



## 2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 9 The Foundation of God's Government

by Tim Jennings

### SABBATH

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A great title for the lesson, because the foundation of God's government is the central issue in the Great Controversy.

And what is the foundation of any government? The law, and thus the lesson points us to the central question—how do we understand God's law? Sadly, the lesson has yet to embrace the truth about God's law and instead continues to present [The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ](#). If you haven't read our magazine by that name, please do so, for it lays out the central issue over God's law which slants everything we believe about God and the Bible.

If we understand God's law functions like that of a creature, imposed rules, then we always conclude that God's justice is legal, the use of His power to inflict artificial penalties to punish rule-breaking. And in such a worldview God becomes the source of pain and death.

But when we return to worshipping God as Creator we recognize that His laws are the laws reality is built to exist and operate upon and every single law of God is for our health and benefit. The more we choose to live in harmony with God's design laws the healthier and happier we become. The more we choose to violate God's design laws the more sickness, pain, suffering, we experience before we ultimately die unless we turn back to God and allow Him to heal us.

The message that the SDA church was given to take to the world was a call to turn people back to worshipping the Creator God whose laws are design laws. EGW wrote:

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

The final issue in this war is over how we understand God's law and, thus, how we understand God's character and government to function. If the church is to finish the Reformation and hasten the day of our Lord, it must reject the Roman idea of law and return to worshipping the Creator.

**Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the

Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. (*Prophets and Kings*. p. 625, emphasis mine).

The final conflict is not a battle between rival churches! It is over the laws of men versus the precepts of God. What kind of laws do men enact? Imposed-law, made-up rules. But God's law is design law, the laws that sustain the operations of life itself. The final conflict will be over this issue.

Yet, sadly, far too many Christians are caught up in denominational fighting when the real issue is over whether we are worshiping the Creator or a creature.

Read first paragraph,

- Through intensive Bible study, Adventists came to understand the significance of **the law in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary**. Looking into the heart of God's law, they also discovered the **significance of the Sabbath**, the fourth commandment. In fact, this commandment more than any other clearly identifies God as our Creator, the foundation of all true worship—a theme that will be especially relevant in the final days of earth's history (see Rev. 14:6–12). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, *The Great Controversy* p. 72, emphasis mine).

We were certainly given light on the significance of the law, in 1888 when Jones and Waggoner brought the truth that the Ten Commandment law, referred to by Paul in Galatians was “added” and did not exist in eternity past, including the Sabbath. But the leaders of the church rejected that light and instead of appreciating the true significance of the seventh-day Sabbath undermined the truth and hid the light away from the people under a false burden of legalism and rule-keeping, i.e., that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience.

EGW confirmed the position of Jones and Waggoner:

- I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.** ... “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). **In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law** (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, pp. 233, 234, emphasis mine).

Let's be very clear on a couple of points:

- Every Bible scholar of every denomination will acknowledge that the Sabbath of the Bible is the same Sabbath the Jews keep to this day, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday—there is no dispute between people who have studied the question as to which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath.
- The question is whether it matters—and this is the real failing of the SDA church since 1888 for they have embraced the right day but have promoted it with Satan's reason, that it is a made up legal test of loyalty to God and thus while keeping the right day as the Sabbath they are teaching the wrong law, imposed law, the law that creatures make up, and thus they are promoting the wrong God, just as the Jews did 2000 years ago. If we want to finish the Reformation, if we want to hasten the day of the Lord, if we want to give the special message

for this time, we must reject the lie that God's law functions like human law and returning to worshipping Him as Creator—yes we keep the beautiful and wonderful blessing of the seventh-day Sabbath but we present it in its design law reality and remove the legalism attached to it by the lie.

The history we have in the Gospels has been demonstrated that imposed law, rule-keeping, legalism is a false theology with Satan as the god being worshiped, when 2000 years ago the church of God, the people specially called by God, protected by God, blessed by God, the people who had the inspired writings, who had the sanctuary message, who had the health message, who had the seventh day Sabbath kept is all legally and they rejected the Lord of the Sabbath and killed Him.

