



## 2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 11 The Father, the Son, and the Spirit

by Tim Jennings

### SUNDAY

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Read the second and third paragraphs,

- Unfortunately, Lucifer brought sin into this world. Sin is, among other things, a disruption of our relationship with God. It misrepresents who God is. Thus, Jesus took upon Himself our human nature in order to restore knowledge of God and to bring salvation to humanity.

While here, Jesus submitted His life to the Father, living according to His guidance. He said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30, NKJV). “The Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John 10:38, NKJV). “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me” (John 10:37, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 89).

Do you believe Jesus and the Father are one? Are they one only in the way that Jesus prayed for Him and His followers to be one or are they one in a different way?

Do we believe that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father? Do we believe that Jesus is more than a human being but also God?

This is a critical truth and when understood dispels much of the confusion and lies that are circulating about God.

Have you noticed an ongoing attack on the Godhead by, in my experience, very well-meaning and good-hearted people who only want to be true to Scripture—and the attack I am speaking of is the denial of the three members of the Godhead, the move to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit and to relegate Jesus to something less than the Father.

These arguments never are based in reality—how reality functions, but always based in philosophy, theory, proclamations, claims, assertions, textual criticism, and a refusal to integrate all the evidence God has provided. To undermine the full divinity of Jesus also undercuts God’s plan to win the Great Controversy.

When it comes to matters of theology the Bible is always our first and primary source of evidence and truth. So, let’s start with the Bible and its evidence and then consider how reality functions and the implications in the Great Controversy over what conclusion we draw.

What Bible evidence would you offer to someone who rejects that Jesus is fully and equally God in all aspects with the Father?

- **In the beginning** was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him... The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen **his glory, the glory of the One and Only**, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only**, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-3, 10, 14, 18, emphasis mine).

Who was the Word that became flesh? Jesus, and Jesus was with God from the beginning and Jesus was God and Jesus is the revelation of the glory of God.

- For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9 NIV84).

It was through Jesus that all things were made:

- For by **him [Jesus] 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 1:16,17, emphasis mine).

Jesus is fully God, Creator, from whom all reality was Created and who existed from the beginning with the Father.

Jesus claims the name of God:

- "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58).
- "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

The Apostles recognized Jesus as God:

- Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).
- We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. **He is the true God and eternal life**. (1John 5:20, emphasis mine).

And we are only to worship God:

- Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:8 NIV84 quoting Deuteronomy 6:13)

- At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! (Revelation 19:10 NIV84).

Did Jesus reject worship when Thomas worshiped Him?

And angels worship Jesus:

- And again, when God brings his **firstborn** into the world, he says, “Let all God’s **angels worship him.**” (Hebrews 1:6 NIV84, emphasis mine)

How do we deal with the question of Jesus being first born if some suggest He is a divine being but is the offspring of the Father, not eternally co-existent with the Father?

Who was Abraham’s firstborn son, the one who inherited the promises of God? Isaac, but who was the son naturally born first to Abraham—it was Ishmael. So in the Bible firstborn does not mean simply biological descent but means the one who is the inheritor of the blessings, the one who is the head of the family. And Jesus is the firstborn over all Creation, the one through whom God’s promises, power, blessings flow to all creation.

- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the **government will be on his shoulders.** And he will be called Wonderful **Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,** Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Who is the child that was born? Jesus, who is fully and completely God. And how can God’s heavenly eternal government be on His shoulders unless He is Creator, the originator of the design laws and the one in whom all things hold together?

So, we have many Bible texts that testify to the divinity of Jesus, now let’s talk about reality and how it functions.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is fully God and equal with the Father that Jesus is the exact representation of the Father, that the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily; if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father. So, the first reality-based understanding is to realize that if Jesus is not fully God then these texts are not true.

- If Jesus were an angel then His life tells us something about angels, not about God.
- If Jesus were an angel, then what we learn about God is that He is willing to sacrifice angels but not Himself.
- If Jesus is a demi-god, subordinate god, later to the stage god, then we learn something about the demi-god, that the subordinate god is willing to sacrifice self but the Father is not.

We can all declare things about someone we know, but we cannot live the life of someone we know. The only way that if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, is if Jesus is fully and equally God. Any diminishment in the full divinity of Jesus undermines the plan of salvation and sustains one of Satan's charges that God is not truly love, not truly willing to sacrifice for His creation.

