



2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 9 Jerusalem Controversies

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read memory verse:

- “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26 NKJV).

How do we understand this? What law lens do we understand it through? Is God’s law like human law and God has made a rule that we must forgive and if we don’t forgive others then God will not forgive us because we are breaking His rules?

Or is this simply the description of how reality works, if we remain hard-hearted and selfish, refusing to forgive, God cannot deny the reality of who we have chosen to be and while He forgives us from His heart and throne we do not **experience** His forgive in our hearts and enter into a state of forgiveness because we choose to hold onto selfishness, vindictiveness, and hard-heartedness. Thus, God accurately diagnoses us to still be terminal in sin. While He remains in heart and mind forgiving toward us, our refusing to be reborn by insisting on holding grudges, obstructs God’s love, grace, and forgiveness from entering into us and transforming us. Thus we do no experience His forgiveness that is freely given.

Here is my paraphrase,

- And when you are talking with God, if you hold resentment, bitterness, or anything against anyone, don't harden your heart but forgive them, so you may experience the forgiveness of your sin from your Father in heaven. For if you refuse to forgive, you close your heart to the forgiveness of your Father in heaven." (Mark 11:25-26 REM).

One of the founders of the SDA church described it this way,

- But **forgiveness** has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He “will **abundantly pardon,**” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:7-9. **[Human ways are legal, based on imposed law and payment and punishment is required. But God’s ways are the ways of the Creator whose laws are design laws. And payments and punishments are not required, healing and restoration is!] God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from**

condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. And again he says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**” Psalm 103:12. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing 114, emphasis mine).

Thus, when we refuse to forgive we are preventing God’s grace and forgiveness, freely given from heaven, from healing and cleansing us. And God will not pretend we are forgiven when we refuse to be forgiven.

But the penal/legal lie actually cheats people because it teaches them that forgiveness is legal rather than experiential and in that model they can claim legal forgiveness, while they remain unforgiving in heart turn over their desire for vengeance to either human courts or God’s court and look forward to the day that their abuser gets punished for their sins. In their mind they believe the lie that they have forgiven because they relinquish their personal vengeance to the state or to heaven; and they believe the lie that they are forgiven from their sins—but in truth they remain unchanged, closing the door to their heart to the forgiveness of God being poured out upon them.

Read first paragraph,

- A series of five controversies between Jesus and the religious leaders are recorded in Mark 2 and 3 (see lesson 3). In this week’s lesson, when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, He has a series of six controversies with the religious leaders. The two sets of controversies are like bookends of His earthly ministry. Each set deals with important issues in the Christian life. Jesus’ instructions, even in these polemical situations, help guide believers both in fundamental issues of faith and in practical issues of everyday experience. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 72).

What do you think were the nature or basis of these controversies? The lesson expresses it nicely when it states,

- Jesus’ instructions, even in these polemical situations, help guide believers both in fundamental issues of faith and in practical issues of everyday experience.

This is nicely put because in order to have practical application in life experience one must operate in harmony with design law, with how reality works, and not upon made up rules or penal legal systems.

So, the controversies, all of them, are the conflict between the religious leaders advancing a false system of imposed law, legal theology, based in the lie that God’s law functions like human law, and reality itself, the laws our Creator built into the operations of the fabric of the cosmos, including the design laws that govern the operations of our minds and hearts.

Jesus constantly leads people back to reality and away from the fantasy of a legal, rules-oriented religion.