In the SDA church, we have done the exact same thing, the blessings of God to help prepare us to meet Him have been corrupted because the leadership of the church rejected the design law truth brought to our church in 1888 and instead embraced the Roman idea of law, that God's law are made up rules that require legal oversight, and EGW wrote about the delegates at 1888 who rejected the truth that the 10 Commandments written on stone are not eternal, they were added because of man's sin, and instead taught God's law is a written down set of rules, like humans make. Listen to what she said about the Adventist leadership:

And this is only one quote, there are others in which she says similar things:

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

So first question is, have the Adventist leadership truly appreciated the significance of the Sabbath, or have they misrepresented both the Sabbath and God's government by continuing to understand it through Roman law, through human law, through imposed law, teaching that it is a rule that we must keep and that God enforces through inflicted punishments?

Let me be clear, I am not and will not undermine the significance, blessing, value, holiness, sacredness of God's Sabbath—no, it is the legalists, the law-keepers, the rule-makers, the religious leaders who teach the Sabbath is a rule that must be kept lest God inflict punishment who undermine it. And it is so sad, heartbreaking really, that people can be enemies of God while they claim to be worshipping God and keeping His commandments—which is the exact lesson we have recorded in the Gospels.

And the root cause of this is the belief that God's law functions like human law—when one believes that lie they can have all the right doctrines, but are worshipping the wrong god, and applying the methods of God's enemy—force, coercion, and inflicted punishments.

So, what is the significance of the law in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary?

This is symbolic language taken from the OT Sanctuary service. In that old covenant system the law was kept in the box, in the ark under the lid. But in the new covenant where is the law written? In the hearts and minds of people (Hebrews 8:10).

In last week's lesson we learned that the construction material of the heavenly sanctuary is what? Living beings! So, what is the imagery of the law in the Most Holy place intended to lead our minds to understand? That God is working to remove the law of sin and death from our hearts and minds, to remove the law of survival of the fittest, the law of fear and me first and restore into our hearts and minds the His law of love, truth, and liberty, such that we are united with Him in at-one-ment in intimacy, which means we know Him, and we are "known" and this is life eternal (John 17:3), this is unity, this is the cleansing of the sanctuary, this is healing and restoration, this is recreation in Christlikeness, this is being a living stone built together in a house for the Lord, this is having the living law of love the law upon our hearts.

Read the second paragraph,

- Satan's aim from the beginning has been to **thwart the worship of God through undermining the law of God**. He knows that to **offend "in one point" means to be "guilty of all"** (James 2:10); so, he encourages people to transgress God's law. Satan hates the Sabbath because it reminds people of the Creator and how He is to be worshiped. But it also is enshrined in God's law in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Because the law is what defines sin, as long as people seek to be faithful to God, then His law must continue to be valid, including the Sabbath commandment. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 72, emphasis mine).

It is true that if we break God's law in one point we break it in all points—**but only if we understand God's law is design law**. If we think God's law is imposed rules, this is not true. Is it true that if someone cheats on their taxes, they are also guilty of child molestation? Is it true that if someone commits adultery, they are also guilty of murder or selling drugs to kids? Would you accept it as true if someone came to you and said, "because you lost your temper and cursed your neighbor you are guilty of rape?" Or would you say, "no I am not!" So the only way it is true that breaking the law in one point means we break it in all points is if we understand that God's law is design law, the protocols of love.

So,

- If we bear false witness against our neighbor we fail to love
- If we dishonor our parents we fail to love
- If we commit adultery we fail to love
- If we murder we fail to love
- If we steal we fail to love
- If we covet we fail to love
- If we have other gods we fail to love

- If we take God's name, calling ourselves Christian but misrepresent Him by teaching He is an imperial dictator source of death, we fail to love
- If we find worthy of our affections false images of God we fail to love
- If we don't remember the Sabbath and don't embrace the truth its existence reveals to us, which means holy living, we fail to love

Failing to love is the transgression of God's law, and the Ten Commandments were added for the need of fallen humanity.

