



## 2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 13 The Triumph of God's Love

by Tim Jennings

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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**NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK NOW AVAILABLE: *Biblical Concepts Made Easy***, by Stephanie Land. It is a fun book with puzzles that teaches children the truth about God, His design laws, and answers difficult questions regarding moral decision making and why suffering happens. These are available for you and your family and to share. We will ship them at no cost to any US Postal address. They will also be for sale on Amazon as an individual book and we will have them for sale at bulk discount pricing on our website for schools and church groups to purchase and give to their youth. Please get a copy and share with your youth pastor or leader and give them the contact information where they can order on our website.

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### SABBATH

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What a great lesson title—The Triumph of God's Love.

Does love triumph in the end? Does love triumph in the end on its own? Is the only power of God that causes the triumph the power of love, or does the triumph in the end require another power of God to be combined with it?

God is love but God is also true. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth and love. It is these two powers together that actually win the day.

Love alone can be broken by lies—which happened in Eden. Lies believed break the circle of love and trust.

Truth without love can be used to harm not heal, can cause one to become arrogant and unkind.

The ultimate victory is God's love and truth advancing together to heal the mind and hearts of people.

The last paragraph from MONDAYs lesson is the following quote from the book *The Great Controversy*:

- “The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. . . . That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 651.

Science corresponds to our thinking, comprehension, understanding—our thoughts, our minds—it is the internalization, acceptance, identification with and application of the truth. This corresponds to our left brain.

Song corresponds to our emotions, heart reaction, affections—our spirits, our feelings—it is the internalization, acceptance, identification with and application of God’s love. This corresponds to our right brain. Thus, God wins by cleansing us from lies, fear, and selfishness.

Our thoughts and feelings, our minds and hearts, our souls and spirits combined make up our characters and our hearts and minds, our souls and spirits, our thoughts and feelings, will for all eternity rejoice in Christ and what He has done for us.

What is the method or mechanism for love’s triumph?

- We love because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19 GNT).
- You will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:32).
- God’s kindness leads you toward repentance (Romans 2:4 NIV84).
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17 NIV84).

It is through the revelation of truth and love that we are won back to truth and love!

Can love triumph through imposed law and law enforcement?

What happens to love if one uses the methods of enforcement?

God’s kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. God’s kingdom operates upon design laws and He wins by His divine and holy methods. Specifically love wins through the application of truth while leaving people free—the law of liberty—love only exists and grows in an atmosphere of freedom.

Take away freedom and love is eliminated:

- We can program computers or robots to function with perfect obedience—but robots and computers cannot love.

- God could program people—He is God, infinite in power, but if He did that, we would be reduced to robots, to machines, and would no longer be beings who bear the image of God because God is love and we would no longer be able to love.
- If instead of programming like a computer, we instead control the environment, only giving food and water if people do what we want, do we get love?
- What if we give lists of rules and inflict punishments to enforce our rules, do we get love?

How does God triumph with love?

Consider these two historical quotes, and notice the application of the law of liberty in these quotes—why God has acted the way He has:

- Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. . . . They were to enjoy communion with God and with holy angels; but before they could be rendered eternally secure, **their loyalty must be tested**. At the very beginning of man's existence a check was placed upon the desire for self-indulgence, the fatal passion that lay at the foundation of Satan's fall. The tree of knowledge, which stood near the tree of life in the midst of the garden, **was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love** of our first parents. While permitted to eat freely of every other tree, they were forbidden to taste of this, on pain of death. **They were also to be exposed to the temptations of Satan**; but if they endured the trial, they would finally be placed beyond his power, to enjoy perpetual favor with God. . . . (Conflict and Courage 13.2, emphasis mine) [I am pausing here before this author completes her explanation to inquire, How do you hear this? Do you hear this through the imposed law lens? God made a rule and if they disobeyed then He would be required by law to inflict punishment? Did He test them as a set up for them to fail? Do you see God testing them to find out what they would do, as if He didn't know the future? Or do you understand reality, God's design law methods of love and liberty? Do you realize this is the only way God can obtain what He wants—love, loyalty, friendship, trustworthiness, devotion—by presenting free intelligent beings an opportunity to think for themselves, consider issues for themselves, and to make a choice for themselves as to what they believe, what they prefer, what they will know in their own mind, heart, character, and experience. Will they choose to know truth, love, and loyalty, and exercise their freedom to trust God and know by experience, action, and choice what it means to be a trustworthy friend of God? Or will they choose to believe lies, and choose to know fear, distrust, selfishness, doubt, guilt, shame, sin, and evil? The only way they could know life, to know in function, in character love, is to choose truth and love. And God provided them this opportunity for them to experience and know for themselves God's love, truth, and friendship. Notice what the author of this paragraph says next as to what she meant by the words I just read for this is the next paragraph she wrote.]

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of**

**character**. . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. (Conflict and Courage 13.3, emphasis mine).

Do you see the law of liberty applied in the description of the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? This test was not a legal test, it was design law reality being applied to free beings for them to test themselves and decide what kind of people they would become. Why? Because God can get love and loyalty only in an atmosphere of freedom!

Do you see how the traditional Christian teaching of God's law and God using His power to inflict punishment for sin destroys freedom and undermines love and actually obstructs God from achieving what He wants for and from us?

Here is the second quote, and we read this last week at the end of our presentation:

- “God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.**” (*The Desire of Ages* 759, emphasis mine).

How can God win by love?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

## **SUNDAY**

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Read first paragraph,

- The close of human probation is followed by a time of trouble “ ‘such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.’ ” Revelation 16 describes seven last plagues that will be poured out on the wicked world. But, as with the plagues that fell on Egypt, God's people will be shielded from them. Note the promise in Daniel: “ ‘And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book’ ” (Dan. 12:1, NKJV). This must be referring to the “book of life” (see Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 20:12, 15; Rev. 22:19). If we have stayed faithful to Jesus, our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5). (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

What closes human probation? Is it a time preset by God and when the clock runs down Jesus stands up from His intercessory role and says, “ready or not, time's up; here I come”?

Or does probation close when every human heart is settled either into loyalty to God or hardness against God so that no person will change their mind. For the righteous, no temptation, no trial, no tribulation will cause them to break trust with God—they are perfect like Job, perfect in their trust of God. And for the wicked they have destroyed the faculties that respond to truth and love and no further amount of truth and love will have any impact upon them.

This is what closes probation. It is a combination of events occurring in the world that bring people to this point—it is a combination of the gospel being presented in its true light in contrast to the methods of Satan being advanced globally, **specifically the principles of truth, love, liberty of conscience resisting the rule of law being advanced by the earthly powers under the guise of saving lives and doing justice.**

But, if we have a forensic, human law view, we may falsely think that the close of probation is when Jesus finishes reviewing all the records in heaven and all the heavenly judicial decisions have been completed, when Jesus finishes deciding what names of the righteous He keeps in the books and which ones He removes. Some believe that it is when that legal accounting work by God is complete that determines the close of probation—have you ever heard this?

It all goes back to how we understand God's law—this legalistic way of describing things is based upon believing God's law functions like human law and distorts things in ways that undermine trust in God and cause fear.

When we return to reality, to design law, we understand the records in heaven are merely the accurate description of what is the true condition of each heart and mind—like accurate medical records. **Nothing in a medical record causes the patient to live or die, nothing in the heavenly record determines whether a person receives eternal life or eternal damnation.**

For the patient, it is what is actually happening in their body that determines whether they live or die, and the medical records merely document that reality. So too for our eternal salvation, it is what is actually happening in our hearts and minds that determines our eternal destiny and the heavenly records merely document that reality.

