



2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 10 The Way, the Truth, and the Life

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the second paragraph,

- Interestingly, the famous seven “I AM” statements form a bridge across the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. These are “the bread of life” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51), “the light of the world” (John 8:12, John 9:5), “the door” (John 10:7, 9), “the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14), “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), and “the true vine” (John 15:1, 5). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 80).

What significance do you find in the “I AM” statements?

Jesus is clearly calling Himself God, and referencing back to when God spoke to Moses as the bush,

- Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”
God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” (Exodus 3:13–14 NIV84).

What does this mean? What is God saying in this?

God is self-existent, the originator of all things and the sustainer of all things. Jesus is making it clear that it is through Him that all things were created and through Him that all things hold together.

- He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For **by him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him** and for him. He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**. (Colossians 1:15–17 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he **made the universe**. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things** by his powerful word. (Hebrews 1:1–3, NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is God, full, complete, and infinite. And God is the source of all things and the sustainer of all things. He exists above and outside of space and time as we know it and it is from Him that everything we know and comprehend exist and hold together.

Let's consider the seven I AM's. What do they mean?

- “the bread of life” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
 - Jesus is the source of all sustenance, physical, mental, spiritual, relational. He is the source of truth, love, and freedom. He is the source of all energy, physical matter, all that is nutritious and healthy for every aspect of our being. Every nurturing element we experience ultimately has its source in Jesus.
- “the light of the world” (John 8:12, John 9:5)
 - Jesus is not only the source of all truth and light, but He is the member of the Godhead who left infinity, left the domain of the divine and entered not just our space-time continuum, but He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). He left heaven and came down to Earth and became a real human being in order to bring us the light of heaven, the truth, love, and freedom of God.
 - In him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. The **light** shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it... The true **light** that gives light to every man was coming into the world... No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:4-5, 9, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine).
 - We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. (1 John 5:20 NIV84).
- “the door” (John 10:7, 9)
 - Jesus is the connecting link between Earth and heaven, only in and through Jesus is humanity reconnected and restored to unity with God and heaven. It is only through Jesus that life returns to humanity. Adam and Eve infected humanity with sin, the death causing principle, and Jesus, by becoming a real human not only revealed the truth, He restored the sinless life originating in God back into the species and became the only way, the only door, the only gate, path, road, ladder, or access point back to sinless perfection and reconciliation with God.
- “the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14)
 - Jesus is not only our Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and Healer, He is our Protector, Director, Guide, and Friend, the one who watches over us, guides us, leads us, provides for us just like a shepherd does for his flock.
- “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)
 - Jesus is the resurrection and the life—the cure to death, the victor over death, the one who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life (2 Timothy 1:10; Heb 2:14). Jesus is NOT the victim of death, the legal payment for a death penalty, and He is certainly not the source of death—He is the resurrection from death and the source of life. Satan is the one who holds the power of death—and we must stop putting Jesus and the Godhead in the role of eternal death dealers as the punishment for sin—they are

not the source of death, they are life. Death comes from sin—Life comes from God and is restored into humanity through Jesus.

- “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)
 - Jesus is the full embodiment of God lived out in humanity who revealed the truth that destroys lies and wins to trust and also destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and restored in humanity God’s living law of love, the protocols for life, thus saving humanity from eternal death.
- “the true vine” (John 15:1, 5)
 - Jesus is the second Adam, the new head of humanity, the one who contains life and we can receive that life only as we are grafted into Him through trust.

Did you notice none of who Jesus is or what He accomplished is legal, it is all actual, achievement, reality, the way things exist, operate, and function because our God is the God of reality and who Jesus is and what He accomplished is real, not some fictional legal adjustment.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to John chapter 13 where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples in the upper room.

What are some of the lessons from this story?

I think one of the most important revelations and evidences is in verse 3:

- Jesus knew that the Father had put all things **under his power**, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What do we learn?

