



2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 5 Miracles Around the Lake

By Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read last paragraph,

- The overarching characteristic of these dramatic stories is to let the reader **see who Jesus is**. He is the One able to calm a storm, cast out demons, heal a woman who simply touches His clothes, raise a dead girl, preach in His home town, send out His disciples on a preaching mission, feed with a few loaves and fish, and walk on water—**incredible displays of power** that are drawing the disciples closer to an understanding that He is the Son of God. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 38, emphasis mine).

Do any questions come to mind, or is this just accepted as truth?

We need to see Jesus for who He is; and therefore what we need is to see incredible displays of power, and the incredible displays of power draw us closer to understanding of who He is—is that correct?

Can displays of power be counterfeited?

- In Eden a serpent talked
- Jannes and Jambres counterfeited some of the miracles, turning rods to serpents
- Elisha raised an axe head out of the water, similar feat to walking on water
- Elijah raised the Shunamite's woman's son from the dead
- Paul sent cloths that were prayed over to people and they experienced healing

And the Bible tells us:

- Then I saw another **beast**, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.. And **he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven** to earth in full view of men. (Revelation 13:11-13 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Can we tell who God is by mighty displays of power?

Are miracles a reliable indicator to use in order to discern Christ from antichrist?

Was the war in heaven started over a question of who has the power? Doesn't the Bible tell us the devils believe and tremble because they know who has the power?

The war was never over who has the power, but whether God is trustworthy with all power.

Why does the lesson focus on the power of Jesus as the factor we need to see in order to know Jesus? What kind of a god relies on power over others justify their rule? This is the level of moral decision-making based on immaturity, levels 1-4, it is self-centered, it is childlike, the spiritual mile the writer of Hebrews described, not acquainted with the teachings about righteousness.

Satan is the one who wanted to rise above and rule by the exercise of might and power, but Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be held onto but surrendered His power and humbled Himself into a servant all the way to the cross in order to uplift fallen humanity.

Zechariah tells us that God wins,

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

Why is it God wins by something other than might and power?

Because what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, understanding friendship, and He cannot get our love and trust by the use of might and power, it is by truth, presented in love, and leaving us free—in other words without power intimidating us.

It is Satan who wants people to believe based on power, to cower, to live in fear of punishment, to shut down their thinking, to not ask questions, not investigate the evidence, not pursue truth, to believe based on the claims of the one they perceive having power.

The question of God being powerful was never the issue and teaching people that it is the issue colludes with Satan's lie, it leads to fear, it undermines trust, and it undercuts the very purpose of God's gift to humanity of the Sabbath.

After six days of using immeasurable amounts of power to create this world, rather than using power to crush Satan's rebellion, rather than using power to force compliance, to intimidate, to frighten into obedience, or to inflict just punishments upon Satan and his rebel angels, God instead stopped using power, God rested, God created time for freedom to think and choose for oneself. The Sabbath is a gift from God a holiday built into time to show us, remind, us stand as evidence for us, that God's methods are design law not imposed law, that God doesn't use power to coerce, force, or inflict external punishments.

The issue isn't whether God has power or is the most powerful—the issue is whether God is trustworthy with the power, whether God is actually good, or whether God is, as Satan alleges, powerful, but untrustworthy, a being who will use power to inflict punishment for disobedience. This is the lie one concludes with when one accepts the lie that God's law functions like human law.

And that is the problem with this paragraph, it focuses on power because when you believe the law functions like human law you need the power to enforce the law.

God had already revealed the evidence throughout the recorded history in the Bible that mighty displays of power do not achieve what He wants:

- The Flood—followed by Babel
- 10 Plagues, Red Sea parting, Pillar of fire—followed by golden calf
- Mount Carmel—followed by repeated apostasy and pagan worship
- And then, Jesus' miracles—followed by rejection and crucifixion

There is another powerful lesson when we examine Scripture from the design law perspective, from the reality perspective, from how things actually work perspective, from the evidence perspective and not from the make-believe imposed law perspective. We do this when we ask—what actually happened and what does that reveal: not only does the use of might and power not work on a population scale, as we just demonstrated by the evidence of history, but it doesn't work for saving people either—including righteous people.