The various false human-law legal views, such as penal substitution theology, create fantasies that cloud minds and prevent hearts from being healed as they teach people to seek legal adjustment in record books in heaven and the hiding of the truth from the Father by the blood of Jesus who declares us righteous while we remain unrighteous.

Questions?

The lesson makes a comparison between the plagues at the end and the plagues of Egypt—how are these plagues similar and how are they dissimilar?

They are similar in that they are plagues that are part of God's judgments against people for their hardness of heart and rebellion against Him, and the plagues are unpleasant and cause distress to those who experience them.

They are dissimilar in that the plagues of Egypt occurred when God judged it was time to use power to intervene with therapeutic actions to expose the gods of Egypt as false in order to win both Hebrews and Egyptians to faith in Him. God's actions in Exodus were not actions to punish sin, but were specifically designed to expose sin and falsehood by the revelation of truth in action and thereby win the people to trust in Him. Thus God's use of power in Egypt was saving, healing, and therapeutic, not punitive. As God said,

- "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 29:6, NIV84).

The plagues at the end of time are called the wrath of God poured out without mixture. God's wrath is when God judges that no more use of power will save anyone else, all are sealed either into loyalty or rebellion and therefore God ceases to use power. And when God stops restraining or hold at bay the destruction that comes from sin and the chaos that results when His presence is removed, the forces of evil are unrestrained and more destruction happens. This is the punishment of sin—the punishment that sin itself causes and brings when God no longer protects us from it. Paul describes this in Romans 1:18-32 and we have read those verses many times.

Thus, the plagues at the end of time are the step-wise withdraw of God's presence and power from the earth and Satan gaining more control over both people and the elements to act—much like we see in the book of Job when God removed His restraining hand and Satan began to destroy.

EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church describes it this way, and I agree with her assessment, because this is describing how design law functions. Do you agree with these descriptions?

- "I was shown that the **judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord** upon them, but in this way;

**"They place themselves beyond His protection.** He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them.**

**"It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress,** and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." (Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3, emphasis mine).

- **Satan has studied the secrets of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. It is God that shields His creatures from the destroyer.** But the Christian world has shown contempt for His law, and **the Lord will do what He declared that He would—remove His protecting care from those who rebel against His law and force others to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard.** He will favor and prosper some, in order to further his own designs; and he will bring trouble upon others, and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them. (From Here to Forever 360, emphasis mine)

**While appearing as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, Satan will bring disease and disaster until populous cities are reduced to ruin.** In accidents by sea and land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in a thousand forms, **Satan is exercising his power.** He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. **He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish.** (From Here to Forever 360, emphasis mine).

Sadly, those who hold to the imposed law view falsely teach that the two plagues are God using power to inflict punishment, that God is the source of pain, suffering, and death and conflate the two instances of plagues to misrepresent God rather than discerning the truth.

Read second paragraph,

- In the time of trouble, God’s people have a personal relationship with Jesus so deep that nothing can change it. Their consummate desire is to please Him in all things so that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, they will be as pure as He is pure. There was nothing in Christ’s heart that responded to Satan’s deceptions. We can reflect this aspect of His character, as well. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

There is no doubt that all the saved will have a personal relationship with Jesus that will not change. They will absolutely want to please Jesus, no question about it. And the saved will have nothing in their hearts that resonates with or prefers Satan, so true.

Then what conclusion do you draw from this paragraph—isn’t it that salvation is achieved by forming a personal relationship with Jesus?

Is that the core of salvation—or is salvation something that we experience from and through our personal relationship with Jesus but if one has a personal relationship with Jesus and doesn’t experience what salvation actually is they won’t be saved.

I am asking, is it possible to have a personal relationship with Jesus and still not be saved because the core element that our personal relationship with Jesus is suppose to cause to happen in us didn’t happen? In other words, can a person have a personal real, one-on-one, for themselves, relationship with Jesus and not be saved?

Consider Lucifer in heaven—did he have a real, individual, personal, for himself relationship with Jesus?