And the Sabbath was created as a gift specifically for humanity but also as an evidence of God's character and government, His design laws, a proof, that Satan lied, a revelation and confirmation that God is love and He gives us genuine freedom—for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

Satan hates the weekly Sabbath because it is evidence that he lied about God. So Satan attacks the Sabbath in a variety of ways, one way is trying to replace it or get people to forget it so they don't appreciate and realize the truth of God's character, so they accept the lie that God's character is like Satan's, a rule-maker and inflictor of punishments. Or he tries to trick people into teaching the right day of the week but as a legal requirement or made-up rule, imposed under threat of punishment like the Jews and sadly many Adventists have done this. All of which works to replace the truth about God with a lie, a false god in the hearts and minds of the worshipers.

The lesson says the Sabbath reminds people of the Creator—it most certainly can, however, the Jews claimed God as their Father in John 8, but Jesus said that despite their Sabbath keeping, Bible believing, and claims to worship the Creator God, that Satan was their father. So, consider this: if they had the weekly Sabbath and also believed God is Creator, how could Jesus say that Satan was their father?

Because they believed God's law functions like that of a creature! And this was borne out by the evidence of the methods they employed in how they treated others, including Jesus. The brought forth from their hearts the fruits of Satan's character because they worshiped a dictator god.

## **SUNDAY**

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Read first paragraph,

- **The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment.** All of Israel was commanded to take part in this event by repentance, soul searching, and refraining from all work (see Lev. 23:29–31). On this day alone the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place to **make atonement for sin**. There, in the innermost apartment of the sanctuary, was the ark of the covenant. Within the ark was God's Ten Commandment law, written on tables of stone. **The golden cover of the ark was called the mercy seat, where blood was sprinkled to cleanse the sanctuary from sin.** God's presence was manifest in Shekinah glory above the mercy seat. Every sacrifice offered

revealed God's mercy toward sinful human beings, but the Day of Atonement shows that **sin is remembered until the day of judgment (Heb. 10:3)** and that it could really be removed only through faith in the **blood of Christ to cleanse from sin** (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). There, in the presence of God, mercy and justice beautifully combine. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 73, emphasis mine).

How do you understand this in light of last week's lesson?

What is the first question we must ask? What law lens are we viewing things through. So, let's go point by point and contrast the two:

- The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment.
  - If viewed through the human law lens what does this mean? Legal examination, ensuring proper punishment was paid by someone, did the person confess their sin and claim the legal payment of Jesus' blood to their sin record in heaven? If so, then the sin recorded in the book can be erased by the mighty power of Jesus' blood and the sinner can be declared righteous while they remain unrighteous.
  - Design law—judgment is our examination of the evidence in the Great Controversy and judging if God is like Jesus revealed, Creator and Sustainer whose laws are design laws, or do we believe God is like Satan, like Baal, a being with immense power but who makes up rules and uses his power to punish rule breakers? We judge whether we can trust God and allow Him to enter our hearts and minds or whether we need a mechanism, a mediator, a payment, a shield, covering, or some other action to be done to an offended god—and instead of trusting God, we trust the mechanic, work, intervention being done to that offended god to protect us from it?
  - And judgment is God's diagnostic judgments, determining who has judged Him correctly and therefore opened their hearts and invited Him into their inmost holy place and He as our heavenly High Priest enters our sanctuaries and diagnostically judges what is wrong, what falsehoods still operate within us that undermine trust, what passions, fears, insecurities doubts, guilt, shame needs to be removed to heal and restore us into the full stature of Christ and He then cleanses all the defects in us restoring us in heart and mind to righteousness, we become the righteousness of God, the living law of love is written upon our hearts, we are cleansed by the blood (life) of Jesus, which we partake of via the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are at-one with Jesus again.
- Make atonement for sin.
  - Imposed law—means making the legal payment to the heavenly government so God's imposed law justice can be satisfied and the legal payment made
  - Design law we realize that atonement is at-one-ment bringing two into oneness, thus we realize it is Jesus cleansing His people from everything that separates them and restoring us to unity with God and Himself.
- The golden cover of the ark was called the mercy seat
  - Imposed law—it is a place where the payment of blood is legally applied to remove the record of sins, pay the legal penalty, assuage or propitiate the wrath of God to legally