Notice the five controversies in Mark chapter 2 and 3 that the lesson points us to consider, I will read the verses, and you tell me what Jesus is advocating and why this is a controversy:

- When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some **teachers of the law** were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:5-12 NIV84, emphasis mine).
 - What is the conflict? The Jews think sin is a legal problem and that Jesus does not have legal authority to give legal pardon or forgiveness and thus He is blaspheming.
 - But Jesus shifts the entire equation from legality to function, from legality to reality, to the ability to live, thrive, and be healthy and says, which is easier to accomplish—to heal the soul or the body? But so you may know that I am not doing a mere legal adjustment in a book, a mere legal proclamation, but am healing this man’s soul, removing his guilt and shame and purifying his heart and mind, watch as I heal his body. Then you will know that I am not here to operate upon the false, made up, legal system of sinful creatures, but I am here as the representative of my Father and His kingdom to cleanse sinners from sin and restore them to righteousness. And my Father is the Creator God and Our kingdom is the kingdom of reality that operates upon design law.
 - Do you see why they hated Jesus? Jesus broke down the fantasy of legality and rules that enslaved the people and that gave those leaders power over the masses, just like Satan seeks. Satan wants to rise up and rule over. But Jesus was leading them back to reality to design law which gives no one power over another, design law does not discriminate, design law teaches people that health and life exist only in a trust relationship with our Creator God of love!
- When the **teachers of the law** who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:16-17 NIV84).
 - What is the nature of the conflict?

- The Jews were operating upon imposed law, made up rules, and their made-up rules that discriminated against people and forbade them to eat with certain members of society.
- What did Jesus do? He reset the question into that of reality. The problem is not a legal problem but an actual condition of being, health operates upon the laws of health and those who are sick need treatment, not legal pardon, and Jesus came to provide Remedy and restore people back to harmony with God’s design laws for life. As long as they are still healable and willing to participate with God for healing—all are welcome.
- Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. (Mark 2:19-20 NIV84).
 - What is the nature of the conflict?
 - The Jews were operating upon made up rules—they fasted as a legal requirement, or as a means to earn righteousness points to make themselves look and feel better about themselves and to earn religious credits in their false legal theology.
 - What did Jesus do? He described reality—we celebrate at times of celebration—but we naturally fast when we are grieving. He reset things in the frame of design law.
- One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:23-28 NIV84).
 - What was the basis of the conflict?
 - The Jews understood the Sabbath as an imposed law, a rule enacted by God with behavioral requirements and legal consequences. Thus, they made up even more behavioral requirements to ensure proper Sabbath keeping and Jesus’ disciples were breaking their rules.
 - What did Jesus do? He reset things again in the setting of reality, of design law. The Sabbath is not a rule or imposed law placed upon man to govern human behavior, it is a gift created for human thriving; a blessing for humanity’s welfare; a resource and evidence to teach them reality—the reality of God’s character and government. **The Sabbath is evidence, proof, a perpetual reminder built into time that God does not have a legal form of government but a reality form of government.** The Sabbath is proof that while God is Creator and has all power, God does not use His power to make up rules, coerce people, or inflict punishment for disobedience, but God leaves people free to decide for themselves. Thus, the Sabbath is a gift to lead us back to the true freedom we have in God’s kingdom and away from the enslavement of the imposed

law systems of government with their coercion and force and inflicted punishments. And thus on the Sabbath people are free to do whatever that is in harmony with God's character and design law principles of love. And it is healthy and good to eat on Sabbath, to operate in harmony with the laws of health. Jesus makes the same point in the next controversy.

- Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 3:1-6 NIV84).
 - What is the nature of the controversy?
 - The Jews operated on the false imposed-law legal system of theology and the Sabbath was viewed as a made-up rule imposed by God to test our obedience. Those leaders considered sin to be a legal problem and thus Jesus healing on Sabbath is work that breaks their imposed-law rulebook and is worthy of punishment.
 - What did Jesus do? He purposely drew their attention to the falsity of their legal religion, for rule-keeping harms God's creation, whereas harmony with God's design laws heals His creation. Their legal observance of their Sabbath law would keep a child of God in disability, suffering, and deformity a fit metaphor to what their legal religion does to the soul. Legal religions keep sinners in spiritual disability, suffering, and deformity of character—legal religions harm. Whereas Jesus understanding reality, taught that the Sabbath is a gift from God to humankind to remind us of the character of God, His love, His truth, and His freedom and thus all activities that advance love, truth, and freedom of God are righteous to do, especially on the Sabbath.