What about Judas on earth—did he have his own, individual, personal relationship with Jesus?

What did Lucifer and Judas not have despite their personal relationship with Jesus? –**They didn't trust Him and didn't love Him more than themselves!**

What is the core element that is the actual reality of what it means to be saved? It is what Jesus described to Nicodemus, it is being reborn, it is receiving through our relationship with Jesus a new heart and right spirit, it is dying to fear and selfishness and living to love and trust, it is being recreated in the inner man, it is recreation by the Holy Spirit that is achieved through our personal relationship with Jesus. For a personal relationship with Jesus to result in salvation it must cause our sinful distrusting heart to be changed to love and trust—in other words, we must come to actually trust Jesus and love Him and His methods, design law, and principles.

Lucifer broke trust and never restored it, and Judas never trusted Jesus, never died to self and was never reborn to love God and others through a genuine trust in Jesus.

Is there a danger in thinking salvation is in the relationship with Jesus, rather than being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit through our relationship with Jesus?

What if someone prefers the false Christ, the imposter, the imposer of law and the inflictor of punishments and they believe he is god, that the enforce of law “Jesus” is the true Jesus, could they form a relationship with that Jesus, and could they in that relationship trust that Jesus to pay their legal penalty, erase their sin crimes from the records, and to one day punish all their enemies for their unrepentant sin crimes and then go out in the name of that god to do justice, to advance on others with law and punishment to put down rebellion and sin—just like Saul of Tarsus did before the Damascus road?

And what will Jesus say to such worshipers when they claim they were doing all of this in His name? He will tell them to go away He never knew them—they actually didn't have a trust relationship with Him, but preferred His enemy instead.

Yes—salvation is found in a personal relationship with Jesus—but salvation means healing, it means saving from sin, it means restoring God's law in us and cleansing our hearts, minds, and characters from fear, selfishness, and distrust and that requires we know God and Jesus Christ and die to self and actually come to trust Jesus and be reborn to love God and others more than self.

Read last paragraph,

- There are some who have misunderstood the concept of living through the time of trouble without a mediator. Jesus ceases His mediation in heaven's sanctuary when everyone has made their final decision for or against Him. But this does not mean we are alone during this time,



trusting our own strength. Jesus has assured us He will be with us always (Matt. 28:20). Faith trusts when it cannot see and believes even when the world around us is falling apart. During the time of trouble, our faith strengthens and our longing for eternity increases so that our one desire is to live forever with Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 105).

I like how the lesson says He finishes His mediation when everyone makes their decision for or against Him. But what has He been doing? What is His mediation?

If we have a forensic view, a human law view, then we often project in ideas about Jesus doing legal accounting, or arguing like a lawyer to His Father, or pleading His blood as a payment etc., all of which create fearful concepts of what happens if Jesus isn't there to intercede with the angry and wrathful Father? This is all a lie.

There is nothing wrong with the Father—there is something wrong with us and Jesus is the Father's agent to mediate the covenant of grace to humanity. First, by taking up humanity damaged by sin and purifying and perfecting it as our substitute, and second by applying His victory into the hearts and minds of every sinner who trusts Him to heal and transform!

He is the mediator of the new covenant, the covenant of love and trust and God has no deficiencies that need addressing, resolving, healing, correcting, removing, or cleansing. But we do, thus Jesus mediates God's plan to heal and restore us back into unity with Himself and the Father. And once He has done that, cleansed and sealed us into eternal loyalty and friendship such that nothing can shake us from it, His work as mediator is done and now He enters His final cleanup phase, reaping the harvest from the Earth, separating the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, and bringing to final conclusion of the sin problem.

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph,

- Jesus' words, " 'Let not your heart be troubled,' " are His reassurance that He will never leave us and is coming again to take us home. This world is not our home. A better day is coming. Once in every 25 verses, the New Testament speaks of the return of our Lord. When the days are dark and the oppressive enactments of a church-state power threaten our lives, the promise of Christ's coming fills our hearts with hope. This is the "blessed hope" that has inspired the faithful people of God in every generation. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 106).