Consider these historical quotes:

- By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. (The Desire of Ages p. 19).
- Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had **accused God** of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, **while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice**. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the **Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make**; for “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death. (The Great Controversy p. 502, emphasis mine).

If Jesus is not fully God then we do not learn that God is self-sacrificial, but that He is willing to sacrifice others to protect self.

Some might argue that I am using philosophy—not at all—it is not philosophical, it is again how reality works. We, in reality, learn of the person who is acting by observing and interacting with that person. Thus, we learn of God through the life of Jesus only if Jesus is in fact God. We can learn of God healing and restoring power, His kindness, love, grace, and mercy, methods and principles in the lives of people who have accepted God, but we are learning through their experience, their perspective, their understanding, their words, acts, and deeds, all of which filter and impact the light of heaven and thus we are not seeing God in action as another individuality is acting, is choosing. It is only from God Himself that we get pure unadulterated truth lived out in action.

The Bible gives all kinds of evidence about God. Historical accounts of God interacting with people, descriptions of God by His penmen, evidences of His words and declarations as recorded by the prophets, but ultimately the purest, truest revelation and evidence is in the life of Jesus who is God in humanity.

Jesus, who is God in humanity, taught there was a third member of the Godhead called the Comforter, Counselor, or Spirit:

- “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Counselor** to be with you forever—the **Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept

**him**, because it neither sees **him** nor knows **him**. But you know **him**, for **he** lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17, emphasis mine)

Notice Jesus did not say what many deniers of the Trinity say, that God would send His own presence. Jesus did NOT say: “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will come to you to be with you forever—His spiritual presence will be with you. The world cannot accept the Father’s spiritual presence, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

Jesus did say,

- “But the **Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father** will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26, emphasis mine)
- “When the **Counselor** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the **Spirit** of truth who goes out from the Father, **he** will testify about me.” (John 15:26, emphasis mine)

The Old Testament teaches God is a plurality, not a singularity:

- Then God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, in **our** likeness...” (Genesis 1:26, emphasis mine)

Even the text quoted by Jews and Muslims that “God is one” teaches a plurality, not a singularity:

- “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4).
  - Notice the passage in English uses “Lord” and “God”. The reading of this passage with the Hebrew names for “Lord” and “God” would go like this: “Hear, O Israel: *Yahweh* our *Elohim*, *Yahweh* is One.”
  - What is interesting is that the word *Elohim* in Hebrew is plural and is the same word used for God in Genesis 1:26. Thus an accurate English reading might go like this: “The One is more than One yet is One”
  - In Hebrew there are two words for “one,” *Yacheed* and *Echad*. The first indicates singular unity as in one and only, the second indicates compound unity, as the oneness of two or more. In this text *Echad* is used along with the plural name of God *Elohim* indicating the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament also provides texts in which all members of the Godhead are referenced:

- And now the Sovereign Lord [Father] has sent me [Son], with his Spirit [Holy Spirit]. This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 48:16,17).

- “Here is my [Father] servant [Son], whom I [Father] uphold, my [Father] chosen one [Son] in whom I [Father] delight; I [Father] will put my Spirit [Holy Spirit] on him [Son] and he [Son] will bring justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)

The Old Testament teaches the close love relationship between them:

- “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” (Zechariah 13:7 KJV)
  - The Man who is my friend NCV
  - The Man who is close to me NIV
- “Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.” (Proverbs 8:30 NIV84).

So, the Bible gives strong evidence for the plurality of our One God, supporting the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are a perfect unity of three separate individualities. But, for me all the above evidence is not what is most compelling. The most compelling evidence for me that God exists in plurality rather than singularity is the nature and character of God Himself—how reality functions.

The Bible says, “God is love.” (1John 4:8). Further the Bible teaches that this love is “not self seeking.” (1Corinthians 13:5). Love is outward moving, other-centered. Therefore, God, being love, could not be love in isolation because love requires an object to pour itself upon. Love is other-centered! God’s nature and character of love, rightly understood, is the most powerful argument for the plurality of God and we see this in the Old Testament texts above as the Father is delighting in the Son and the Son rejoicing in the Father and the Spirit loving them both.

Some might again argue that I am making a philosophical argument—no, again, I am observing how reality functions. Love **cannot** function or exist in isolation as a singularity. If we say there was a time when God the Father existed alone before Jesus then at that time in eternity past God is no longer love, but something else. And the minimum number for true other-centered, selfless, love is three. With two you can get narcissistic reinforcement, but three requires selfless sacrifice for the benefit of the others.