What about the new controversies in Mark 11? Do you think they will be different?

SUNDAY

The Triumphal Entry—what is the lesson taught in this story?

- Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9 NIV84).

Jesus fulfills all the Old Testament prophecies and requirements of the Messiah. This is the design law of truth being fulfilled, accomplished, demonstrated. Truth can and must be spoken, but truth is reality and truth is most powerful when revealed in action, in fact, by evidence. Jesus' life lived out is a

testimony and revelation of truth that is far surpassing in power and value than that of verbal description only. It is accomplishment, not mere claim.

This is a lesson that many people today do not understand, and Satan works hard to confuse people on this point. Satan works by deception, by getting people to replace fantasy for reality, lies for truth, falsehood for facts, and to accept words, claims, proclamations for truth.

In other words, Satan relies on getting people to listen to what is said and not what is done, but you have all heard that actions speak louder than words. Look at the actions of Jesus and the outcomes of His actions; and look at the actions of the religious leaders in Christ's day and the outcomes of those actions. And then look at the words of both.

In Jesus, His words and His actions aligned perfectly. But the words of the religious leaders did not align with reality, with truth. The religious leaders pretended to be advancing truth, but because they were operating upon lies their actions eventually demonstrated the corruption of their words. The outcomes of their policies, principles, procedures, rules harmed, whereas the outcomes of Jesus' policies, principles, procedures, and methods healed.

But the words of the corrupt leaders were about saving the nation—
“It is better for one man to die than the nation,” Caiaphas said. “We have responsibility for our society, we must save lives,” He claimed, “even if we have to take liberties from one person. It is better to abuse and mistreat one so we can save the many.” But in reality they destroyed themselves and left their nation desolate.

This same problem exists throughout all human history—the problem of differentiating reality from fantasy, truth from claims, facts from fiction, words from evidence.

Just watch this current presidential election cycle—I am not going to tell you what to think or who one should vote for. I am suggesting that you open your eyes and watch, think, critical examine, practice differentiating words from actions, words from accomplishments, words from outcomes—how things turn out when certain people are in charge and can make decisions that impact others. Consider evidence from past accomplishments and outcomes versus accusations, claims, promises, and proclamations.

In my view, in the ultimate outcome of this world, it really doesn't matter which candidate gets elected because God has a plan and all the kingdoms of the earth are corrupt and all use Satan's methods and eventually they all join forces to war against the saints. But these events do matter for individual hearts and minds, for you and I are being attacked. Our hearts and minds are under assault. We are being misled, misinformed, manipulated by propaganda, and our emotions are being exploited, all designed to confuse the mind and get people to ignore truth, ignore evidence, ignore reality and align with fantasy, align with wishful thinking, align with the methods of God's enemy. It is right now that every person must exercise their God-given individuality and think for themselves, learn to examine evidence and facts for themselves. Differentiate words from reality.

For those who want to practice discernment skills, God is allowing these events to unfold because the actions, the practices, the methods, the choices, the results of what people do are evidence for people to recognize and realize—claiming something to be one way does not change the reality of it.

Claiming a dog is a cat doesn't make it so—even if you dress the dog up like a cat.

Claiming a daisy is a rose doesn't make it so—even if you paint the daisy red.

Claiming good is evil and evil is good doesn't make it so—even if you declare it to be so.

Claiming it is good to have no standards for graduation, to pass everyone regardless of actual competence and achievement doesn't make all people develop their God given abilities, in fact, it harms them, their families, society, and steals their future from them, making them functionally dependent on others.

- Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. (Isaiah 5:20 NIV84).

The first lesson of Jesus' triumphal entry is that He reveals truth in action, but the people who prefer lies, who prefer selfishness and evil are there to confuse minds with words designed to deceive and divert attention from the truth.