What strategies does Satan use to destroy people's hope? The common root action needed to destroy hope is to get people to take their eyes off Jesus, in any way he can, by such things as:

- Focusing on personal problems, finances, health issues, family conflicts

- Focusing on other people's problems, dramas, issues
- Focusing on worldly threats, climate change, wars and rumors of wars
- Focusing on entertainments of any type
- Focusing on work—even work for the Lord to the point we take our eyes off Jesus
- Focusing on evil and what the evil are doing to the point we become discouraged and hopeless
- Focusing on ourselves—our sins, our responsibilities, our duties, our commandment keeping or lack thereof etc.
- Focusing on the extent of the sin and evil problem in the world, which is overwhelming to human abilities to address
- Others?

## **TUESDAY**

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The lesson focuses on the millennia—what happens during the Millenia?

The millennia is a future event described in the highly symbolic book of Revelation, which means it is open for a variety of divergent interpretations. And in fact, there are a variety of different teachings within Christianity on what happens during the millennia. We can go through the various texts and demonstrate why we think our view is the most reasonable view, but at the end of the day what is important is the following:

- Does our interpretation accurately represent or misrepresent God's character, methods, and principles?
- Does our interpretation make God out to be like Satan has alleged?
- Does our interpretation teach God functioning in a way that violates His own design law?
- Does are interpretation function to increase fear, shut down thinking, increase a servant rather than friend's relationship with God?

So let's examine one common view of the millennia and compare it with our view and inquire, which is most consistent with God as Jesus revealed, with our God who IS love, with God who is Creator and whose laws are design laws, and therefore which view functions to increase trust, decrease fear, and promote eternal security in which sin never arises again?

- Some Christians believe that there is a secret rapture coming in which the righteous dead and righteous living all disappear from the Earth and are taken to Jesus and for the next 7 years the wicked rule on the Earth and it is the time of tribulation when the plagues fall. At the end of those 7 years Jesus, the New Jerusalem, and the saints return to Earth and all the wicked are killed in a great physical battle with Jesus who leads His forces to victory. Then Jesus sets up a government on earth in which the Christians rule with Jesus for 1000 years. During that 1000 years new children are born to the saved and some of those children rebel and choose to sin but Jesus is now ruling with a rod of iron so there will be no trials, no investigation, no inquiry, only swift justice directly from king Jesus who punishes all the disobedient.

- What type of principles, law, methods, and government are described in this interpretation?
- Are the principles, methods, and law those of God's or Satan's?
- First, there is a secret rapture—who is the one in the controversy who operates in secret and who conducts their business in the open?
- Who is the one who operates in darkness and who is the light that lightens all men?
- Who is the one who has no truth and thus must depend on secrecy and no investigation or inquiry and who has all truth and asks us to come and see, come and reason?
- Who would like a place where the wicked rule unrestrained by God and what kind of place would that be—a place without any grace, goodness, kindness, love, truth, hope, a place of total depravity and sin? It would be a place of torture and torment—and what kind of a god would create a place of torment and torture?
- After the 1000 years, who would want a future in which sin continues to arise God or Satan?
- And what kind of law is being applied when Jesus is described as using power to inflict punishment upon sinners?
- This entire theology is deeply infected with Satan's view of God and God's law, and therefore must be rejected. Those who believe this are conditioning their minds to accept Satan when he comes impersonating Christ.

In our view there is a tribulation which precedes the second coming of Christ, which is brought about by the outworking of God's design laws and reality itself. God's end-time witnesses are first sealed (settled into the truth so that they will not be shaken out of their loyalty to God) and then the four winds begin to be loosed. As billions of people choose the lies, reject God, and harden their hearts against heaven the Holy Spirit is slowly withdrawn from the Earth and Satan and his demonic forces get more freedom to act. The contrast between the righteous—those who are kind, truthful, loyal, faithful, patient, meek, loving, forgiving, gentle, noble, trustworthy and Christlike, and those who are cruel, selfish, deceitful, faithless, impulsive, demanding, arrogant, unforgiving, belligerent, debased, perverse, untrustworthy and satanic becomes ever more stark.