Jesus had all power, all things were placed under His power. He is fully God. If we have seen Him we have seen the Father, and what did Jesus do, as our human substitutionary Savior, with all power? He served, He used power to help others, He humbled self and refused to use power to exalt self or protect self. This is the exact opposite of how Satan and the kingdoms of this world use power and function.

Satan and all who unite with him always seek power for self and use power to rise over others and exploit others for their benefit. Throughout all human history every single nation has had a few ruling elites exploiting the masses for the benefit of the elites. This is why God warned the Israelites not to have kings, because the royal class would exploit the people for the benefit of the ruling class.

All the kingdoms of the world operate on this principle of a few exploiting the masses through imposed law and artificial and arbitrary authority over others.

Jesus, the Creator and Sustainer of all, has real power, real authority invested in Him by reality—He is a divine being; He is the Creator and Sustainer, and He uses power to serve, to build up, to protect, to uplift, to heal and restore the people:

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but **made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself** and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore **God exalted him** to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus sacrificed self for the uplifting of His creation and did not seek honor and glory for self and therefore is honored and glorified. Satan, however, sought to advance and exalt himself:

- **You said** in your heart, “**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise** my throne above the stars of God; **I will sit** enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will ascend** above the tops of the clouds; **I will make** myself like the Most High. But you are **brought down** to the grave, to the depths of the pit.” (Isaiah 14:13-15 NIV84, emphasis mine).

These two beings, Jesus Christ and Satan, practice two opposing methods, principles, or laws. Jesus lives out perfectly God’s design law of love, selflessness, and beneficence and as such not only saves others, but is Himself exalted. Whereas, Satan, practices the methods of a creature, imposed rules, selfishness, self-exaltation, artificial, declared, imposed authority attempting to rule over others and not only destroys all who follow him, but ultimately separates himself from life and despite all his efforts to advance himself he only destroys himself. Why? Because his actions break the design protocols life operate and exist upon—not because God functions like Satan and uses external power to punish Satan.

So the first lesson we learn from Jesus is that the more power we receive in God’s kingdom the more we are to use it to help and bless others and as we do this we experience greater blessings ourselves.

Other lessons?

The foot washing also is a symbol, metaphor, teaching tool of our need for ongoing cleansing from sin while we continue to live in this world of sin.

Our initial cleansing from sin is symbolically represented by baptism, in which the person is submerged in water, symbolically representing the reality of the entire being, heart, mind, soul and

spirit being immersed in the cleansing waters of the Holy Spirit who washes away our guilt, shame, fear, dread, doubts, worries, lies and recreates in us love and trust and transforms us by the truth.

But once we have been reborn with a new life of love and trust, we still live in this world of sin and we will be confronted with lies, injuries, wounds, fears, anxieties, resentments, hurts, worries, temptations, frustrations, mistakes and missteps, shortcomings and personal failings, and it is important that this dirt from walking the road of life in this sinful world be washed away. And this is symbolically represented by the foot washing service in which Jesus washes the feet of those who are His. The reality of it is our daily surrendering to Jesus and being cleansed each day by the daily washing of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our humble growth in grace and service to others.

What is the purpose of the ceremony? What is the benefit and are there any dangers?

The idea behind the ceremony is to be a teaching tool by experience, to stimulate or remind people to do introspection, consider the various elements of pride, arrogance, temptation, sin, guilt, fear etc. and ask the Holy Spirit to remove any of this dirt from our hearts and minds, and then to act upon the new motives in service to others. But the ceremony is only that, a ceremony that is to remind us, help us, lead us into actual living lives of godly love and service to others.

The danger is that the ceremony can instead of being understood as a teaching tool, become construed to possess some saving benefit, some merit, making one somehow clean from sin or righteous because they participated in the ceremony. Worse, it can become a litmus test of orthodoxy or righteousness virtue signaling where people become spiritual proud for participating and judge others who don't participate as not being as good, virtuous, or righteous.