And we see this all through the Bible Jesus never seeks glory for self but always seeks to uplift the Father, the Father is always promoting and exalting and glorifying Jesus, the Holy Spirit is uplifting and advancing both the Father and the Son.

Therefore, when God created us in His image He created “them male and female” and the “two shall become one” united in a triune relationship – husband, wife and God indwelling their hearts via His Spirit! And they were told to be fruitful and multiple in the world before they sinned. Why? So they could grow and develop in true other-centered godly love, which requires more than just the two of them. As they have children and seek to give of self for their children, they function in love, thus God creates other intelligences and gives of Himself for them.

Those who seek to destroy the truth about the plurality of the Godhead undermine the truth about God's character of love whether they intend to or not, and in so doing, place an obstacle to the only healing remedy for sin: God's "perfect love [that] casts out all fear." As we see the truth about God as revealed in Jesus, the lies about Him are removed and we are won to trust and in that trust He pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and we are transformed to be like Him!

Amongst the founders of the SDA church there was debate regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Some saw Christ as the offspring of God and, as such, not a "created" being, but was of the same "substance" as the Father, yet still not equal to the Father for the Son arose from the Father. This idea goes back millennia and is sometimes referred to as Arian theology.

But, Ellen G. White opposed this theology and came out strongly in favor of the Bible position above. Here are a few of her quotes:

- Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, **was one with the eternal Father,--one in nature, in character, in purpose,**--the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6). His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34, emphasis mine).
- The Jews had never before heard such words from human lips, and a convicting influence attended them; for it seemed that divinity flashed through humanity as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that **he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes.** (The Signs of the Times, Nov. 27, 1893, p. 54, emphasis mine).
- Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged Sovereign of heaven, **one in power and authority with the Father.** (The Great Controversy, p. 495).
- "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). It is not physical life that is here specified, **but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God.** The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. **But the life of Christ was unborrowed.** No one can take this life from Him. "I lay it down of myself" (John 10: 18), He said. **In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived.** This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This is the open fountain of life for the world. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p 296, emphasis mine).
- The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through **the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead,** who would come with no modified energy, but in the **fullness of divine power.** It is **the Spirit**

**that makes effectual** what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. (The Desire of Ages 671, emphasis mine).

- **There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**--those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ. (Evangelism, p. 615, emphasis mine).

Some Protestants attack the Trinity truth because they have been tricked into believing this is a doctrine originated by the Roman church and that Protestants should therefore reject it as not being in the Bible. This is often put forth with the argument that the word “trinity” cannot be found in the Bible, or the challenge, “Show me from the Bible a text with the word trinity in it.”

But this would be like saying that we don’t believe in the Investigative Judgment because we cannot find that term in the Bible. Or that words like atonement, justification, or sanctification are translated words, not Greek or Hebrew words and therefore not in the original Bible therefore we should not believe these ideas.

The term one uses to describe the Godhead is NOT what matters, what matters is the truth about God that we understand and believe regardless of what words we choose when we talk about it. It is what those words mean that matter.

Others object to the Trinity because the Bible appears to represent Jesus as subordinate to the Father and they wonder what this means if not that Jesus was a later addition, a being born or begotten from the Father.

The idea that Jesus is “subservient” to the Father is a misunderstanding that results from not appreciating God’s character and the way His government works. In God’s economy,

- “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35).
- “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” (Matthew 20:16).

God’s kingdom is the kingdom of love and love gives for the wellbeing of others. Thus Jesus is “exalted” because Jesus surrendered all and gave all for others. This exaltation is not “conferred” by the Father to the Son, but a result of the accomplishment of the Son in perfectly revealing and carrying out the Trinity’s character and purpose.

- 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).

Another way to understand it, (recognizing of course that our finite minds are trying to probe the Infinite God so we will inevitably come up short of complete understanding), is that the Godhead voluntarily assumed different roles or functions for the accomplishments of Their joint purposes (a loving way all share together in giving for Their creation). Any of the three could have assumed any of the functions. We would err in concluding that when one of the three assumes a function that He was not capable of functioning in the role of the others.