merit—through the blood of Jesus mercy from God who grants forgiveness and restrains His wrath

- Design law we realize that the golden cover was not called a mercy seat until Martin Luther (the person who invented penal substitution theology to undermine the doctrine of purgatory). Luther created that title when he translated the Bible into German. Paul uses the name of the lid, which is called the cover, applying that name to Jesus. Jesus covers us, with His grace, His love, His healing power—He substitutes Himself between sinful man and sinless heaven, and becomes the connecting link and the means whereby God’s purity, holiness, righteousness is restored into humanity, thus the blood is the symbolic way of showing the very life of Jesus is perfectly reproduced in all who have surrendered to Jesus as their Savior.
- Blood
  - Imposed law—it represents the death penalty paid for our sin crimes
  - Design law—it represents the sinless, holy, and pure life of Jesus that we internalize and partake of, as Leviticus taught, the life is in the blood—(not the death). Consider these two quotations, regarding the blood:
    - “In **the study of the Bible** the converted soul eats the flesh and **drinks the blood** of the Son of God, which He himself interprets as the receiving and doing of His words, that are spirit and life.” (Fundamentals of Christian Education 378, emphasis mine).
    - “The **leaven of truth** works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By **it [the truth] the impure are cleansed, washed in the blood of the Lamb.**” (Christ’s Object Lessons 102, emphasis mine).
  - If we include these insights into our understanding of the sprinkling of the blood by the High Priest to cleanse the sanctuary—what then is happening in reality? Who needs to internalize the truth and be cleansed? Does the Father need truth presented to Him? Does the Father need to be cleansed? Does a building made out of brick, gold, silver need to be cleansed? Of course not, we need to be cleansed.
  - Jesus is cleansing hearts and minds from sinfulness, purifying the believers, again nothing penal or legal going on, it is actual, just as we discussed last week.
- Sin is remembered until the day of judgment
  - Imposed law—there is a legal registry and all sins are recorded and are brought up in the courtroom of heaven to be adjudicated and determine if the proper legal penalty has been paid for each sin crime, i.e., the blood of Jesus has been applied to all the confessed sins, those asked to be forgiven, but if one sin remains on the book, because you forgot to legally ask for Jesus’ blood to be applied, then God will be required by law and justice to kill you for that sin, and in fact all the other sins you did remember to ask for forgiveness will be returned the record and your total torture time will be calculated based on all the sins you ever committed and then God will use divine power to inflict this torture, performing a miracle to keep you from dying until all the torture has been completed. Then God will kill you. Now, the legalists won’t say it this way, but will dress it up in fancy theological words to make it sound more holy and

righteous, but the meaning is the same. And it is all a lie, it is Satan's perversion of the gospel which occurs when the imposed law lie is believed.

- Design law—sins are symptoms of sinful hearts and minds, and the symptoms, the sins, are forgotten from the relationship as soon as the underlying sin condition is healed or addressed—because they are no longer relevant to reality. The sins are not forgotten as long as the condition remains any more than we forget a child has a fever of 106 as long as they are sick, but when they are well the fever is no longer thought about—we don't have amnesia for the fact they had a fever, but it isn't thought about or considered when the child is well. Likewise, with God there is no registry of sins, no accounting book of misdeeds, there are spiritual medical records that accurately reflect the real-time real-life condition of every heart and mind. This is why the Bible says:
  - “God is love” and “love keeps no record of wrongs” (1 John 4:8 and 1Corinthians 13:5)
  - “Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. **God did not keep an account of their sins**, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ; or God was in Christ making the whole human race his friends.” (2 Corinthians 5:19 GNT, emphasis mine).