So the ceremony can be a blessing if understood and experienced as Jesus intended, but can also be an obstacle if misunderstood and misused. And what makes the difference in how ceremonies like this one are experienced? The law lens one holds as they approach it. If one believes God's law functions like human law, then they are vulnerable to experience the ceremony as a rule, a mandate, a legal requirement or condition for salvation, and to believe that if one doesn't do it then one is not being obedient, they are in fact disobedient and can't be cleansed from sin because they are not complying with the rules Jesus set out.

But if one believes the truth that God's laws are design laws then one realizes this is all ceremony and symbolism designed to lead our minds to experience the reality of cleansing our hearts and minds from sin and live authentic lives of Christian service and they do not experience the ceremony as a legal requirement but an opportunity to remember reality and reaffirm their humble surrender to Christ and rest thankfully in His cleansing power and presence.

But this confusion about ceremony and symbols is not new, consider what God told the Israelites about ceremonies:

- Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of **Sodom**; listen to the law of our God, you people of **Gomorrah**! “The multitude of your **sacrifices**—what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have

more than enough of **burnt offerings**, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; **I have no pleasure** in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this **trampling of my courts**? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your **incense is detestable to me**. New Moons, **Sabbaths** and convocations—**I cannot bear your evil assemblies**. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts **my soul hates**. **They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them**. (Isaiah 1:10–14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Who is God addressing here? The Israelites, but He—God—calls them Sodom and Gomorrah—why? What does this mean? What is God saying? How can the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be Sodom and Gomorrah?

- As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister **Sodom** and her daughters **never did what you and your daughters have done**. ‘Now **this was the sin of your sister Sodom**: She and her daughters were **arrogant, overfed and unconcerned**; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. **You have done more detestable things** than they, and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done. Bear your disgrace, for you have furnished some justification for your sisters. Because **your sins were more vile than theirs**, they appear more righteous than you. So then, be ashamed and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous. (Ezekiel 16:48-52 NIV84, emphasis mine).

How is this possible? What does it mean? How was Israel more vile than Sodom and Gomorrah?

Who do you recognize as being more vile—the single woman who goes into prostitution, or the married woman who while married goes into prostitution while pretending to be faithful to her husband?

Sodom and Gomorrah—were selfish, they did not show love to the strangers who visited them, no hospitality but sought to exploit and abuse others for their own gratification. This is the outworking of fear and selfishness, the exact opposite of God’s living law of love.

But the Sodomites did not profess loyalty to Yahweh. They had not entered into a relationship with God. They had not presented themselves to the world as representatives of the God of heaven. In other words, they were not in the position of the Bride of Christ—they were acting out loyalty to their god, Satan and revealed him accurately.

But the Jews had accepted God’s proposal, they had entered into relationship with God. They had taken the position of the bride, claimed to be representatives of Yahweh—yet they were just as selfish, unconcerned, exploitive, manipulative, deceitful, arrogant, prideful, and sinful as the Sodomites, but it was worse because they claimed they represented God. Thus, they not only were destroying their own souls as the Sodomites were doing, but were making it appear this is how God functions and thus obstructed others from coming into as saving knowledge of God.

- Again the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, **they defiled it** by their conduct and their actions... wherever they went among the nations **they profaned my holy name**, for it was said of them, ‘**These are the LORD’s people...**’ “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which **you have profaned** among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name **you have profaned** among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and **you will be clean**; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you**; I will remove from you your **heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh**. And **I will put my Spirit in you** and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to **keep my laws**. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. **I will save you from all your uncleanness**. (Ezekiel 36:16-29 NIV84, emphasis mine).

They were more vile than Sodom because they did the same selfish, sinful, exploitive living as the Sodomites but they claimed to represent God and thus they profaned the name, character, methods, and principles of God’s kingdom obstructing the plan of salvation rather than promoting it.