As I understand their chosen roles, the Father acts as the source of all. The Son is the medium, mediator, advocate, conduit, agent through which the Father reveals Himself or acts particularly in linear space time—the member of infinity who leaves infinity and interacts with the creation on the plane of creation. And the Holy Spirit is the actualizer or applier of what the Father and Son have achieved. Thus God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2Corinthians 5:19). Jesus’ work on Earth was the acting out of the Father’s will. As Jesus said, not His will but the Father’s be done. His completed mission and victory over sin are applied to the lives of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit. In creation we have the Father as the source, the Son as the architect, designer, and builder and the Spirit as the actualizer or implementer of Their design.

So, with this understanding we realize what Christ meant when He said, “I do nothing of myself.” Christ takes from the Father to fulfill all the Father’s purposes for His universe. In this sense we can see Christ turning to the Father, not to persuade the Father to be kind, but to receive the fullness of the Father’s purpose of love for His creation and carry that purpose out in meaningful action!

We also see throughout Scripture that the Son never seeks glory for self but constantly seeks to bring glory to the Father and the Father is constantly uplifting the Son and the Spirit is giving witness to the glory of both Father and Son. In other words, the Godhead functions in perfect other-centered love.

## MONDAY

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The lesson focuses on God's actions after Adam's sin, how sin severed our relationship with God and God's plan to restore that relationship:

- To accomplish the restoration of this relationship, one Member of the Godhead became human. Thus, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, manifesting the glory of God (John 1:14–18). As a result, humanity has received His fullness and grace. This is what Jesus came to share, to declare the glory of God so that the relationship broken by sin might be restored, at least to all who were willing to accept by faith what has been offered them in Christ Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 90).

Why is the truth that Jesus is fully God essential for not only our salvation, but in order to eliminate sin from the universe?

Consider this position, taken by one of the Adventist Reformers after the 1888 GC in which the message about design law was rejected and leadership officially accepted the imposed law view with its false penal legal solution to the sin problem. It was written by EGW, do you agree and does it give insight as to why Jesus must be fully God?

- **Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God.** He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the **erroneous ideas** Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, **in regard to the character of God, might be removed.** We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live; but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold **the Lord our Father in the person of his Son.** Christ came in the robe of the flesh, with his glory subdued in humanity, that lost man might communicate with him and live. Through Christ we may comprehend something of him who is glorious in holiness. Jesus is the mystic ladder by which we may mount to behold the glory of the infinite God. By faith we behold Christ standing between humanity and divinity, connecting God and man, and earth and heaven. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 5, emphasis mine). **[If Jesus is not fully God then we are not learning of God in the life of Jesus and the lies about God cannot be removed by the actions of a being other than God.]**

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with power and intelligence, and could break away from the captivity in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that **men might lose the true views of God's character**, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused truth of vital importance to be so **mingled with error** that it had lost its significance. **The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** **[How? By asserting that God's law is not design law, not the protocols reality is built to operate upon, but made up rules that functions like human**

law, imposed rules requiring external authority.] He was pictured as **one who could take pleasure in the sufferings** of his creatures. The **very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God.** [Again by getting us to believe God's law functions like human law we believe God functions like a creature, using power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking and thus Satan replaces the truth about God with his own characteristics] Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. **Angels could not fully portray the character of God,** but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.** That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 6, emphasis mine). [Again if Jesus is anything less than God He could not fulfill the mission of the Godhead and eliminate sin and rebellion from the universe because could not reveal the truth about God necessary to destroy the lies that caused the distrust and rebellion. It is how reality works.]

**The Father was revealed in Christ** as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. [Isaiah 9:6 for unto us a child is born His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, a Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.] Said Christ, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The love of Jesus, expressed for the fallen race in his life of self-denial and sufferings, **is the manifestation of the Father's love** for a sinful, fallen world. Christ endured shame and grief and death for those who despised his love and trampled upon his mercy... (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 7, emphasis mine).

Man was God's workmanship, made after his image, endowed with talents, and fitted for a high destiny. **But Satan has worked to obliterate the divine image, and to impress his own image instead of the image of God in man's nature.** ["The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8 NIV84). Jesus condescended to humble himself, to take human nature, and by uniting divinity with humanity, he proposed to elevate man in the scale of moral value. All heaven was poured out in the gift of God's dear Son... The redemption of man is a wonderful theme, and the love manifested to the fallen race through the plan of salvation, can be estimated only by the cross of Calvary. The depth of this even angels cannot sound. **That God could consent to become flesh,** and dwell among fallen beings, to lift them up from their helplessness and despair, is an unfathomed mystery. He whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, whose dominion endureth throughout all generations, made himself to be sin for us that he might lift up all that are bowed down, and give life to those who are ready to perish. (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 8, emphasis mine).