Consider Elijah, what was his experience after Mount Carmel?

In 1 Kings 18 we have the Mount Carmel event, fire called down from heaven, the execution of the false prophets of Baal, and the end of the drought—a mighty display of might and power.

And then in 1 Kings 19 we find, after Jezebel's threats, that,

- Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." (1 Kings 19:3-4 NIV84).

Elijah was the messenger of God through whom incredible might and power was wielded and yet, even for Elijah, it didn't do anything for his salvation. Elijah was discouraged and wanted to die. Something else, something other than might and power was what saved Elijah:

Elijah runs for 40 days and ends up in cave and we read,

- Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-12 NIV84).

And after this Elijah is ready for translation—why? What happened? What is revealed by the evidence? There are two types of power being wielded, **external power of physical might, and internal power of truth and love**, which is the power of God that wins God's cause?

So, Paul writes,

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

Consider Stephen—did Stephen demonstrate a power at work in his life when his life was not only threatened, but ended by stoning?

God cannot win His cause, achieve His goals, by the exercise of physical power—for external power doesn't change hearts and minds, it is internal power, the power of truth and love that removes fear, selfishness and sin and restores us to trust and results in the transforming of our selves into true trusted friends of God. This is why Jesus said,

- “The kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21 NIV84).

It is a terrible precedent to teach us that we should look for miracles, signs, and wonders to be authoritative, to be the evidence to convince or persuade. For physical might and power can be counterfeited, and possessing physical might and power doesn't mean the one with physical power can be trusted. And physical might and power alone doesn't win to love and trust, in fact it incites fear and leads to rebellion. To focus on this as the primary attribute is to obstruct the plan of salvation.

Consider this historical quote, the author understood what I have just described:

- The King of glory stooped low to take humanity... His glory was veiled, that the majesty of His outward form might not become an object of attraction. He shunned all outward display. Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; **Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side. Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw those who would follow Him.** The character of the Messiah had long been foretold in prophecy, and He desired men to accept Him upon the testimony of the word of God. (The Desire of Ages p. 43, emphasis mine).

As people started to follow Him for miracles, He withdrew to stop performing them.

So if Jesus didn't want people to follow Him because of might, power, and miracles, then why did He perform so many?

Because He had to provide the full spectrum of evidence of who He was—He needed to wield the powers of God to provide the evidence that He was God, but God's powers go beyond physical might.

From our magazine [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17](#)

- **The Lamb's Seven Horns**
The lamb's seven horns represent the perfect, complete, and total power of God used by Jesus to win the war. These seven powers distinguish our Savior, who is God, from the dragon and his beast, which counterfeit God. These seven powers of God that Jesus wields include:

1. Power of creation/man born blind, feeding of the masses (Genesis 1; John 1:1–3,14; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:1, 2)
2. Power of truth (John 14:6; Matthew 10:34; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 2:12)
3. Power of love (1 John 3:16, 4:8; John 15:13)
4. Power of life over death; resurrection power (John 11:25, 11:38–44; Romans 1:4; Revelation 1:18)
5. Power to forgive and save/heal from sin (Matthew 1:21, 9:6; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 1:9)
6. Power that sustains and holds all reality together and the laws that govern reality (Matthew 14:25–29; Mark 4:39; Colossians 1:17)
7. Power over time, including foreknowledge—the ability to see through time (Genesis 2:2–3; Joshua 10:12, 13; Daniel 2:28; Isaiah 46:10; Mark 2:28)

Jesus was revealing ALL the powers of the Godhead in human form, because Jesus doesn't win by claims, but by evidence revealed because He is the God of reality. So, yes, Jesus performed various miracles as part of the revealed evidence that Jesus is in fact fully God. But when we emphasize the miracle working power out of context, by itself, suggesting it is power and might that causes us to worship God, we introduce a subtle distortion that opens the way for Satan to counterfeit Christ because Satan can work various miracles, but Satan never has truth on His side, doesn't have the ability to remove sin from hearts and minds and recreate individuals in righteousness, or know the future, or hold reality together.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the story of Jesus and the disciples in the boat when the storm comes up and Jesus is asleep, the disciples are afraid, they wake Him, He calms the storm and

- They [the disciples] were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4:41 NIV84).