These events are permitted to assist those who have not settled into one of the two camps to discern and choose—the events themselves place people into positions where they have to choose, in governance of themselves, what methods, what law, they are internalizing and practicing and thus every person will be decided for or against Jesus by the methods and law they choose to apply to themselves in how they live and treat others. Remember Jesus said as we have done it unto the least of these we have done it unto Him.

Once every heart is settled either into loyalty or disloyalty, then Jesus stands up and the plagues begin to fall. And the plagues are not God using power to inflict harm, but they are the result of God giving people what they have freely chosen—a life without Him. So He sets the world and people free from His protective care in a step wise fashion. While the wicked are given what they have chosen, separation from God's presence and protection and thus suffer under the plagues, the righteous are also given what they have chosen, intimacy, unity, and oneness with God and His angels are sent to

watch over them, protect, them and provide for them in this difficult time—like Elijah when the angels fed him.

This ends with the second coming of Christ at which time all the wicked who are still alive on Earth die the first death, the death the Bible describes as a sleep. All the wicked who are already in the grave stay in the grave. All the righteous who have died through history and have been asleep in death arise at the voice of Christ and the trumpet call of God and the righteous on the Earth are changed in the blink of an eye when this mortal puts on immortality. All the righteous through all history are gathered together to meet Jesus in the air as Paul describes in Thessalonians. And Jesus takes all the saints away from the Earth for 1000 years.

All the righteous are in heaven, all the wicked are asleep in death, and the planet is returned to its state before God created here, what is described in Genesis 1:1 a dark, deep abyss, where Satan is bound with his angels for 1000 years.

During the 1000 years the saints reign with Christ in heaven and this is a time for every person to learn, to grow, to understand, to ask questions, to complete their Christian education in the things of God. It is not a time to develop Christian character, that has already happened that is why they are in heaven. It is a time for the saved to settle in their minds the things they didn't understand, the things they were accepting on faith. It will be a time to clarify and clear up issues that left questions and uncertainties, about God, the origin of sin, why Jesus had to die, who is saved and why some people we thought should be there are not there and on and on. It is God opening Himself and all the records of all history up for examination and evaluation—because God is the God of truth and light and love and He wins us to eternal loyalty by the truth, not by operating in secret.

One example of the kinds of things that will happen for the righteous during the 1000 years will be those people who are saved but haven't yet heard about Jesus will learn about Jesus and all He did for us.

The Bible describes this group this way:

- What may be known about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them**. For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature**—have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made**, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20 NIV84, emphasis mine)
- All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who **hear the law** who are righteous in God's sight, but it is **those who obey the law who will be declared righteous**. (Indeed, when **Gentiles**, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law**, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they **show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) (Romans 2:12-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

- This is the **covenant** I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. **I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.** I will be their God, and **they will be my people.** (Hebrews 8:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- **If someone asks him,** ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ he will answer, **‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’** (Zechariah 13:6 NIV84).

When you get to heaven will you have a lot of questions? Will one of them be, “Jesus, where did you get those wounds on your body?” Or do you know the answer to that question already? So what does it imply that some will ask this question? That some will be there who have not yet heard the full story, yet they have responded to the truth about God that is revealed in creation, and received the indwelling Holy Spirit, who took the victory of Christ and applied it to their hearts so they were reborn with a new heart and cleansed mind. In other words, they were still saved by and through Jesus, but now need to learn the full story that no one had ever told them before.

Now, which of these versions of the millennium is most consistent with the God of love, truth, and freedom, in harmony with His design laws, and consistent with Jesus and what He revealed, and instills greater love and trust?