Yet God prophesies that He will bring glory to His own name by revealing His grace through them. But this prophecy along with others is, incredibly being used to continue to misrepresent God and lead people into error. I have heard many Christians today focus on this prophecy and some like it about God restoring the Jews to their land as being fulfilled by the nation state of Israel today. But, they ignore entirely the point of the prophecy, it is not about the geography, it is about the character. And the prophecy cannot be fulfilled unless the people are reborn to have Jesus restored into their hearts and minds and they become righteous and reveal the truth about God. That only happens when we rejected the imposed law lies and return to design law function, love for God and others.

So watch the devil do what he has done throughout history, get people to embrace the Bible but teach it through imposed law lenses so that people end up legalistic Christians using the might of human laws and force of arms to do battle with others all under the name of doing good or some mandate from God.

This condemnation of Israel being Sodom is the same condemnation that God gives to the false church, known as the great prostitute in Revelation, the church that claims to represent God and be the bride of Christ, but who instead of internalizing the design law methods of Jesus embraces and takes into their hearts, mind, character, the imposed law lie of Satan, taking Satan’s seed of legalism and imperialism into her heart and teaches a false Christianity that functions like Rome, with an imperial dictator god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as the legal punishment for sin. This is the harlot of Revelation and the true church, the pure bride, is composed of people who have

had their spirit temples, their sanctuary, their hearts and minds washed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit from the lies of Satan and have returned to worshipping God as creator, meaning they have rejected the imposed law lie and embraced the truth that God's laws are design laws and reset all their doctrines into this setting. These are the ones who at this time in history God reveals His name, His character through.

Back to God's condemnation of Israel's rituals and ceremonies: Who gave them all these instructions? God did, then why is God berating them for doing the various ceremonies He told them to do?

Because the ceremonies had become meaningless; the people were doing them without thought. These ceremonies were only teaching tools to engage the mind to think and comprehend reality and because the people were not thinking the ceremonies had become obstructions to understanding reality, obstacles to the truth and thus God hates anything that darkens hearts and minds.

This is the danger in ceremony, it can become an obstruction to actual thinking, which if that happens, obstructs the truth and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. This is why God says just a few verses later:

- Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

God connects reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin. If we refuse to reason, to think, to comprehend, then we are not able to know the truth, we will not be able to discern right from wrong, and we will not be empowered to choose the right and be set free.

So ceremonies can be very helpful and beneficial but only as they engage our thinking to comprehend and appreciate the truth to which they were designed to teach.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention again on Jesus being the way, truth, and life and in that context states the following in the second paragraph,

- John 1:18 says that the only begotten (better translated here as unique) God is the One who has made the Father known. To make known in this text is the Greek verb *exēgeomai*, meaning to *explain, interpret, exposit*. We get the word exegesis from this. It means to bring out the meaning. Thus, Jesus Christ is the link to the Father, the One who explains or interprets the Father to a fallen world. Consequently, He is the way or path to the Father. Without Him, we are limited in our understanding. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 83).

There is no doubt that Jesus is the way to the Father; that He is the Father's thoughts made audible and visible, an exact representation of the Father and that through Him we learn the truth about the Father. So, I never want to do anything to diminish this reality.

However, what is this knowledge that Jesus brings? Is it proper exegesis that is the knowledge? Or if we limit ourselves to exegesis do we fall short of the knowledge that Jesus brings?

Jesus said in John 17:

- Now this is eternal life: that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (John 17:3 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Is Jesus referencing proper exegesis or a different kind of knowledge?

When we think of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was it the tree of proper exegesis?

No, it was the Tree where they would choose to know by experience, by action, by choice what they would know—love, loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity, honor, virtue, trust, and godliness—would they know good in their heart, mind, soul, and character, or would they believe the lies and know evil, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame and all the pain and suffering it brings?

Likewise, life eternal is not proper exegesis, it is returning in heart, mind, character, and experience to knowing God personally. It is knowing God, not knowing about God simply with proper exegetical references.