## MONDAY

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### The Immutability of God's Law

What does this mean? That God's law cannot be changed—what is the only type of law that is not changeable? Design law, the protocols reality is built upon, for to change that type of law destroys reality itself, it would destroy the fabric of the cosmos as God created it. But changing imposed laws doesn't destroy reality.

Now, what about the Ten Commandments—are they eternal or added?

- Did God's law exist in heaven when Lucifer rebelled? Yes!
- Did the seventh-day Sabbath exist in heaven when Lucifer rebelled?
  - Jesus said the Sabbath was made—if it was made it had a beginning, and He said it was made for man—indicating it began when man began, thus wasn't in existence in heaven when Lucifer rebelled.
  - EGW wrote:
    - **The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden.** After God had made the world and created man upon the earth, He made the Sabbath for man. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The **principles** of the Ten Commandments **existed before the fall** and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. **After the fall the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were**



**given to meet man in his fallen state.** (*Story of Redemption* 145, emphasis mine)

- If the Sabbath didn't exist when Lucifer rebelled in heaven and if **“The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God.”**(*The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine), then how is the Sabbath involved in the final events?

The lesson will attempt to make it a test between which day of week one attends worship services, the Bible Sabbath or the festival of Sunday, but if the final issues are the culmination of the controversy that began in heaven over God's law when Lucifer rebelled, and the Sabbath was not part of the opening rebellion over God's law, how is it involved in the end of this conflict?

And that leads us to **TUESDAY's** lesson, The Sabbath and the Law

Read third paragraph,

- At the conclusion of Creation week, God rested in the beauty and majesty of the world He had made. He also rested as an example to us. The Sabbath is a weekly pause to praise the One who made us. As we worship on the Sabbath, we open our hearts **to receive the special blessing He placed in that day only, and in no other day.** (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 75, emphasis mine).

I have heard this argument my entire life and I agree with it—I do believe there is something special about the Sabbath, however I have never heard a Adventist leader tell me what that special blessing is. I have asked multiple Adventist pastors and leaders, what is that special blessing, but what they describe is not a blessing exclusive to the Sabbath. What do you think?

The lesson lists us a couple of potential special blessings, but remember, we are looking for what the lesson claims is a blessing that is associated with the seventh-day Sabbath and **no other day**. If we can experience the blessing on another day, then while that may be a blessing, it is **NOT the special blessing** of the Sabbath, for **the special blessing** must be exclusive to the Sabbath and no other. Do you agree with this premise?

So let's test the lesson's assertions:

- **A Memorial of Creation**—it is true that we can remember creation and God as Creator and the Sabbath reminds us of God's creatorship—but is this exclusive to the Sabbath? What about the seven-day weekly cycle, irrespective of which day is the Sabbath, do all the days together organized in a seven-day week give evidence of God's Creatorship? For all the other time measurements, days, months, years, we have astronomic events, the movement of planet and moon to measure these times. But the weekly cycle is established only by creation, so does the Sabbath alone, by itself establish God as Creator, or does the weekly cycle give evidence of this? And does the weekly cycle give evidence for all to consider even without a Bible, for anyone from any time in history could inquire, why do we have 7-day weeks, what is that

based upon? And the Bible also teaches that the heavens declare the glory of God and nature reveals God as Creator. So while it is true the Sabbath speaks to God as Creator, this blessing is not exclusive to the seventh-day.