The next lesson we learn from His triumphal entry is that God does have foreknowledge:

- Zechariah prophesied this would happen
- Jesus knew where a foal would be found
- Jesus knew what the disciples needed to say and how the owner would respond
- Jesus knew what His entry would mean and how the leaders would respond
- Jesus told His disciples repeatedly exactly what the leaders would choose to do to Him and how He would be treated

Again, truth revealed in action about God—and what do we learn from this? That despite God knowing the future before it happens, He does not manipulate people for His own benefit. He does not exploit; He does not take away our freedom. Jesus, despite knowing all they would do, did not avoid going through these events, and did not restrict in the least the ability of sinful humans to torture and kill Him. We learn that Jesus has all power over all of Creation:

- The power to create
- The power to forgive sins
- The power of love
- The power of truth
- The power over the forces of nature
- The power to raise the dead
- The power over time

Yet, Jesus uses His power always and only for the benefit of others!

Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb who was slain!

So the first area of conflict or controversy between Jesus and the leaders in Mark 11 is also a conflict between evidence revealed, design law, reality itself and their declared rules, coercive powers, imposed laws, and delegated positions of authority.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the cursed fig tree and the cleansing of the temple.

What is the nature of the controversy and does it also demonstrate design law versus imposed law?

Consider this commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

- It [the fig tree] was already covered with leaves. It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore this tree in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit. But **its appearance was deceptive**. Upon searching its branches, from the lowest bough to the topmost twig, Jesus found “nothing but leaves.” It was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more... (The Desire of Ages 581, emphasis mine).

Christ's act in cursing the fig tree had astonished the disciples. It seemed to them unlike His ways and works... What was its purpose? they questioned. (The Desire of Ages 582).

The cursing of the fig tree was an **acted parable**. That barren tree, **flaunting its pretentious foliage** in the very face of Christ, was **a symbol of the Jewish nation**. The Saviour desired to **make plain** to His disciples **the cause and the certainty of Israel's doom**. [Do you think this means the cause of Israel's doom is God uses power to inflict death on the tree and punishment on Israel? Consider, before we continue, what the curse Christ invoked means. From where does the tree get its life? From where comes the energy and power that sustains the tree and allows it to grow? From God—so is the curse of Christ the **dispersement** of power from God to inflict death, or is it the **withdrawal** of power and allowing the natural results to occur? In scripture water is a symbol for life, for love, for the presence and power of God. If water is cut off from a plant what happens? It withers and dies. When one cuts themselves off from God they wither and die. Imposed law gets justice by inflicting punishment; design law justice is the outworking of design law, the natural results of individual choice. Imposed law's wrath is the use of power to inflict suffering and pain; design law's wrath is the withdrawal of protective power that holds at bay the suffering and destruction sin brings.] For this purpose He invested the tree with moral qualities, and made it the expositor of divine truth. The Jews stood forth distinct from all other nations, professing allegiance to God. They had been specially favored by Him, and they laid claim to righteousness above every other people. But **they were corrupted** by the love of the world and the greed of gain. They boasted of their knowledge, but **they were ignorant** of the requirements of God, and were **full of hypocrisy**. Like the barren tree, they spread **their pretentious branches** aloft, luxuriant in appearance, and beautiful to

the eye, but they yielded “nothing but leaves.” The Jewish religion, with its magnificent temple, its sacred altars, its mitred priests and impressive ceremonies, was indeed fair in outward appearance, **but humility, love, and benevolence were lacking.** (The Desire of Ages 582).