What do you learn from this story?

What do you think about this storm? Do you think it was a natural storm or something more? Could it be that Satan was using whatever power he has over nature to bring about this storm to try and destroy the fledgling church and kill Jesus before Jesus can accomplish His mission?

Evidence for this possibility:

- Some of the disciples were fishermen and familiar with sailing, storms, boat handling, but this storm was far beyond what they could handle.
- They set sail without concerns for a storm so it came up suddenly without warning.
- Job chapter 1 informs us that Satan can affect nature to a degree when permitted

- Satan is called the prince of this world and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).
- Satan usurped Adam’s position and authority and Adam was given dominion over the earth
- Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26 NKJV).

One Bible commentary states,

- Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was **given dominion over every living thing that God had created**. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made **Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands**. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature. (Conflict and Courage p. 10, emphasis mine).

So, I believe it is possible that this storm was an attempt by Satan to obstruct the plan of salvation by destroying Jesus and His followers before Jesus could complete His mission by using his angelic power and the usurped authority of Adam over nature.

What is revealed by Jesus calming the storm? That He governs the power of nature.

Was it just manifestation of divine power, or was Jesus as the second Adam reclaiming and exercising the delegated authority and power God originally invested in Adam? Jesus was born a real human, and became a member of the species that God had granted the delegated authority and He remained loyal to God. So is it possible that as a human Jesus possessed all the authority over nature given to Adam?

Jesus said of Himself He can do nothing—which could imply all His miracles were through His humanity trusting His Father. But this could also mean that He walks in trust and all He does is in a trust relationship with His Father exercising all the powers He possessed, whether walking, eating, holding a child in His lap, working on furniture in the carpenter shop—all His abilities were understood to be from the Father and He did all in cooperative relationship from the Father, but He possessed within Himself abilities of Adam.

I find this an interesting question and don’t have a conclusive answer, but one day we will ask Jesus this question.

What are the lessons from this story?

An object lesson could be: We may be traveling through life with Jesus in our “boat” but we forget He is with us and struggle against the storms in our own strength until we are overwhelmed and about to give up and then we call out to Jesus who stills the storm and asks us, why we had such little faith—why we didn’t turn to Him sooner?

Read the bottom question:

- Think about the power of God. How can you learn to lean on this power and to trust it in all things in your life? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 39).

What do you think about this question?

Read the question carefully—where is the emphasis?

Now we rejoice that our God is powerful—in fact all powerful? But again, was that ever the issue? Why do they focus on that? If one believes the imposed law lie then one must have the most powerful god to enforce their way upon others, to inflict so-called “just” punishments and cause outcomes, to make things right through might and power—this is Satan’s method of governing not God’s. And it actually prevents one from trusting such a god.

This is why all false religions teach that actions must be performed to influence, pay, propitiate, appease, or do something to the god:

- Offering sacrifices firstfruits, first animals, first born child
- Offering devotion, service, money, deeds
- Offering vicarious payments
- Ceremonies, sacraments, works of various kinds
- Offering the god the blood of the sacrifice, whether animal, or Jesus’ blood

Penal/legal theologies ultimately teach people that they cannot trust God because God needs something done to Him or His law lest He act out in anger and wrath to punish and kill. Thus, the penal legal theologies lead people to place their trust in the robe, the blood, the mediator, the erasure of records, or some other action because without those other actions God cannot be trusted.

Further, look at the question,

- “How can you learn to lean on this power and to trust **it** in all things in your life?”