- The Sabbath as a sign of the plan of salvation—it is true that Jesus rested in the tomb over the Sabbath day and has connected the Sabbath with rest in Him as our Savior—however, Jesus also left us the memorial of communion and baptism which teach us of His death for us and the plan of salvation. And people celebrate His death and resurrection on Easter Sunday, the first day of the week upon which He rose from the dead. So, while we certainly can be blessed by celebrating Jesus' victory over sin and death each Sabbath, that blessing is not exclusive to the Sabbath.
- The Sabbath as a weekly pause to praise and celebrate God—while it is certainly a blessing to do so, are we somehow prohibited or restricted from pausing and praising God on other days of the week? And if we pause to praise God on another day of the week, will we not be blessed by doing so? When Daniel paused three times each day to praise and worship God every day of the week, did he experience blessing or was he only blessed when he did so on the Sabbath? So, it is certainly a blessing to pause each week to praise God, but pausing to praise God and spend time with Him does not set the Sabbath apart from other days.

So again, what is the special blessing of the Sabbath? What does the Sabbath provide that no other day of the week can?

Consider the Sabbath in Eden, before Adam and Eve sinned. Was its purpose there so that they could physically rest and recover from a hard work week?

- What was the condition of the world when the Sabbath was made?
- Consider the type of activities that Adam and Eve did during the six work days while in Eden:
  - Went for walks in nature
  - Studied nature
  - Interacted with the animals
  - Walked with God in the cool of every week day
  - Appreciated God and all He had done in the creation of the world
  - Talked with angels
  - Did they have to pull weeds?
  - Was there any planting to do?
  - Any harvesting and storing in barns?
  - Any fertilizing, irrigating, or pesticides to spread?
  - Were there houses to build?
  - Was there laundry, vacuuming to do, or dishes to wash?
  - Was there anything for them to do that we call work?
- What was the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden?

In other words, were Adam and Eve's non-Sabbath activities very similar to the activities we find valuable to do on Sabbath?

Did Adam and Eve do any of the following on Sabbath in Eden?

- Attend church services?
- Have communion ceremony?
- Go to confession?
- Do penance?
- Pay tithe or bring offerings?
- Would they still walk in nature, pick fruit from the trees to eat, interact with the animals, converse with God and angels?
- So what was different for Adam and Eve about the Sabbath than any other day of the week?
- Was the difference primarily in their behavior or something else?

Could the purpose of the Sabbath in Eden be in what the day itself revealed? Could it be in what the day itself represented? And could the Sabbath day reveal something about God that God wants every human to understand, to know both intellectually but also experientially about Him? **Could the Sabbath be different from the other six days of the week not because of what Adam and Eve did differently, but because of what God did differently on the seventh day of creation week?**

As the commandment says “for in six days God created the heavens, earth, sea and all that in them is, but on the seventh-day **God rested.**” The Sabbath is a memorial to God’s character and methods of truth, love, and freedom—the Creator God on Sabbath STOPPED using power. The Commandment calls our attention to the contrast of what God did—and we have failed to recognize it and instead focus on His incredible power to create or our own selves, our behavior.

Praise God we serve the Creator the all-powerful one—but the question isn’t whether He is powerful, the question in the Great Controversy is whether God can be trusted with the power, and thus the Sabbath is proof, evidence, of God’s character and methods. That despite having all power, He gives us real freedom—He does NOT use His power against His creatures. He does not force Lucifer and the rebelling angels into line. He leaves all free!

**Thus, because God created Adam and Eve in the middle of this war He also created the Sabbath to be a reminder, a sign, a signal, an indicator, a testament, an evidence, a memorial, a flag, pennant, signet, a revelation, a proof of God’s character, methods, principles, law, and form of government!**

The Sabbath was made by God and it was made holy, blessed, sanctified, set apart, how? Was the Sabbath made holy by legislation? Was it made holy by declaration, or was it made holy by both design and action, by deed, by how it came to be, by what God tied to that day in its origin by His actions to rest and not use power? In other words, the Sabbath was set apart at and by creation and the actions of God in its origin.