Jesus had come to the fig tree hungry, to find food. So He had come to Israel, **hungering to find in them the fruits of righteousness.** He had lavished on them His gifts, that they might bear fruit for the blessing of the world. **Every opportunity and privilege had been granted them,** and in return He sought their sympathy and co-operation in His work of grace. He longed to see **in them self-sacrifice and compassion, zeal for God, and a deep yearning of soul for the salvation of their fellow men.** Had **they kept the law of God,** they would have done the same **unselfish work** that Christ did. But love to God and man was eclipsed by pride and self-sufficiency. They **brought ruin upon themselves** by refusing to minister to others. The treasures of truth which God had committed to them, they did not give to the world. [What law is in operation in this description—they brought ruin by refusing to minister to others. They did not give God’s treasures to the world. What law were they breaking? The law of love, the more you give the more you receive. If you refuse to share what has been given to you then you harden your own heart and cut yourself off from love. Consider the example of a garden hose from your house and a fire hose connected to a fire hydrant—both receive water from a municipal source. Which gives more away? Which receives more to it? Consider the water in the pipes of your home as a metaphor for the love in your heart. As the water comes into your home it is fresh and pure and healthy. But what happens if you turn off all the taps and don’t let any water flow? What happens to that water over time? It stagnates and becomes poisonous. When we receive God’s love into our hearts it comes in pure, fresh, live giving and health. But if harden our hearts and refuse to love then that love eventually turns to selfishness. Love cannot be hoarded, love by definition, by function, by what it is must be distributed, shared, given away for it to grow in a living being. Thus, refusing to share, give, love is inherently destructive.] In the barren tree they might read both **their sin and its punishment.** [Their sin is being selfish and their punishment is to wither and die as they cut themselves off from the source of life] Withered beneath the Saviour's curse, standing forth sere and blasted, dried up by the roots, the fig tree showed what the Jewish people would be when the grace of God was removed from them. **Refusing to impart blessing, they would no longer receive it.** “O Israel,” the Lord says, “thou hast destroyed thyself.” Hosea 13:9. (The Desire of Ages 583).

The warning is for all time. [Why? Because God’s laws are design laws and His universe is built upon and functions upon other-centered love for all time] Christ's act in cursing the tree which His own power had created stands as **a warning to all churches and to all Christians.** **No one can live the law of God without ministering to others.** [Why? Because God’s law is not imposed, it is not legal, it is functional, operational, design law, the protocols life is built upon] But there are many who do not live out Christ's merciful, unselfish life. Some who think themselves excellent Christians **do not understand what constitutes service for God.** [Why? Because they believe God’s law is imposed and salvation is legal and sin is rule-breaking. Thus the false legal theology makes them self-focused, focused on their behavior, on whether they are doing right and wrong, and they are not operating in love for God and others, but in fear of

legal trouble and rule-breaking.] They plan and study to please themselves. They act only in reference to self. Time is of value to them only as they can gather for themselves. In all the affairs of life this is their object. Not for others but for themselves do they minister. God created them to live in a world **where unselfish service must be performed.** [Why must unselfish service be performed—because it is a rule that one must perform lest one be punished? No, because it is the design law for life. If you want to live you must give away your carbon dioxide to the plants, if you refuse to do so you will separate from the design law for life and die.] **He designed them to help their fellow men in every possible way.** But self is so large that they cannot see anything else. They are not in touch with humanity. **Those who thus live for self are like the fig tree, which made every pretension but was fruitless.** They observe the **forms of worship**, but without repentance or faith. In **profession they honor the law** of God, but obedience is lacking. **They say, but do not.** [This is the religion of penal legal theologies. A religion with a form of godliness but without power because it actively separates people from God's design and makes them more self-focused.] In the sentence pronounced on the fig tree Christ demonstrates how hateful in His eyes is this vain pretense. He declares that the open sinner is less guilty than is he who professes to serve God, but who bears no fruit to His glory. (The Desire of Ages 584).

The parable of the fig tree, spoken before Christ's visit to Jerusalem, had a direct connection with the lesson He taught in cursing the fruitless tree... In the parable the result of the gardener's work was not foretold. **It depended upon that people** to whom Christ's words were spoken. [So too with us, our spiritual health, salvation; our fitness for heaven does not depend on God—it depends on us—on our response to God, on our willingness to choose God and His ways in our life. If God were the determining factor, the one deciding on who is saved or lost, then every single person would be saved. But individual salvation is not God's choice, it is our choice.] They were represented by the fruitless tree, and **it rested with them to decide their own destiny.** [How often is the judgment presented as God deciding everyone's destiny and punishment? That is the lie of human imposed law. Design law teaches the truth that we each decide our own destiny by how we respond to truth in our own lives.] Every advantage that Heaven could bestow was given them, but they did not profit by their increased blessings. By Christ's act in cursing the barren fig tree, the result was shown. **They had determined their own destruction...** (The Desire of Ages 584).