Oh, that men might open their minds to know God as he is revealed in his Son!... Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented. **Christ exalted the character of God,** attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of **the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and**

**the matchless perfections of the Father.** In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,**—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that **the character of the Father was made manifest to men.** (Signs of the Times January 20, 1890, par. 9, emphasis mine).

Why is it a requirement for our salvation that Jesus is fully and completely God and any other lesser being that somehow lived a sinless life and died on the cross would fail to be able to provide salvation?

What is the cause of sin in heaven and what is the cause of sin on Earth?

Satan is the father of lies and his foundational lies are about God, and thus we must have the truth of God restored in order to have the lies removed and be won back to trust in God:

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

Lies believed break the circle of love and trust and cause fear and selfishness—this is the problem that sin causes. And the only way to remedy this is to reveal the truth about God that restores trust.

And what was Satan’s mode, method, point of attack to undermine God’s character and get people to believe God is actually like him, severe, revengeful, unforgiving, and arbitrary, and being who is the source of pain, suffering and death and who requires appeasement, something done to assuage His anger and wrath lest He use divine power to torture and kill?

He misrepresented God’s law as functioning like human law. And wherever and whenever any being, angel or human, believes that God’s law functions like human law, imposed rules, their minds are trapped into lies about God, and they falsely believe that justice is using external power to inflict punishment on law breakers. Thus, they worship a creature instead of the Creator and misrepresent God as being like Satan.

This is what Rome did to Christianity. When Constantine converted he used the power of the state to make Christianity the legal religion and passed all kinds of laws enforcing Christian worship. And the Roman bishop became the head of the western Roman empire when Constantine moved the capital to the Constantinople, now Istanbul. And the Roman bishop, as a Roman governor of the empire, used the power of the state to enforce Christian law. When the Roman empire fell, the Roman church continued to function and continued to function with its cannon law, Roman hierarchical structure with a Caesar-like leader who is elected by the senate, (college of cardinals); and the church and world, in

this legal system of imposed law with a false god that is the source of inflicted pain and suffering for sin, went into the Dark Ages.

The Reformation is a call to leave the Romanization of Christianity, to return to worshiping God as Creator, stop seeing Him as a dictator, and this requires we rejected the imposed law view of things and return to understanding that all of God's laws are design laws.

People get confused because of the Ten Commandments and instructions given to Moses. They think that the Ten Commandments and the other Levitical laws are evidence that God's law does function like human law. This was the great schism in Adventism in the 1888 GC where our church was blessed with the message of design law, that was embraced and promoted by the Reformers Waggoner, Jones, and EGW, but was rejected the legalists in leadership.

Jones, Waggoner, and White taught that the various written laws including the Ten Commandments were all added and are not eternal. They were added specifically for the need of sinful human beings as helpful guides, diagnostic tools, and protective hedges until the people could mature in love and trust and experience the restoration of God's eternal living law written upon hearts and minds.

This is the final message of mercy to go to the world—the truth about God's character of love, worshiping God as Creator, rejecting Satan's view of God as dictator and source of death. And we only are able to do this when we rejected the Roman law lie with all its baggage and distortions.

## **TUESDAY**

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Read last paragraph,

- Jesus' claims about His relationship to the Father are astonishing. He asserts that all of His teachings are the teachings of the Father; that all He says He had personally heard from the Father; that belief in Him is the same as belief in the Father; that both His very words and His works are all of the Father; and that He and the Father are united in loving and working for the salvation of humanity. What a powerful testimony to the closeness of Jesus to His Father in heaven! (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 91).

This is so well said and absolutely true, God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus bodily. Jesus said if we have seen Him we have seen the Father.

Can you think of any doctrines taught within Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, that deny this and teach the opposite, that there is a difference between the two?

Jesus as our mediator in heaven pleading His blood to the Father to pay for our sin to propitiate the Father's wrath, to assuage the Father's anger, to do something to the Father because if Jesus doesn't do this then the Father would lash out in anger and hurt us. In other words, we are kept safe only by the

Jesus working upon the Father. In the Roman church they also have Mary and the saints up there pleading to either Jesus or the Father for blessings.