Of course we want to do proper exegesis, always the truth, but can a person do proper exegesis and still not know God?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Again and again in John's Gospel, truth is connected to Jesus, to His Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Truth is connected with Jesus, the Word (logos), and with light—in contrast to darkness (John 1:1–14, John 3:19–21). And, too, falsehood is connected with the devil and sin (John 8:44–46). Consequently, truth in John is not simply a matter of facts and figures. It does involve such things, but more than this, the idea of truth contains a moral aspect of faithfulness to God and to His will. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 84).

What do you think of the idea that truth contains a moral aspect of faithfulness to God and His will? Yes, if we follow the truth we will live in harmony with God and His will and this will be morally right, no doubt about that.

But what is morality or moral decision-making? It is the aspect of deciding what is right and wrong—and how can we determine what is right and wrong, what defines or determines it?

Is right and wrong determined by whomever is in charge, something is right because God says it is right, and wrong because He says it is wrong—or does God say something is right or wrong because it actually is that way and it is still that way even if God doesn't say so?

For instance, the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* describes a time in eternity past when God found it necessary to verbally declare that Jesus was fully and equally God. Did Jesus only become fully and equally God when and because God said it, or did God say it because Jesus was, in fact, fully and equally God and always had been?

- The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence **He might set forth the true position of His Son** and show the relation He sustained to all created beings... **There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ.** Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made **necessary a statement** of the true position of the Son of God; but **this had been the same from the beginning.** Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 36 and 38, emphasis mine).

So when God declares something to be so, does His declaration make it so, or was it already that way, but because of sin, lies, misunderstanding, confusion God finds it necessary for the sake of His creatures to state clearly the way things are?

And this is true of God's law. God's laws are design law, the protocols reality is built upon, emanating from His being, sustaining all things. God's verbal description of His law does not establish it, He states it because it is the way things are as He created them.

So is the Sabbath holy because God said so, declared it holy, or did God declare it holy because it was holy?

The Bible says God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day—what does that mean? He blessed it by legal declaration, making an imposed law that requires external enforcement through inflicted punishments? If that is what God did, then that would not have been a blessing but a cursing for that is the way Satan's kingdom works, that would have sustain Satan's charges against the government of God rather than refute them. No, God did not make a legal rule, an imposed law. God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath by action, conduct, creation—by reality. The Sabbath was made, created, built into time by the God who controls space and time, whose laws are the basis of the operations of all reality. And the Sabbath was made in the context of a war against God's rulership. And the Sabbath was set apart from the other six days NOT when God used power, but when God stopped using power, when God rested, when God left all His creatures free to think and decide for themselves. The Sabbath was created at the end of creation week of this planet and is invested, made, created, built by the revelation of truth, love, and freedom when God refused to use external power to punish Lucifer, to

force Satan to comply, to operate the way of a creature. Thus the Sabbath is holy, made and created as a sign, evidence, revelation, demonstration of God's character of love. It exists because God exists and God is love and love only exists in freedom. And thus, for the same reasons God found it necessary to declare the true position of Jesus, God also declared the reality of the sacredness, holiness, blessedness of the Sabbath day. But His declaration doesn't make it so. He declares it because it is so.

Here is one historical quote that describes this reality:

There is no such thing as weakening or strengthening the law of Jehovah. As it has been, so it is. It always has been, and always will be, holy, just, and good, complete in itself. It cannot be repealed or changed. To "honor" or "dishonor" it is but the speech of men. (*Prophets and Kings*. p. 625, emphasis mine).

This is not how the laws of creatures work nor how Satan's kingdom operates. Satan and all creatures cannot speak reality into existence, we cannot create from nothing. We cannot establish the laws that reality operate upon, so we make up rules and call them law and enforce our rules by external enforcement. This leads to the belief that law is declared, it is imposed, it occurs when the ruler proclaims it, like the laws of Nebuchadnezzar or the Medes and Persians described in the book of Daniel.