In every age there is given to men their day of **light and privilege, a probationary time** in which they may become reconciled to God. But there is **a limit to this grace.** Mercy may plead for years and **be slighted and rejected**; but there comes **a time when mercy makes her last plea.** [What do you think is the cause of that limit? What is the factor that cuts off the plea of God's mercy? Has God set a date and when that time comes in cosmic history then God stops His plea of mercy? No, it is reality, the plea stops when no more pleas will do any good when there is no one left who will respond because all the lost have persisted in sinful living so long that they have destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth] **The heart becomes so hardened that it ceases to respond to the Spirit of God. Then the sweet, winning voice entreats the sinner no longer, and reproofs and warnings cease.** (The Desire of Ages 587).

Do you recognize the entire cursing of the fig tree is an acted out parable teaching design law, teaching how reality works? There is no penal legal system at work, that is how human laws work, the rule of law is the way of creatures not the Creator God.

What about the cleansing of the Temple?

- “In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an **object lesson** [What is an object lesson? Is the object lesson reality or does it illustrate reality? Is the object lesson for salvation? Is the reality which the object lesson is teaching required?] for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being**, from the bright and holy seraph to **man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator.** [What kind of a temple is this? Is such a temple suggested here, composed of living beings one built by human hands?] **Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God.** Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, **the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled.** [What is God's purpose for humanity? And what was God's purpose in the incarnation of Jesus?] God dwells in humanity, and **through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple.** [What does this mean? And would the heart of a sinner become again the temple where God dwells require some cleansing work to be done? Could we call that the cleansing of the temple?] God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high **destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood** the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. [How about Christians today, have we understood?] They did not **yield themselves as holy temples** for the Divine Spirit. [How about Christians today?] The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.** "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.**" Mal. 3:1-3. (The Desire of Ages 161).

TUESDAY

The lesson is one of authority—the Jewish leaders ask Jesus, by what authority does He do what He is doing. Jesus of course answers their question with a question and asked them by whose authority did John preach—and the refused to answer because if they said his own the people would reject them because they believed John was sent of God, but if they said God Jesus would ask why they don't believe John's testimony because John endorsed Jesus.

We all know the story—but it raises the question of authority. Previously we read,

- The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had **authority**, not as the teachers of the law (Mark 1:22 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What was this authority that Jesus wielded?

Did Jesus teach with the authority of the Sanhedrin—an organizational church authority? In other words, did Jesus teach with the support and endorsement of the organized religious system and leadership? Clearly not!

Then how could His teachings be with *authority* if the *authorized* church (God’s chosen institution, one blessed with the oracles of God) did not recognize, endorse, and support Him? In fact, how could He teach as one who had authority if the organized and “authorized” leadership were actively telling people He was teaching heresy? (Luke 5:21; John 7:46–49).

What about today? Could those who are advancing God’s truth for this time be actively opposed by church leadership, by the “authority” of those in church office?

Is there a difference between the authority of the organized church and the authority with which Jesus taught? Could God’s faithful today teach with the same authority that Jesus wielded while being opposed by the “authority” of the organized church?

What is the difference between these two types of authority?

Did Jesus teach with the authority of the state? Did He have the endorsement of a government office? Pilate spoke with the authority of Rome. And Matthew spoke with the authority of Rome on matters of taxation. But did Jesus speak with the authority of the government? Clearly not—so what was the basis of Jesus’ authority?

What is the difference between these two types of authority?