I remember one Catholic colleague describing why he valued the ministry of Mary in heaven so much. He said, no one can influence a son more than his mother and when he prays to Mary, Mary goes to Jesus and influences Jesus to grant the blessing that he is praying for.

Consider what such a teaching says about God. Many Protestants do the same thing when they teach Jesus pleads with the Father to get the Father's blessings. But this is not what the Bible teaches:

- What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will **he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things**? Who will bring any charge against those whom **God has chosen**? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and **is also interceding** for us. (Romans 8:31-35 NIV84, emphasis mine).

It is only by the truth, the truth that Jesus is fully and completely God, the truth that God's laws are design laws, that we are able to free our minds from the lies about God and see Him as Jesus revealed Him to be. And this truth destroys the lies and restores us to trust. In trust we open our hearts and experience the indwelling Holy Spirit who takes the victory of Jesus and reproduces it in us so that it is no longer I that live, but Jesus lives in us.

And this is why some attack the divinity of the Holy Spirit, they want to undermine the application of Christ's victory in people. Understand, Jesus, in His own personhood became a real human being, descended from Adam and overcame sin and restored the species human to unity with God. In the individual person of Jesus the species human was saved, the truth of God was revealed. If no other individual human being were saved, because Jesus became a real human being and overcame as our substitutionary Savior, the species was saved. There will always be a sinless human being because Jesus is fully human.

We are not individually saved because of the historical fact of what Jesus did. We are individually saved when we receive, participate, partake, the victory of Jesus into our own hearts and minds, as Peter wrote, when we partake of the divine nature through faith or trust. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to not only bring truth and love to our hearts to convict us of sin and enlighten us to God's love and Jesus as our Savior. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to infuse us with the life, the spirit, the animating motivating energy of Jesus Christ—to reproduce in us the living law of love that compels us and enables us to live lives of love rather than fear and selfishness.

And the lesson quotes from the book *The Desire of Ages* in **WEDNESDAY's** lesson:

- “In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit

from His Father **for the exaltation of His people**. The Spirit was to be given as a **regenerating agent**, and **without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail**. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in **the fullness of divine power**.” (The Desire of Ages, p. 671, emphasis mine).

The Holy Spirit is the sealing presence and power of God:

- And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13 NIV84).
- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 NIV84).

The saved in Revelations are sealed with a seal on their foreheads—how is that seal connected to the Holy Spirit?

Consider this description of the sealing by EGW, and see if it gives insight into the seal of God and how the Holy Spirit is the seal, the sealing agent?

- “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a **settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved**—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already.” (EGW, The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1161, emphasis mine).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love. The Holy Spirit is the source of truth, enlightening our minds, bringing conviction, but leaving us free. If we choose to submit to the Holy Spirit and are converted we believe the truth, the lies are displaced, and we become settled into the truth so that we cannot be moved. That is being settled intellectually or sealed intellectually—this is the cleansing or sealing of our minds, our thoughts, and mental processes, morals, values. But the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of love, the animating, motivating, energy of altruism, beneficence, self-sacrificial service, love for God and others. When we are won to trust and open our hearts God pours His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). We not only experience how much God loves us, but we have the Spirit of love operating within inspiring, motivating, and compelling us with love. As we choose love we are cleansed from fear and selfishness, perfect love casts out the fear and we are spiritually settled or sealed that we would rather die than exploit others. We become partakers of the divine nature and Christ lives in us via the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus the sealing is only possible by the work of the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

This is why Satan attacks the Trinity because he wants to misrepresent the divine character undermining trust, cause confusion about God’s methods, principles, and design laws. And interfere with the application of Christ’s victory in the hearts and minds of sinners, so even if they rightly believe that Jesus is Savior, they don’t open their hearts in trust to experience the indwelling Spirit that

seals them, but instead traps them in a false legal theology in which they claim legal payment to an offended god.

## **THURSDAY**

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Read the fourth paragraph, which are quotes from Jesus' prayer in John 17:

- “ ‘This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God’ ” (John 17:3, NKJV), not God, whoever we think He is. “ ‘I have made your name known to those whom you gave me, . . . and they have kept your word . . . and know in truth that I came from you’ ” (John 17:6, 8, NRSV). “ ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ ” (John 17:17, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 93).

What does this mean?

Do we see again why it is a requirement that Jesus is fully God?