing to the fall of Lucifer, (greater global fulfillment)
- Malachi's prophecy concerning Elijah—local regional with John the Baptist who preceded Christ, greater global fulfillment with the Elijah message before the second coming

- Second beast of Revelation 13 with lamblike horns representing the USA (local regional fulfillment), pointing to Satan impersonating Christ (greater global fulfillment)

These events in France impacted a very small part of human civilization. While in France these prophetic elements were fulfilled, it is not true that they were fulfilled in the other parts of Europe and the world where the Bible was still held in high esteem at that time. It is my belief, that the full fulfillment of this prophecy will be the global rejection of the truth of God as revealed in the Bible and by His true church and the world wondering after the beast and the entire world becoming as Jesus said, like it was in the days of Sodom, which I believe we are seeing transpiring right now in this very generation.

Peter wrote this about Lot:

- Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) (2 Peter 2:7-8 NIV84).

I am currently experiencing this same thing, so much of the news, TV, movies, what is happening in our schools, in our communities is so vile, perverted, exploitive, abusive, and corrupt it makes me sick and I can't watch it. I can't even stand to read most of the news articles anymore.

What we see happening is that God's Holy Spirit is being withdrawn and demonic spirits are influencing the people and society is decaying.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- At the end of the French Revolution, God's Word would, figuratively, come to life again. There would be a mighty revival. Great fear would fall on those who saw God's Word once more become the living power of God unto salvation. At the end of the eighteenth century, God raised up men and women who were committed to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. People spread the message of the Bible rapidly. One such person was William Carey, who traveled to India and translated the Bible into dozens of local dialects. Propelled by the power of the Bible, missionaries were sent around the world. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 50).

Did you notice something the lesson did here? And I agree with it, but what they did supports my view and undercuts their own previously stated conclusion that the two witnesses are the Old and New Testament and that the complete fulfillment of the prophecy is the French Revolution.

They moved away from France to the entire world, and they brought in the people who took the gospel to the world. I agree with this move because I believe the two witnesses are the true church and the Bible, and the French Revolution is only a regional fulfillment not the complete fulfillment.

Are we seeing the complete fulfillment now? When the godless forces of this world who deny the Bible, who have worked to eliminate it from our discourse and society, who lead the green climate change movement—which is a lie and a specific denial of God’s promises to us—who were behind the COVID gain of function research, release, and then the greatest abuse of human rights in history, who are advancing the lie that male and female is a mental construct not a biological God-designed reality, who are behind the DEI falsehoods, who promote lawlessness such as open borders, who promote no standards in education, who claim Christianity is racist and abusive, that a two parent home with a mother and father is a form of white supremacy, who want to evolve humans to human 2.0 through genetic and cybernetic manipulation. Are we seeing the ever-increasing decadence, crime, abuse, and exploitation and activities designed and intended to destroy the image of God in people, to increase fear, advance selfishness, and destroy the unity of people to have healthy community? Do we see demons working to destroy the image of God in people?

Isn’t the greater global fulfillment of these events occurring right before our eyes?

And we must be careful to guard our hearts for Satan is using all of this evil to infect our hearts with anger, rage, hate—and it is now we must keep watch, watch over our hearts, we must purposely choose to love our enemies, to pray for those who are doing all this evil, to see them as our sin-sick brothers and sisters, family members who are destroying themselves, that we might be sons of our Father who is in heaven. As Jesus said,

- “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36 NIV84).

We must be careful to watch our own hearts and not become angry, bitter, selfish, and hateful. We must love the enemies of God like Jesus, like Paul, like Stephen even though they will seek to destroy us and all that we hold dear, we cannot win by devolving into hatred, politics, use of earthly powers to try and advance what we think is right. We win like the early church advanced the gospel, by living out God’s principles in governance of ourselves in how we treat others, not by taking over governments.

But do you see the need for the two witnesses to rise up? Do you see how the true people of God, who have the Word of God in their hearts and minds and are able to accurately present God’s reality-based truths for this time, are needed to give their witness, to give the testimony of Jesus to the world? This can only be done if we return to worshiping God as Creator and understand His laws are design laws—our God is the God of reality! Satan is the father of lies, the make-believe, the pretend, the reimagined way of thinking—of fantasy.

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 119:89 and 111:7-8:

- Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89, NIV84)
- The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness. (Psalm 111:7-8, NIV84)

What do these texts mean?

Is the Psalm, when it says, “Your word is eternal” talking about the Bible?

Read the last two paragraphs,

- God’s Word may be attacked, or suppressed, but it will never be eradicated. Even many professed Christians undermine its authority in various ways, questioning parts of the Bible or so emphasizing the human elements that it all but loses its divine stamp, and God’s truth is undermined.