At the end of the day this is all future and I don’t debate these details, my concern is do we present them in such a way that presents God in His true character of love, in harmony with His design law methods, that engenders trust or do we incite fear and distrust—this is the real concern. As long as we are engendering trust, and helping people grow in harmony with God’s design law principles, then the specific details can be clarified during the 1000 years if we have some of them incorrect.

## WEDNESDAY

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Read first paragraph,

- During the millennium, the righteous will have an opportunity to observe firsthand God’s justice and love in how He has dealt with the sin problem. Who doesn’t have questions they would like to ask God about a lot of things? Now, during the millennium in heaven, the redeemed get to ask those questions. If a loved one or close friend is absent from heaven, the saved have the opportunity to understand God’s decisions more fully. In a new way, more forcefully than ever before, the redeemed will grasp God’s powerful attempts to save every person who has ever lived. They will realize anew that everyone who is lost has missed out on heaven because of their own personal rejection of Christ. Only then does God bring final judgment—the second death, which is eternal destruction—on the lost. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 108).

What do you understand this to mean? What does it mean observe firsthand God’s justice? If we are reviewing records is that firsthand observation or second hand observation? So what is firsthand

observation? Will the wicked be resurrected one at a time and brought before a tribunal in heaven in which we hear God interrogate them and then we make a judgment about their case and decide how long they deserve to be punished before God kills them?

Some teach that we will be sitting on committees in heaven and making such determinations about all the wicked, deciding how much torture each person must receive before they are executed—is that what they mean or do they mean something else?

What does this sentence mean,

- “If a loved one or close friend is absent from heaven, the saved have the opportunity to understand God’s decisions more fully”?

It seems like it doesn’t fit with the following two sentences:

- “In a new way, more forcefully than ever before, the redeemed will grasp God’s powerful attempts to save every person who has ever lived. They will realize anew that everyone who is lost has missed out on heaven because of their own personal rejection of Christ.”

These seem to be contradictory—if every person is lost by their own personal rejection of Christ, then what is God’s decision in the lost being lost?

Is there a suggestion that God as the sovereign has the final decision whether someone is saved or lost? What kind of law functions this way, where the judge determines guilt or innocence, the judge determines pardon or punishment? That is human law, this is a distortion if it means God’s decisions are determinant in someone’s salvation.

No, the only person who has determining power for someone’s salvation is that person. God doesn’t decide any person’s eternal destiny, every person decides their own. God has provided the means and opportunity for all people to be saved and He wants all to come to salvation—so God’s choices are the actions of mercy, grace, and love to provide us that choice. The reason anyone is lost is because they have spurned every opportunity, all truth has been rejected, every mercy despised, every entreaty spurned—until the individual has hardened their heart and mind beyond healing. God’s judgment doesn’t determine this outcome, God’s judgment is diagnostic and simply identifies what is.

So, what are we doing during the 1000 years? We are personally examining any and all evidence that we need to examine to confirm for ourselves that this is in fact true. That every single action of God was therapeutic, loving, merciful, redemptive, and created opportunities for salvation and that no person is lost because of an act of God or a neglect of God.

What is the final judgment?

There are four judgments in Scripture;

### **The First Judgment**

The first is our judgment of God—which Adam and Eve had to make in Eden, and which every person in history has been called to make since. Is God like Yahweh then worship Him, but if like Baal, worship him.

### **The Second Judgment**

We talked about some time ago and are God's therapeutic judgments throughout history. His diagnosis of the problem and His judgment of what is the best intervention or treatment for the problem. This would include the investigative judgment in which Jesus determines what is necessary to cleanse and heal all who have trusted Him throughout history, and simultaneously the living are judging the evidence of who God is and choosing to trust God.

### **The Third Judgment**

The third judgment is the judgment that the righteous render during the thousand years after they are taken to heaven and all the evidence of history is before them.