Are we to trust God’s power—or are we to trust God? Why didn’t they ask, “How can you learn to lean on God and to trust Him in all things in your life?”

Remember the song, “’tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to rest upon His word... Jesus Jesus how I trust Him; How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er”

Should we sing instead, “’tis so sweet to trust in power, just to rest upon its force. Power power how I trust it. How I feel it ever more?”

MONDAY

The lesson is about the demoniac and casting out the demons who took control of the swine—do you have any questions about what demons are, what is demon possession and so forth?

What are demons?

Demons are fallen angels, the angels who were cast out of heaven with Satan when he rebelled.

Demons are created beings of the angelic order who rebelled with Satan and corrupted themselves with fear and selfishness, and who have destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth and are beyond healing and salvation.

What are the powers of Satan and demons? What are the weapons they wield?

The primary power of the demonic is **lies**, which breaks the circle of love and trust, and incites **fear** and selfishness. And then fear and selfishness are used by Satan to manipulate, tempt, and control, via other weapons such as:

1. Imposed laws—These are made-up rules that require external enforcement and always result in unequal, arbitrary treatment and injustice (Isaiah 1:10; Ecclesiastes 5:8), which create more fear and selfishness and obstruct healing of hearts and minds. All earthly governments are based upon the so-called “rule of law,” which are made-up rules requiring external enforcement (Daniel 7:25, Jeremiah 8:8).
2. Police and prosecution—the power to accuse and bring charges (Zechariah 3:1), restrict liberties, enforce fines, and arrest and imprison in order to compel and control a population. All human governments use this power.
3. Judicial—the power to determine guilt or innocence, to pardon or convict, and to determine punishment. We see this power wielded by Pontius Pilate in unjustly convicting and sentencing Jesus to death (Matthew 27:19). God’s power is the power of truth. Thus, His judgment is the accurate pronouncement (diagnosis) of what actually is. God’s judgment doesn’t determine the condition of a soul; it confirms the condition of a soul (Matthew 12:33–37; Revelation 22:11).
4. Economic—the power to print money, regulate currency, manipulate its value, and control commerce—all used to exploit populations through taxation, tax incentives and loopholes, currency manipulation, inflation, commerce, and trade.
5. War—the use of military force to compel, control, or overcome other states to expand a nation’s wealth and power; the power to raise a military and compel service; all powers bent on attacking and destroying others for the protection of the state (Job 1:14, 15; Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:11).
6. Death—Satan’s kingdoms wield the power of death, the ability to take life in war, by police action, and through execution; the power to deceive souls, cutting people off from God, the source of life, resulting in eternal death. Satan is the “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44); Jesus came to destroy him “who holds the power of death—that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).

- a. This includes the power to corrupt—when permitted to impact weather, bring fire down from heaven, to impact nature as in the book of Job.
7. Education/Indoctrination—the power to indoctrinate the populace, setting a national educational narrative, moral values, and history; Satan uses the kingdoms of this world to educate people in the ways of this world.
8. Ownership (Genesis 47:16)—the power to determine ownership of lands, peoples, goods, resources, activities, and business endeavors—who can own a license to make certain products or open a school, hospital, or refinery, etc. But the truth of God’s kingdom is that all things in heaven and on earth belong to God: “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14 NIV84, see also Psalm 24:1, 50:10, 89:11; 1 Corinthians 10:26). We own nothing. We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him to use His resources for the uplifting of His kingdom (Genesis 1:26–28; Luke 12:42, 43; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:10).

And Satan uses all of these powers for a single purpose—to get people to choose to believe him, prefer his methods, act on his principles, and become like him in character. The more we identify with the powers of Satan, choose them, like them, believe them, prefer them, act on them, the more we change ourselves and our hearts, minds, spirits, souls come into closer unity, harmony, alignment with Satan until we lose all self-control and are under demonic influence and eventual control.