We must never, in any way, allow ourselves to be seduced by these attacks on the Word of God. It is still alive today, speaking to human hearts, breathing new life into those who are willing to listen to the Word and follow its teachings. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 50).

It appears the lesson is applying these Psalms to the Bible, and we certainly do refer to the Bible as the Word of God.

So, I think it is quite legitimate to believe these Psalms are including in its reference the written Word of God, but my question is whether these Psalms are restricted to the Bible or even primarily intended to point our minds exclusively to the Bible? are these psalms pointing our minds to God the Creator of reality and His word which is truth itself, reality, how things are, and is most perfectly revealed in Jesus the Word made flesh?

Let me be clear—I am not in any way diminishing the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God and it is in the Bible that we learn about Jesus the living Word of God. But I believe God’s Word means the totality of His Word, the truth that ever flows from God in all avenues of His divine disclosure and revelation. And God has given us the written word as a touchstone, for us to use as a reference and compare any future claims of inspiration—because God would make future revelations of truth because truth is unfolding and the Bible is a reference guide to differentiate the true word of God from falsehood. Therefore, in my view, God’s Word includes:

- His direct revelations in speaking to people like Adam and Eve in Eden, the spoken revelations of the coming destruction of Sodom He made to Abraham, the directions He gave to Moses when He spoke face to face as a man to a friend.
- His revelations in dreams and visions like He did to Joseph, Pharaoh, Daniel, and John

- His truths spoken by His prophets like the words spoken to Nineveh by Jonah
- His truths written by His prophets—the Bible
- The testimony given in nature—The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), and God’s divine nature is seen in what He has made (Romans 1:20).
- The testimony given by the transformation of lives when the Holy Spirit recreates a person to leave selfishness and sin behind and live lives of love and trust in harmony with God and His design laws for life
- The truth spoken by God’s teachers, pastors, evangelists, and gospel workers

The Word of God is the truth, for God is the truth and the source of all truth. And while the Bible is the inspired divine revelation of God to us, the written Word, it can be misused, misunderstood, misapplied, and used to harm—especially when it is used alone without connection to the other evidentiary threads God has given us. Jesus Himself said to religious people who were studying the God-inspired Holy Scriptures:

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV84).

Jesus is not undermining the inspiration of the Bible—He is stating that one can study the Bible in such a way that it doesn’t do any good.

The lesson admonishes us not to allow ourselves to be seduced by attacks on God’s Word—my point is that the attacks on God’s truth are multipronged. There are the attacks of godlessness, of the idea that there is no God and that the Bible is just a book of fables. But there is another attack, and that is that the Bible is a codebook of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned. In other words, that the Bible is a legal book, a book of laws that must be obeyed with the idea that the God’s kingdom is like the kingdoms of the world. This causes a form of godliness without power and people can be religious, claiming belief in a long list of right doctrines, including reverence for the sacred text, but still be enemies of God, why? Because they have accepted a different attack on the Bible, an attack that changes and obscures the truths contained in the Bible.

We protect ourselves from this attack on the Word of God, by including all the threads of evidence that God has provided and harmonizing them. The integrative evidenced based approach that seeks the harmonized truth from Scripture, Science/Nature, and Life Experiences.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Despite the attacks of the enemy, God’s work on earth will come to a glorious climax. The gospel will be preached to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6, NKJV). The

great controversy between Christ and Satan will end with Christ completely defeating the powers of hell. God's kingdom will triumph over evil, and sin will be eradicated forever from the universe. Revelation 11 begins with Satan's attempt through the French Revolution to destroy the Christian faith and eradicate belief in God, but the chapter ends with the triumph of God's kingdom over the principalities and powers of evil. It provides encouragement to all who go through fiery trials for the cause of Christ and His truth. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 51).

Why hasn't Jesus come? What is the cause of the delay? Do we have a role to play in hastening the day? What is our role?

Consider this historical quote, by one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The quote refers to Adventists after the 1844 disappointment. Recognize that this reference is not referring to the Seventh-day Adventist organized church, for it wasn't organized until 1863. This reference is to the wide body of Christians from all denominations that were part of the Great Awakening and who were looking forward to the second coming of Christ, and in particular those who were followers of Baptist preacher William Miller who proclaimed that the 2300 prophecy of Daniel 8:14 would end with the coming of Jesus on October 22, 1844. It is this group of people, that are referred to in this quote. And then the author makes a suggestion as to why Jesus has not yet come. What do you think of this suggestion for the delay:

- Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, **receiving the message of the third angel** and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, **the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this** to receive His people to their reward. (Evangelism 695.3; 4LtMs, Ms 4, 1883, par. 52)

So this author, in 1883, has taken the position that the work could have been finished if that initial group of Adventists—from a wide variety of denominations—would have received the message of the third angel—thoughts?

What is this message of the third angel that would have made such a difference?

- A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Revelation 14:9-12 NIV84).