Did Jesus speak with the authority of academic credentials or the endorsement, recognition, and certification of various theological schools, academic institutions, or certifying bodies? Did the apostles, after Jesus’ ascension, speak with that same authority that Jesus did and also end up facing the same opposition from an opposing theological and academic authority?

What is the difference between these two types of authority?

Consider the voices of authority that speak today—whether church authorities, governmental authorities, academic and professional authorities, what is the basis of their authority?

Do you remember a recent global health “crisis” in which various voices of authority arose and spoke, making all kinds of claims, demanding all types of obedience, and promising all types of results—

what was the basis of their authority? And did their authority work? Did their authority actually bring about what they promised? Why not? Does this reveal something about the difference between the authorities of this world and the authority of God and His kingdom?

- Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the **devil's schemes**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers, against the authorities**, against the **powers of this dark world** and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10–12 NIV84, emphasis mine).

There are different types of authority, and one of Satan's traps is to get people to surrender to the authorities of this dark world—the methods, motives, and principles of imposed law, coercive force, and the mere claims of others (opinions of experts)—rather than standing upon the authority of God. Many today are just as confused about authority as the people were when Jesus walked upon the Earth.

So, again, what is the authority that Jesus wielded? It is an authority that Satan can never wield and, thus, God's enemy does not want you to recognize and begin using this authority.

Satan and his followers can wield the authority of organizational office, whether church or government, and they can wield the authority of position, power, and academic credential, endorsement, and certification—but they can never wield the authority of truth, because the truth always exposes their fraud, their lies, and it leads people back to God.

Nor can Satan and his followers wield the authority of God's design laws, of reality, because his kingdom is false, fantasy, make-believe, artificial, operating on made-up beliefs, ideas, and rules that require external enforcement. Satan is terrified of people learning to think, reason, and discern truth, for the truth sets hearts and minds free from being captured in his artificial construct, his virtual reality world of law and order, where the powerful rule and have authority through threats, force, and punishment.

Jesus spoke with the authority of truth, reality, the methods, principles, and protocols of God, which our Creator built into the fabric of the cosmos when He spoke things into existence. God's laws are the [design protocols](#) for life, not made-up rules like a creature imposes. Jesus spoke with authority because He spoke the truth of how reality functions.

But notice, Mark 1:22 doesn't merely say that Jesus spoke as one with authority. It adds an important, clarifying detail: "**not** as the teachers of the law"!

Consider the implications: "Not as the teachers of the law" refers not to the Roman lawyers teaching Roman law but to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious leaders teaching Jewish religious law.

Now consider what those teachers were teaching. They were teaching the correct Sabbath, the right religious festivals, the correct tithe percentage, and the right list of clean and unclean meats—yet they were not teaching with authority. Why not? Because they were teaching all those correct doctrines in

the false framework of Satan's imposed-law lie and, thereby, teaching that God's law functions like human law and that God is the source of inflicted punishment for sin. Thus, they were teaching a false god who is like Satan in character. This is exactly why Jesus told them in John 8 that while they claimed God and Abraham as their fathers, their true father was Satan (v. 44).

The teachers of the law had the endorsement and authority of the organized church, the authority of their offices, the authority of their theological degrees, and the authority of the written law, but they did not have the authority of truth—because all their doctrines were set in the lie that God's law functions like human law.

Jesus taught with the authority of reality, of the truth of design law, and every single teaching exposed the fallacy of their imposed legal system. (See our blog [The Parables of Jesus—The Overarching Theme.](#))

God's authority rests in truth and love in harmony with His character, design laws, and methods—that is, reality.

Earthly authority rests upon made-up rules, delegated positions, external power, coercion, rules, the office itself, the laws enacted, the degrees attained, and enforcement of those policies, rules, and positions of power.

The Bible teaches that prior to the second coming of Christ, a beastly power will rise to dominate the world, a power that will ultimately have Satan as its leader, and the whole world, except for the elect, will follow after this power. It will wield the authority of its office, of governmental endorsement, of imposed human law, of religious endorsement, academic degree, expert opinion, and professional certification, of might, power, and even miraculous signs and wonders—but it will not speak with the authority of heavenly truth!