God wants His people to be faithful to Him, like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, but such faithfulness, love, loyalty, cannot be obtained by God by using imposed rules with external enforcement. It only happens by truth, love, and freedom, when all the loyal are fully persuaded in their own minds (Romans 14:5).

Thus God wants us to know the truth, reality, God's character, nature, methods, principles, and the laws upon which all reality function. When we know the truth, we are won to love and trust by the revelation of truth. And we freely surrender in trust and receive a new heart and right spirit with new desires that frees us from lives of fear and selfishness. We are won to loyalty, we are not threatened into behavioral obedience under fear of punishment.

THURSDAY

Scripture and the Truth—what is the purpose of the Bible? What truth does it contain? What are its limits? How can it be misused?

Is it possible for people to be firm Bible believers and be God's enemy?

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

Isn't this sad, people studying Scripture but doing it in such a way they do not benefit from it. Can this happen today? How?

When people believe the lie that God's law functions like human law and then Scripture becomes a code book of deeds to be done and sins to be shunned, a way to shut down thinking, a way to believe without evidence, on claims, and proof texts without actually understanding reality—just like the religious Bible quoting leaders who crucified Jesus.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus' promise to come again—and asks why should we believe Jesus is going to come again?

Why do you believe in the second coming of Christ?

- Because the one who promised is reliable and trustworthy!
- Because the Bible is reliable and trustworthy and not only did Jesus promise it, but Scripture describes the new heaven and earth repeatedly
- Because of the many prophecies and promises already fulfilled in Scripture
- Are there any other specific reasons why you believe?

Are there any signs or evidences that Jesus coming is soon?

1. Scoffers

First of all, you must understand that in the **last days scoffers will come**, scoffing and following their own evil desires. **They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation"** (2 Peter 3:3, 4 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Have we seen this? This sign was fulfilled in the late 18th and early 19th centuries during the Enlightenment, which directly opposed the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening was a religious movement that called people's attention to the nearness of the second coming of Christ. But this movement was countered by the Enlightenment, in which godless scientific views and human reason replaced a belief in God, and godless evolutionism spread throughout the world. In the wake of godless evolution came communism and other godless philosophies that scoff at the idea that Jesus is coming again.

2. Wars and rumors of wars

You will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is not yet** (Matthew 24:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus here refers to the never-ending regional struggles, tribal wars, crusades, and conflicts throughout the Dark and Middle Ages prior to the “end times,” which began in the 19th century with the Enlightenment. The end times come after these wars. Notice the shift from wars to nations and kingdoms rising against each other.

3. World wars, natural disasters, famines, pandemics

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great **earthquakes, famines and pestilences** in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:10, 11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are **the beginning of birth pains** (Matthew 24:7, 8 NIV84, emphasis mine).

After the long history of wars and conflicts through the Dark and Middle Ages, after the Enlightenment and the rise of the scoffers, we enter the 20th century and experience WWI, WWII, nuclear weapons, wars in Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Syria, and terrorism around the world. The 20th century, with its two world wars and other military conflicts, saw more people killed by war than any other century in human history. And in the past fifty years, the world has seen massive famines, the threats of climate change, HIV, SARS, Swine Flu, COVID, and the increasing frequency of earthquakes, hurricanes, destructive storms, and other disasters. But all of this is *the beginning of the birth pains*.

When a woman goes into labor, the time of delivery has begun. In other words, she has entered the “end time” of her pregnancy—but the labor isn’t instantaneous. The pains get more frequent and more intense right up until delivery. We are now in the time of the end, the time of ever-increasing rapidity of events leading up to our Savior’s return!

Understand that no matter what we do, things on Earth are not going to get better until Jesus returns. And the worsening of conditions on Earth, the increasing labor pains as the Earth itself groans under the weight of sin, will be used by the scoffers to incite fear, turn minds away from God, and promote their godless solutions that will solidify power into a global coalition that persecutes the righteous.