Because of God’s restraining power, demons have no direct power over a human to make us sin. The demons must get humans to choose the demonic and it is done through deception and inflaming of emotions, lusts, passions, that dethrone reason and good judgment.

So, what is demon possession?

Demon possession is not the intracellular occupation of a human body. In other words, another being does not occupy the same space inside a human being’s physical body.

Demon possession is the opposite of Holy Spirit possession—when one is filled with the Holy Spirit they do not have another physical entity occupying their physical body, they have a new energy, intelligence, influencing their heart and mind with motives and ideas.

Demon possession is when another intelligence takes control of one’s mind—influencing, directing, or overriding one’s faculties. It’s hacking into one’s mental computer and taking control. Demon possession is when the mind is controlled by a fallen. When a mind is controlled by another human that is brainwashing, being a cult follower, becoming a drone, a shadow person. When the mind is controlled by a fallen angel that is demon possession.

Modern science gives some insights into what is likely happening in cases of demon possession (and I am speaking of genuine demon possession, not mental illnesses which manifest with hallucinations and delusions).

Our brains are amazing quantum computers. They are composed of 100 billion neurons and more than one trillion supporting cells. Each neuron can have up to 10,000 connections to other neurons. That's over 40 quadrillion interconnections!

These 40 quadrillion interconnections in our brains are comprised primarily of dendrites. Within *each* neuron, there are 10 million microtubules, and each microtubule is made up of billions of tubulin molecules, which in turn are composed of 445 amino acids, which are made of various atoms, many of which share electrons.

Within these quadrillions of dendrites, with their millions of microtubules made of billions of tubulin molecules, the atoms form shared electron clouds. These clouds exist in positions of uncertainty until you think about something and form a conclusion, a belief, or accept a truth — or a lie. Your act of choosing to believe something will cause the electron clouds, in various places within the dendrites, to collapse. This causes conformation change within the microtubule structure, which solidifies the memory or belief into the brain.

Your beliefs and memories are stored within the brain tubulin structure until something happens that causes you to reexamine or reevaluate the belief or memory and come to a different conclusion. This is how beliefs are stored and mindsets are established.

As we act on our beliefs the brain continues to change its structure to wire in our thoughts, attitudes, perspectives, practices and we change ourselves by our choices over time.

This gives insight into the law of worship, which says that by beholding, we become changed. In psychiatry, this is known as “modeling.” We neurobiologically and characterologically change to become like what we admire, worship, think about, choose, and act on.

If we spend time watching vulgar, exploitive, debasing, cruel, selfish, deceitful, or otherwise ungodly things, we will be changed by it. Our neural networks will rewire, our quantum matrix will realign, to come more and more into harmony with what is selfish and evil—that is, what is demonic. And as we come more into harmony with the demonic, our minds become more tuned, more sensitive, more capable of resonating, responding, and being influenced by the demonic. If we persist in going down such thinking patterns, over time we may become so tuned into the demonic that our minds begin to operate on the same quantum frequency as the fallen angels—giving them greater influence in our minds, ranging from mere temptation to demonic harassment and all the way to overriding our own thinking, which is demonic possession. Consider it like two radio stations broadcasting on the same frequency: One has a weak 25,000-watt signal and the other is a 100,000-watt station. The more powerful station will overpower the weaker signal.

This is likely what is happening in demonic possession. Is there any evidence that minds can come into harmony like this?

Two individuals were placed inside a Faraday cage—a wire mesh that prevents any electromagnetic (EM) waves (radio waves, microwaves, etc.) from passing through to the other side—and asked to

meditate together. After meditating together for a period of time, these two individuals were separated into different rooms and were then placed inside their own Faraday cages.

Researchers put EEG (electroencephalogram) leads on each person so they could monitor their brainwaves. Then the researchers shined a light at random intervals into the eyes of one participant while monitoring the brainwaves of both. Every time they shined the light into the eyes of one participant, the brainwaves of the other participant activated in the same way, measured by the EEG, as the person who had the light shined into their eyes. No EEG changes were seen in a control group. These changes were not due to any known EM fields or other causes, such as mirror neurons. (Dean Radin, “Testing Nonlocal Observations as a Source of Intuitive Knowledge,” *Explore* 4, no. 1 (2008): 25).