Thus the Sabbath is evidence of God’s character and methods in a way the other six days are not, the other six days we learn God has power. Only the Sabbath reveals that God is love and gives us real freedom and thus we are safe in the universe with Him for all eternity for He will never use His power

against us. Just the opposite of the imposed law legalists who teach God will use power to punish Sabbath breakers.

Is there some divine power attached to and contained within the Sabbath, some power we need in the controversy?

Paul wrote in Romans:

- I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NIV84).

What is the power that Paul is referring to that is found in the gospel? What type of power is this? Is this the power of physical might? No! it is the power of truth and love, the truth and love of God's character, methods, principles and design law.

This is the same good news power contained in the Sabbath!

The Sabbath is a sign, a symbol, an evidence, a proof, a promise, a commitment, a reality built into time itself of God's character and design law government. The war in heaven began when Lucifer alleged God is arbitrary, a rule-maker, a being who uses power to take away freedom through infliction of punishment for rule-breaking. In other words, Satan's rebellion started by attacking God's law, teaching that God's laws are nothing but made up rules and as we have discussed this one lie changes everything we believe and think about God, undermining trust in God.

So, how does the Sabbath and our observance fit into God making us holy if it is not a rule that we are required to keep?

Consider this historical quote:

- **All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind** and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. **We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life.** All who regard the **Sabbath as a sign** between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, **will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day** they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. **Every day** their light will shine forth to others in good works. (Testimonies to the Church vol. 6 p. 353).

What is described here? Is this describing a one day in seven experience or a daily experience?

The Sabbath is a gift from God that is to be employed by us as a spiritual weapon in our cooperation with God to be a holy priesthood all week long as we remember the Sabbath and all it reveals and incorporate those principles into our daily living!

How is the Sabbath useful in our holiness?

How does the Lord make us holy?

- Does God do this with divine power alone, or is there a part that we must play in that process of our being made holy?
- Do we have choices to make?
- Do our choices have any impact in our salvation and our being made holy by God's divine power?
- Can God make someone holy while they actively choose to rebel against Him?
- Can a person make themselves holy by anything they can do apart from God?
- Is there some type of choosing that we must make that is involved in God's plan to transform and save us? What? And how is the Sabbath involved?

Is salvation about making sure we have the right set of doctrinal beliefs? That we have a correct understanding of which day is the Sabbath, how to perform biblical baptism, belief in a literal 7-day creation week, accurate understanding and practice of tithing and offerings, correct understanding of marriage, right beliefs about the state of the dead, accurate interpretation of Bible prophecy?

Does correctly and rightly understanding all these truths mean one has salvation?

**Understand, salvation is not found in believing the right list—salvation is found in trusting the right God.**

**And if one has the right list, but understands that list, including the Sabbath, through imposed law, then they have the wrong god.**

## **WEDNESDAY**

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The lesson title is the Mark of the Beast

What do you understand this to be?

There are longer versions of this idea, but the following quote gets the point across:

- The **sign, or seal**, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The **mark of the beast is the opposite of this--the observance of the first day of the week.** (Testimonies to the Church vol. 8, p. 117).

Any concerns or questions about this statement?

Statements like this are often misunderstood and misused because they are viewed through the imposed law model.

And the lesson provides a quote that makes clear is it not about the specific day, but the methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement associated with the day, from **FRIDAY's** lesson

- “Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance **shall be enforced by law**, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath [which is the embodiment of liberty], then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. [By preferring the methods of Rome, of imposed law, of coercion of conscience, of imperialism, of the beast, rather than the principles of truth, love, and liberty that originate in God]. He is paying homage to Rome and **to the power which enforces the institution** ordained by Rome. [Remember all imposed law comes from Satan and all compelling power comes from Satan. It is the methods employed that are the problem.] **He is worshiping the beast and his image.** [Not by going to church on Sunday, but by embracing, agreeing, with, and practicing the methods of the beast, imposing law and coercing others to obey.] As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—‘the mark of the beast.’ And **it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive ‘the mark of the beast.’**” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 449, emphasis mine). **And they mark themselves in their forehead when they believe and prefer the methods of imposed law with coercive enforcement, and they mark themselves in their hands when they don’t agree in heart, but go along with their support and works to protect themselves and their property and wealth instead of standing for truth, love, and liberty—all symbolized by the Bible Sabbath.]**

What is a mark or sign?