4. The promise of an era of peace and safety

Paul also used the metaphor of a woman going into labor when referring to the return of our Lord, adding an interesting detail:

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman**, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to

the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled (1 Thessalonian 5:1–6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

When those who don't know God—the scoffers, the evolutionist, the humanists, those who are desperately seeking to save themselves and “save the earth”—are saying, “This is the way we can have global peace and safety,” sudden destruction will come, as labor pains on a pregnant woman.

They will be unaware that sudden destruction is coming, but why? Because they have given up a belief in God, they no longer trust Scripture, they have accepted the false narrative of godless evolution and secular humanism, and they believe peace and safety can be achieved through the implementation of their worldly agenda. This is the delusion of socialism, of globalism, of the Green movement—that we can save the planet. They claim, “We can create a new world order in which all nations come together to stop climate change, to stop the destruction of the environment, to eliminate poverty—all doable through a new globalism that we can create with new economic realities that will bring in a new era of peace and safety.”

But Jesus continues His warning:

5. Increased divisions in society, loss of faith, persecution of believers in Jesus

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and **you will be hated by all nations because of me**. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will **betray and hate each other**, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:9–11 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Then, at the time of the end, at the time after the scoffers arise, at the time when the labor pains have begun, after the nations have had global wars, after the increase in natural disasters and pestilence, *then* those loyal to Christ will be persecuted, some put to death, and hated of all nations. Then people will betray each other to find security for themselves.

And what do we see in the world today? Christians beheaded in some parts of the world. Christians ridiculed for resisting the new world order, scorned for standing against the restrictions of liberty, hated for holding to faith in Jesus, vilified for voicing the hope in God and warning of Christ's soon return.

6. Love of most will grow cold

Because of the increase of wickedness, the **love of most will grow cold** (Matthew 24:12 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Because of the increase in wickedness—which is all the violations of God's designs, laws, methods, and principles—the love in the hearts of most people grows cold. Because of the denial of God and the rise of the lies of secularism, humanism, socialism, evolutionism; because of the breakdown of

families; because of the assault on our common heritage and community values, love is dying in the human heart.

7. So caught up in entertainment and living, people are unaware

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, **people were eating and drinking, marrying** and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen** until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man** (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Incredible! The people before the Flood knew nothing about what was going to happen despite Noah preaching for 120 years and building a giant boat. How did they not know? Because they were consumed with pleasure-seeking, eating, drinking, and marrying. They were too busy either being entertained or living their lives to be bothered with eternal realities.

This is exactly the state of the world today: It is caught up in increasing consumption of mind-altering substances, or leaving reality behind for their preferred fantasy world of video games, social media activity, TV shows, movies, sports, concerts, amusement parks, or anything else to consume and distract the mind. This is the world today—ignoring the warnings of Jesus, ignoring the signs of the end all around, and living merely for the pleasures of the moment.

8. The good news about God’s kingdom of love lightens the world

But he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And **this gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come** (Matthew 24:13, 14 NIV84, emphasis mine).

But those who stand firm for the truth of God’s kingdom of love will be saved! We will be the ones who take the good news about God and His kingdom of love to the world. We will advance the cause of liberty, for love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. We will stand for truth in a world of falsehood and propaganda. We will glorify God by revealing His character of love in how we treat our neighbors. We will call people back to the truth of our Creator by teaching people God’s design laws—the laws our Creator built reality to operate upon, demonstrating that harmony with God and His design laws are the only way to health and happiness.

The truth about God and His kingdom of love, in the face of a world consumed with greed and selfishness, is the final message to lighten the world for Christ’s return. It is the final message of mercy, the message of hope, the message of God’s true character of love that Jesus revealed. It is the message that Satan hates because God’s love destroys the fear Satan works so hard to incite.

So, as you see the signs all around us, don’t let fear rule your heart; instead,

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because **your redemption is drawing near**” (Luke 21:28 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Other reasons to believe in the nearness of Christ’s return?