- I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge**. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4–6 NIV84).

This is also not a judicial process; it is an answering of all the questions people have about the great controversy. It is the assessment, discerning, and settling of minds regarding how God's laws govern all reality. It is the confirmation of what sin does and how salvation occurs—and why some are saved and others are not when God loves all equally, wants all to be saved, and is all powerful.

This judgment by the saints includes more than judging why some of our friends and loved ones are not in heaven; it also includes judging what the angels did and how they possibly could have rebelled:

- “Do you not know that we will **judge** angels?” (1 Corinthians 6:3 NIV84).

In the future, during the Millennium, the saints will review the history of what transpired on earth and the lives of the lost, humans and angels alike, and they will judge that there was nothing more that God could have done. God's design laws and government will stand vindicated, and God will not be falsely blamed for any soul not being in heaven. Without this judgment, doubt about God's goodness would remain in the hearts and minds of those, who like the thief on the cross, were saved near the end of their lives and didn't have time to work through all their doubts and misunderstandings. This is the judgment in which the saved exercise their God-given ability to think, reason, discern and settle all their questions so that sin will never arise again.

The third judgment is not a judicial process but a review of reality, of actual history, of applying our understanding of the design laws of God and making the judgment that all who are lost are lost because that is what they prefer and that there was nothing more God could have done for them.

## The Fourth Judgment

The fourth and final judgment is the judgment that occurs at the end of the thousand years. It is often called the Great White Throne Judgment.

- I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. ... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were **judged** according to what they had done as recorded in the books (Revelation 20:11, 12 NIV84).

Surely this judgment must be judicial ... right? No, it isn't.

What is recorded in the books of life? The names of people (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:15, 21:27). But in Scripture, names are symbolic of one's character. So, what is recorded is our actual characters, which we have developed through our judgment of God—our judgment to trust Him, to open our hearts to Him, to embrace His design laws and methods of truth, love, and liberty or not. Our judgments of God result in whether we open the heart and are reborn—or harden our hearts in selfishness. Our characters develop along whichever line our judgment decides about God, whether we trust Him and His methods or reject them. Thus, we are judged, diagnosed, based on what is the actual condition of our character.

Here's another way to say it: The books record the accurate picture of who we are in heart—they are like medical records. The records don't determine the condition; they merely record the condition.

This is exactly what Jesus taught when He said:

- Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on **the day of judgment** for every careless word they have spoken. **For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned** (Matthew 12:33–37 NIV84).

What is being described? Character—the actual condition of each heart, a diagnosis of what the reality actually is. God is the God of reality, the builder of all Creation. His laws are the protocols upon which life operates. There has never been a heavenly judicial law court like humans make; the idea that God is an arbitrary judge who is the source of inflicted punishment for sin is a lie from Satan.

The fourth and final judgment is not judicial; it is the final confirmation of the accurate diagnosis of each heart and mind:

- He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still (Revelation 22:11 NKJV).



## THURSDAY

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The final end at the end of the 1000 years,

Consider this commentary, part of it is quoted in the lesson, I am giving a little more from the book *The Great Controversy*:

- At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. (The Great Controversy 664).
- Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance. (The Great Controversy 665).
- As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear as if written in letters of fire. (The Great Controversy 666).
- The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them. (The Great Controversy 668)
- Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence. (The Great Controversy 670).

- Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy has now been made plain. The results of rebellion, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, have been laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created... The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." (The Great Controversy 670).

Then the cleansing fires of truth and love burn free and lies and selfishness are burned up, those with the greatest resistance and longest record fight the truth and love the longest and so all do not surrender to the flames of truth and love at the same time. Satan resists the longest, but eventually, he too surrenders and gives up on life not wanting to live in the unveiled presence of God with the full weight of his own evil bearing down on his own mind and heart. And then the fires of combustion break forth and the elements melt in the heat and the God recreates the Earth anew the home of the righteous.