What do you think? If we could broadcast this message, word for word, on every TV and radio station, every internet site, every podcast, so that every single person in the entire world hears this read to them, would that finish the work? Why or why not?

Well first, this is the concluding message that cannot be understood without the two preceding messages.

Let's do a quick review of all three messages and then see what has been rejected in the third, including by the majority of those who have formed and become the Seventh-day Adventist church. If you would like more detail on this and to have something to share with others, our magazine [The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels](#) is available on our website. You can read it online, send the link to friends, download a pdf, or order print copies to share. But let's read the first two messages:

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” (Revelation 14:6-9 NIV84)

The eternal gospel is the eternal good news, which is the good news that has always been true in eternity past as well as eternally true through all the future. And that good news is the truth about God, that God is not like Satan has alleged. And Satan has alleged that God is untrustworthy, that God functions like a creature, that God is selfish, makes up rules, and uses power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. The good news is that all of this is a lie. We are called by the first angel to stop judging God to be like a human dictator, to give Him glory by revealing the truth about Him as Creator, He who made the heavens, earth, sea and fountains of water which means we realize that God's laws are design laws, the laws reality is constructed to exist and operate upon and they are not the kinds of laws sinful creatures make, imposed rules that require imposed punishments.

When we do this we are called to leave Babylon, that system of imposed law with its imposed punishments is fallen and corrupt. Babylon, of all the nations that interacted with Israel in the Bible story arc, is the first nation to have a codified system of law and order, the code of Hammurabi, and thus rightly represents the fallen kingdoms of this world. Just look around and see how unjust imposed laws are. One can never get love, trust, loyalty, friendship or true justice by inflicting punishments upon people. Thus we are to judge God rightly and leave behind all the systems and theologies that teach a penal legal, imposed law, punishing god behind.

Then, when we do that we realize the true message of the three angels and can comprehend the beauty of the third angel. The message is about worship—are we worshiping God as Jesus revealed Him to be, the Creator and Sustainer of reality whose laws are design laws? Or are we worshiping the imposter, the god of this age, whose laws are like our laws, made up rules that require that false

god to use power to punish? The law of worship is a design law, by beholding we are changed. We become like the God we admire, worship, and follow and thus those who reject the first and second angels' messages and continue to worship a god who is like Satan, the god of imposed rules and inflicted punishments will either mark themselves in character to be like him, or mark themselves in practice to be like him. And then they experience the law of liberty when God sets them free to reap what they have chosen for themselves, when God stops using power to hold at bay what sin does to the sinner. And they experience the full consequences of truth and love when God's life-giving glory is unveiled and they have full knowledge of what they have done to themselves and others and they are tormented by their unremedied sin in the presence of the holy angels and the lamb.

The message of the third angel is the message of design law, of reality, of how things actually work. And EGW was telling us we cannot finish the work and hasten the day until we leave the Roman imposed law lies behind and finally teach the truth about God's character and government which is built upon designs laws of truth, love, and liberty.

The lesson asks us to read Revelation 11:19:

- Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. (Revelation 11:19 NIV84).

What do you think John saw? Was John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

We'll consider other things John saw in this very same vision recorded in the book of Revelation:

- I turned around to **see** the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I **saw** seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (Revelation 1:12-16 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality, or a symbolic representation of reality?

- After this **I looked**, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven... and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads... In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. (Revelation 4:1-8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality, or a symbolic representation of reality?

- Then I **saw** a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes... (Revelation 5:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

- Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. (Revelation 11:19 NIV84).

Is John seeing reality or a symbolic representation of reality?

What is the reality that we are to understand from these symbols?

Can you think of other words to describe the reality of what is represented?

The OT sanctuary was given to help us understand these things, what was it that occurred symbolically in that old system? The cleansing of people from sin and the restoration of the people to unity, at-one-ment with God.

So the temple is a symbolic representation of God's plan of salvation. His actions to resolve and remove sin from His universe.

But how does God do this?

What is the problem sin caused that God needs to fix?

Where does sin exist, operate, occur, happen? Does sin happen in non-living matter, do we find sin in rocks, stars, moons, asteroids, photons, neutrinos, atoms?

Does sin exist in books or records? When we read in our Bibles the record of David's sin with Bathsheba, is that record we are reading sin? If we could erase all the records of David's sin from all recording devices, whether printed Bibles, or memory sticks, or internet websites, or heavenly records, if we could erase from the entire universe the record of David's sin, have we gotten rid of sin?

No! understand reality, erasing record books does not eliminate, remove, or cleanse God's universe from sin, because non-living matter cannot sin, but we can keep a record of sin carved in stone, or recorded in ink—but that record is not sin and erasing that record doesn't remove or eliminate sin.

So, whatever Christ is doing in the Temple in heaven it is not erasing facts of history from recording devices.