This research supports the idea that our minds can indeed harmonize with other minds. It gives greater importance to the biblical exhortation to fix our eyes on Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and to focus upon “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8 NIV84). It gives insight into how the Holy Spirit can indwell a person’s mind to bring healing and restoration.

Truth sets free; truth heals, because truth changes conformation and the configuration of our brains. Truth realigns us with the Source of truth, such that we become more sensitive to the Spirit of truth—and as we choose the truth, focusing upon, meditating, and worshiping the God of truth, we experience the alignment of our minds with the mind of God. We become “indwelled” by the Holy Spirit.

Consider this like your computer being “indwelled” by antivirus software. That software doesn’t overrule your decisions or actions, but rather, in the background, it’s constantly monitoring for malicious code, alerting you to what is harmful, and working with you to remove it. But you remain free to ignore or override the antivirus software. However, if you do, the malicious code may eventually defeat the antivirus software on your device and take control of your computer.

Likewise, when we choose the ways of the world—the vile, vulgar, crude, debasing, selfish, exploitive, and manipulative—we change ourselves. What we choose to watch, esteem, promote, and value changes our brain resonance patterns. When we make coercion, force, and intimidation the principles that we value, we become more aligned with the demonic. The sinful world operates upon imperialism: rules (laws) requiring the infliction of punishment by a ruling authority. When Christians teach others that our Creator God operates like sinful humans do, making up rules that He then enforces by punishing rule-breakers, we reject the truth and choose lies, aligning ourselves with the father of lies.

Such belief systems, commonly taught in Christianity, including penal substitution theology, obstruct the work of the Holy Spirit by establishing lies in the minds of people, preventing the truth from transforming the individual. Instead of experiencing greater love and trust, individuals experience fear of punishment for sin and create theologies to protect them from God (such as Jesus “pleading His blood” so the Father won’t kill them).

God wants to set us free—free from fear, free from selfishness, free from the methods of this world. He wants to restore in us His character and methods of love. But this is only possible as we are fully persuaded in our own minds (Romans 14:5). We must choose the God of truth and choose His methods, rejecting lies about Him; in so doing, our quantum matrix is changed and we come into greater and greater harmony with the God of love and truth.

The bottom line is that Satan’s powers are used to influence our minds to choose him and his methods and this is how he gains power over people—even of the people believe that they are serving Jesus.

TUESDAY

In Mark 5 we have the story of Jarius seeking Jesus’ to heal his sick daughter, but she dies before Jesus arrives and Jesus tells the people the little girl is not dead but asleep and they laugh at Jesus.

Why did they laugh at Jesus?

If she was dead, why did Jesus say she was asleep—was Jesus trying to confuse the people? Or was Jesus being Jesus, the light of the world and trying to enlighten the minds of people, and what was He revealing? That what we call death is not what God calls death.

This is so important because confusion about this issue has caused so much misunderstanding about God.

Not one sinner in human history has died the death that is the wages of sin. The death that is the wages of sin, the punishment of sin, is eternal death, annihilation, which doesn’t happen until the end of the 1000 years.

But sadly, many Christians conflate—merge first death and second death—and make all kinds of false conclusions, on both sides of the arguments about God’s character.

Those who hold to the human imposed law lie and believe God is required by law and justice to inflict punishment for sin, take all the examples of God putting people to sleep in the Old Testament and argue that these are evidence that God does punish for sin. They fail to remember that these people have not died, they are only asleep in the grave.