For the billions who have never recognized truth as authoritative, who have surrendered their minds to the authority of others, whether church, academic, or political leaders, to tell them what to think, who have submitted to this type of authority—they will be deceived and believe what the authority of the beastly system tells them.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the controversy over whether to pay taxes to Caesar and the question of the resurrection.

Do you have any questions about this?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the greatest commandment to love the Lord with one's entire being and our neighbor as ourselves, and then states in the third paragraph,

- Sometimes people wonder how it is possible to command love. The cultural context of the command in Deuteronomy helps explain. The language comes from ancient treaties between parties, and the term for “love” refers to being faithful to the requirements of the treaty, faithfully fulfilling them. Thus, while it does not rule out the concept of deep affection between parties, it is much more focused on actions that demonstrate such loyalty. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 77).

This is a very tricky paragraph—it is written, in my view, not precisely, but ambiguously, which means it can be understood in such a way to be perfectly true, but it can be understood in a way to be perfectly false.

It is true that genuine godlike love always results in transformation of the individual that is manifested in action, i.e., fruits of the spirit become evident. That is the truth in the paragraph. However, they introduce concepts that may corrupt the truth into a legal lie, the concept of a treaty and fulfilling treaty requirements which could be misconstrued to be legal rather than operational and functional.

The good tree does not bring forth good fruit because it is legally required to do so nor because it is fulfilling a treaty obligation. Neither does a bad tree bring forth bad fruit because of a treaty obligation; wheat produces wheat, weeds produce weeds, sheep are sheep and goats are goats. There is nothing going on legally or in any way that is an external law being enforced or complied with.

Marriages are also considered covenants or treaties and in fact the Bible uses marriage as an example of the relationship Christ wants with His people. Consider the marriage covenant or marriage contract—is marriage as God designed it a legal contract or a functional experiential union—the two become one in heart, mind, and love? If the marriage is approached from a legal point of view, from treaty obligations and dutifully fulfilling the requirements of the agreed upon contract does that result in love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship?

Don't be tricked by the language of a treaty into thinking our love is a legal matter. Love is only legal when we understand the law is design law, then love becomes law compliance in the same way breathing is law compliance—compliance with the laws of health.

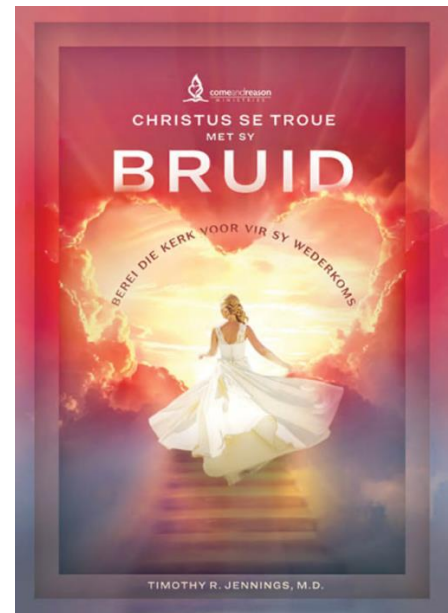
ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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:

The Wedding of Christ to His Bride is now available in Afrikaans. You can download the pdf from our website under the languages tab, or if you are in South Africa and want a print copy email Jacques at southafrica@comeandreason.com

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



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

REVISED SABBATH SCHOOL SCHEDULE:

Date	Speaker	In Person/ Remote	Potluck
September 14	Stanley Baldwin	In Person	No
September 21	Dr. Jennings	In Person	Yes
October 12	Linda Ojala	In Person	No
October 19	Dr. Jennings	In Person	Yes
November 2	Russell Atkins	In Person	No
November 9	Lori Atkins	In Person	Yes
November 16	Dr. Jennings	Remote	No