So, what is the symbolism teaching us?

Where does sin occur? It occurs in living beings and if God wants to remove sin from His universe where does He have to act, what needs to be cleansed?

Notice what David prayed for after his great sin—he did not pray to have records erased, notice what he prayed:

- Wash away all my iniquity and **cleanse me** from my sin... **Cleanse me** with hyssop, and **I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.** (Psalm 51:2 & 7 NIV 84, emphasis mine)

David understood that salvation is cleansing us, our hearts and minds, our characters, our spirits and souls must be cleansed.

That is why in the new covenant God writes His law in our hearts and minds, and that is symbolically taught by the ark of the covenant, which is at the center of the temple.

The ark is the place of at-one-ment, where all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ by the application of His victory at the cross.

The lid to the ark was made of solid gold and represents Jesus—connected to the lid were the angels representing the unfallen heavenly host, the Shekinah glory represents the Godhead, resting on the lid, and below the lid was the box made of porous wood covered in gold. This represents defective sinners, who are perfected by the righteousness (gold) of Jesus. In the box were three elements that symbolically represent how we are transformed and cleansed from sin:

- Manna—represents the living Word, Jesus that we partake and are won to trust, then in trust we open the heart and element 2
- The law is written upon our hearts, the living law of God, the design law methods and motives of truth, love, and liberty that we with our reborn hearts and minds begin to practice and that results in element 3
- Aaron's rod that budded and brought forth almonds, we who were dead in trespass and sin come to live and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness

So what is Jesus doing in heaven as our High Priest? He is cleansing the temple, which means what? He is cleansing His people from sin and preparing His people, to be with Him. He is bringing us into at-one-ment, and this is the wedding of Christ, what happens at a wedding? The two become one, at-one-ment. And where do weddings happen? They are sacred joinings happening in sacred spaces, rightly depicted in the temple. The day of atonement depicts the time in history when Jesus finishes the work of cleansing His bride to meet Him face to face.

What about the records? The Bible says that the names of people are recorded in the Lamb's book of life, and in the Bible names represent character, and thus what is recorded is not historical accounts, but individualities. When a person dies, the body returns to dust, the life energy—spirit—returns to God who gave it, but the soul, the psyche, the individuality is safely stored on the heavenly servers, the Lamb's book of life awaiting download into a new body at the resurrection. Paul describes this perfectly in Thessalonians.

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those **who fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have **fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that**, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NIV84).

Notice that the dead are in a state of sleep and are coming back with Jesus from heaven, but they are also rising out of the ground. How? Because their bodies returned to dust and God creates new bodies for them at the resurrection, but their software, their individuality, their souls have been sleeping in heaven secure in Jesus.

So, cleansing the records in heaven is only achieved by cleansing the hearts and minds of people, it is never achieved by legal mechanics or erasing facts of history.

FRIDAY

In the last paragraph, the lesson quotes this from the book *The Great Controversy*

- “Unless the church will follow on in His [God's] opening providence, **accepting every ray of light**, performing every duty which may be revealed, religion will inevitably **degenerate into the observance of forms**, and the spirit of vital godliness will disappear.”—The Great Controversy, p. 316. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 52, emphasis mine).

Is this not describing a church that has rejected the design law light and embraced and clung to the imposed law view?

MONDAY

Read the question at the bottom of the lesson:

- What are some of the teachings today, held by many Christians, that are based on tradition and not on the Word of God? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 48).

Can you think of any?

- A denomination holds the keys to salvation rather than Jesus
- Ceremonies have saving power
- All people have eternal life whether saved or lost, only the place and conditions of their life change—some live in heaven others live eternally in hell
- God’s law functions like human law
- God is the source of pain, suffering and death inflicted as punishment for sin
- Salvation is a legal process
- Jesus must plead to the Father to save us from the Father’s wrath
- Jesus must present His sacrifice to the Father to pay our sin debt
- Jesus must present His merits to the Father to remind the father of the sin debt He has already paid
- Salvation is being saved from God’s punishment for sin
- Sunday is a sacred day of the week
- Others?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW IN SOUTH AFRICA: The Job Pamphlet is now available in Afrikaans available on the Come and Reason website under the languages tab. Should anybody in South Africa want to order a physical copy they can contact Jacques van den Heever at southafrica@comeandreason.com

Also we are excited to announce that we created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group and should anybody would like to join they are welcome. The link is: <https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0>

New Bookmark: Friends with Jesus is now available. If you have a US Postal address and would like some to share, order them for free in our USA store: <https://comeandreason-com.3dcartstores.com/bookmark-friends-with-jesus.html>

The Remedy NT for Andriod (which includes Genesis and Psalms) has been **rebuilt** so it now runs on the newest flavors of Android OS! Get it in the Google Play Store.