On the other side, there are those who want to place God in the best possible light, but they also fail to understand this difference and they believe correctly that death does not come out from God and God is not the source of inflicted punishment because His government is not built upon made up rules but on design laws, so they argue that God never “killed” anyone for that would be using the devil’s power. If they would remember that first death is not punishment for sin, but an artificial state of existence that is a direct manifestation of God’s grace. In other words, first death, sleep death, only exists because God’s grace is at work holding at bay the eternal death that destroys not only the body

but the soul, the psyche, the individuality. First death allows the body to cease operating and return to dust, while the soul, the individuality, the person to remain alive in a state of suspended animation, i.e., sleep awaiting the resurrection, either of the righteous or of damnation.

And at the resurrection each person finishes their own life by their own freewill choices without any coercion or interference from God. And in fact, God's grace is shown again in that, all the wicked through history are brought to the end of time, to the final showdown, to the place with the supreme evidence, to the place where Jesus, the angels, the New Jerusalem, and all the saints are on the Earth and can be seen with their own eyes, and even interacted with to give every single person, no matter how they entered first death, by old age, by war, by God acting to put them to sleep, the opportunity to see the ultimate evidence and still choose what they will do. For when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and the wicked dead are raised the Bible tells us that a period of time goes by in which they build implements of war, and during that time the gates of the New Jerusalem are open. This will demonstrate reality—that God's power never coerces, never forces, and in fact is always used to heal and save and that God even takes people to the ultimate place of evidence and truth and leaves them free to decide—and every single person outside the city will choose war, will refuse to repent, will not come in through the open gates. This reveals God's actions never decide a person's eternal destiny, every person decides for themselves.

So Jesus' words about the little girl being asleep are powerful truth revealed to enlighten us.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Mark 6, Jesus being rejected by His hometown and the beheading of John the Baptist.

Do you have any questions or concerns about these stories?

Why is it hard for people to accept a prophet in the prophet's hometown?

THURSDAY

The lesson is about Jesus feeding the thousands from a few loaves and fishes and how this excited the disciples and the people to consider Jesus to be the Messiah who comes to reign by might and power, to destroy their enemies.

Read the two last paragraphs,

- Yet, Jesus does not meet their false expectations. Instead, He sends His disciples away and dismisses the crowd. And, rather than lead a rebellion against Rome, what does He do? He retreats to a mountain to pray—not what the people were expecting.

In place of the popular view of the Messiah as a king who liberates Israel, He comes to liberate people from the bondage of sin. His walking on the water displays to the disciples that He is, indeed, the Lord of nature. But He does not come to rule but to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 43).

The lesson then asks the right questions at the bottom of the page,

- What should this story tell us about why a correct understanding of prophecy is important? If a false understanding of Christ's first coming led to disaster for some, how much more so could a false understanding do the same for some in regard to His second? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 43).

Is it the correct understanding of Bible prophecy that is most important—or another truth? Isn't it the correct understanding of God's character and government—which is directly determined by how one understands God's law that is the most important concept to be right about?

If one has the correct understanding of various Bible prophetic events, but believes God's law functions like human law, and justice is legally imposed punishments by God, then one is still worshipping a false god and will be ready to accept the counterfeit Christ.

But if one knows the truth about God and His character and methods, because they understand, embrace, and practice God's design laws, they might not correctly understand some prophetic meaning, but they will recognize the false messiah as false because that messiah will be practicing the methods of Satan and not Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NEW PODCAST LAUNCH JULY 23—Designed4More: We are excited to announce the launch of our new podcast, Designed 4 More—which is a joint effort of Come and Reason Ministries and Honey Lake Clinic. Our first show will be released Tuesday July 23, and we will release a new show every Tuesday thereafter. The focus is God's design for the four domains of our lives, body, mind, spirit, and relationships and how we can only thrive in harmony with His design laws for life. We will explore a wide variety of topics and subjects, physical, mental, spiritual, relational, organizational etc. all seeking to understand how to apply God's designs to our real-world, real-life decisions and actions. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net

South Africa: All 10 Come and Reason Tracts have now been translated into Afrikaans and are available for download on our website under the languages tab.