A symbol that stands for or signifies something else: So these two days of worship stand as signs or symbols for something else, what? **Two types of governments or two ways of governing!**

How did the Sabbath become a day set apart from the other days? By creation, by design, thus the Sabbath is a sign of God’s government or kingdom which operates upon design law.

How did Sunday get set apart as a day of worship from the other days? By legislation, by man-made rules. Thus Sunday becomes a mark or sign of imposed law and represents governments that are made by sinful beings—because created beings cannot build reality, we can only make up rules and enforce

those rules with inflicted punishments. So these two days are symbolic, or signs, of two types of laws, which result in two types of governments, which have two different gods.

Consider the days as flags of two different governments or seals of two different governments. Are the flags of the government the government, or only signs, marks, or symbols of the government?

The flag of the USA has historically stood for liberty and equality of all persons, the land of opportunity. Those who oppose these historic principles over the last decade have worked hard to attack the flag, to devalue it, to kneel rather than stand with hand over the heart when the national anthem is played, to work to assign false values of exploitation, enslavement, and abuse to the flag. Why? Are such attacks actually attacks on the flag, or attacks against the government that the flag represents?

Likewise, the various attacks against and actions to replace the Bible Sabbath are not primarily attacks against the Sabbath day. They are attacks intended to undermine and replace God's design law government with Satan's imposed law government—replacing God's kingdom of love, with Satan's fear-based kingdom of survival of the fittest, and dethroning Jesus and enthroning Satan into our hearts and minds as the one we admire and worship.

Could a person wear the flag of one country, which marks them as being a member of that country, but actually be a traitor and fighting for the other side?

Think about that when you consider who is on God's side and who is on Satan's side by merely what day a person attends church.

So, what is the mark of the beast? Is it attending church on a day other than Sabbath? Consider this quote:

- The time has come for the true light to shine amid moral darkness. The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, **warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the word of God.** (Review and Herald, July 13, 1897 par. 5).

What decision did the beast make and what ideas did it advocate that are in direct opposition to the word of God? Is it not the idea that God's law is imposed and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin? And justice requires the sovereign to use power to inflict external punishment on rule-breakers? And the church, having changed the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday in their legislative counsels give evidence or a mark that they do not consider God's law to be design law, but believe God's law is like human law, imposed rules that can be changed.

Thus the issue in the end, of which the two days stand as signs, is the issue of God's law of love, versus Satan's imposed law construct; God's rule of love versus Satan's rule of fear and selfishness;

God's design law versus worldly imposed laws. It comes down to the methods one practices and **the two days are symbolic of two systems.**

And what does the beastly systems of the earth do? They coerce, they force, they inflict punishment for disobedience. Consider this quote:

- But when the decree shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, **and** the loud cry of the third angel **shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image**, the line will be clearly drawn **between the false and the true. Then** those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast. (Evangelism 234, 235).

Is the mark about the day upon which one attends church, or is it about the law one believes God governs by and therefore the methods employed, and ultimately the character one forms as they become like the god they worship?

The mark is about the methods one employs in how they treat others, which law people embrace into their hearts in how they live and treat others. Do they practice, truth, love, and freedom, or do they employ lies, fear/selfishness, and coercion?

Thus, any time we use power to coerce the conscience of others we are acting beastly and marking ourselves as loyal to the beast and not loyal to the kingdom of God.

## **THURSDAY**

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The lesson focuses on the 3 angels' message of Revelation 14. If you haven't read our magazine [The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels](#), we invite you to do so as we present this message through design law.

But any questions about the message of the three angels?

How do you explain them to people?