



2024 4Q Themes in the Gospel of John Lesson 13 Epilogue: Knowing Jesus and His Word

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

The title for this week's lesson is, **Knowing Jesus and His Word**, what does this mean to you?

Is there a difference between knowing Jesus and His Word and knowing the Bible, or knowing theology, or knowing the doctrines of the church?

Read our memory verse:

- You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39 NKJV).

Was the problem these religious leaders had that they were not Bible students, that they had given up reading the Bible for novels or other entertainment?

If they were faithful Bible students, and let's add to that, not only faithful Bible students but faithful church attenders and also faithful tithe payers, if they were faithful in all of this, what was their problem?

Is it still possible today that there are people who read the Bible, diligently searching the Scriptures, are faithful church attenders, and faithful tithe payers but fail to know Jesus and His Word?

- “Not everyone who says **to me**, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. Many will say **to me** on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in **your name**, and in **your name** drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you**. Away from me, you **evildoers!**’ (Matthew 7:21–23 NIV84, emphasis mine).

How is this possible? How is it possible for people to be faithful students of the Bible, to claim Jesus as their Savior, to work actively and faithfully in ministry and be an evildoer?

Because their faith, their belief, their commitment, their Bible reading is processed through lies, they have rejected the truth of who Jesus is and have preferred a false Christ in his place. They reject the truth of God as Creator and prefer a god who is like them in character, who makes up rules and uses power to punish rule-breakers. Thus they use the words of Jesus but the methods and character of Satan.

Read first paragraph,

- John’s Gospel, like Mark’s, ends with a meeting in Galilee. This final lesson on John deals with that meeting but integrates it with the theme of how we know Jesus and the Word of God—a concept that runs through the fourth Gospel. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104).

Is the “Word of God” words?

Is there power in the words?

Do we need to have the right words in order to experience the power of God or to know God?

Do we need to pray with the right words, not in the name of Jesus, but of Joshua, well not Joshua, but Yashua?

If we think the power is in the words do we enter into superstition, into witchcraft, and sorcery seeking the right incantation?

Is the power in the words spoken, or in the *meaning* of the words?

When Paul wrote,

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

Was he referring to the word “gospel” that there is power in the word or in the idea, the truth, the meaning of what that word “gospel” is intended to convey?

And what if we use the word gospel but understand it to mean something other than what Paul intended, does it still contain the power of God?

When we consider the Bible, the inspired Word of God—is the power in the words, or the truths, the meaning that originate in and reconnect us to God, who is the source of all truth and power?

So if Satan can get us to use the same words but change the meaning of the words he can introduce lies into our minds that cut us off from God. This is what sorcery is all about. Sorcerers are people who work to gain power over people’s minds through a variety of means, but the goal is the same, to gain power over minds. In ancient times they used various hallucinogens, the proverbial witches brew, to make people more susceptible to mind control, in our day such chemicals can be used, but more often mind control is pursued through propaganda, which includes changing the meaning of words to cause confusion and interfere with people being able to tell what is real from fantasy in order to interfere with people being able to discern truth from lies, good from evil.

Do we believe the words of the Bible are inspired or the prophets who wrote the Bible were inspired with truth and they chose the words to convey those truths and thus it is the ideas, the meaning, the truths in the Bible that are inspired not the words?

Do we recognize words are not reality, they are symbols of communication that convey concepts—and the concepts conveyed may be true or false. Thus the power again is not in the words, but the meaning being conveyed.

For instance when you see the letters TREE you are not seeing a plant, a tree, you are seeing a symbolic representation of a tree. You can not get life sustaining nutritious by reading the words, apple, walnuts, and avocados. The words are not the reality and do not provide any life-giving power. In order to gain the energy, nutrition, and life from the food one must actually eat it, take it into their body.

Likewise, the words truth, love, righteousness, God, Jesus, do not contain any life-giving power they are symbolic representations of reality—but in order to benefit one must actually partake of the reality to which those words are representing.

Imagine the physical starvation, suffering, and death that you could cause if you got people to believe that health came from getting together to read about food, and sing songs about food, but they don't actually eat food. Or, if they believe that they must eat something but you get them to replace real fruit with wax fruit.

This was the problem with the Jews in Christ's day—they read the words, but never understood the meaning and replaced the true meaning with falsehoods, thus they took into their minds and hearts the words of Scripture but none of its power because they took in lies—false meanings, the words had their true meaning replaced with a lie.

This has happened in Christianity when Christians replace the truth of God's law being design law with the lie that God's law functions like human law. We read the words of Scripture but fail to understand the truth those words are intended to convey, and we end up with a form of godliness without power—until we return to accept and ingest the true meaning—then we experience the power of God; the truth really does set us free!

We do not believe there is power in syllables or words, but in the truth, in the meaning, and thus it is okay to replace Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew words with English, German, French and other language words as long as one brings the most accurate meaning across. It is the truth that is inspired and which contains the power, not the words.

Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- Merely to hear or to **read the word** is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures **must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him.** By earnest

attention and **prayerful** thought he **must learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 59, emphasis mine).

- The Bible is written by inspired men, **but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God.** But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 21, emphasis mine).
- **It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired.** Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is **imbued with thoughts. But the words and thoughts receive the impress of the individual mind.** The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God. (Selected Messages vol. 1, p. 21, emphasis mine).

So what is the Word of God? First and foremost it is Jesus—Jesus is the Word made flesh—He is God and from Him truth originates and emanates. And the Bible contains divine truth. These divinely inspired truths were revealed to the Bible writers and the writers chose the words and expressions to convey the truths. If we want to know the Word of God we must go beyond the syllables to find the divine truths, the reality-based meaning contained within the writings, within the stories and events recorded.

And to do that we must incorporate and integrate all the truth God reveals to us and God reveals truth in Scripture—so we must always include Scripture. But the Scripture teaches God reveals truth in two other threads, two other modes, means, or places:

- Science and nature—the laws the cosmos, this planet, and life is built upon, the design laws. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:20 God's divine nature is revealed in what He has made, or the psalmist, the heavens declare the glory of God.
- Experience—taste and see that the Lord is good.

The problem with much of modern Christianity is that it has divorced the Bible from reality, from nature and God's design laws built into reality, and from our experiences—the way reality actually works. And this results in reading the Bible in a fantastical light, through the light of Roman law, imposed law, imperialism, and many teach a false punishing god who is like Satan in character.

Read second and third paragraph,

- Though they were with Jesus more than three years, the disciples were still greatly unprepared for the Crucifixion and Resurrection, even though Jesus had told them again and again what would happen. Unfortunately, they didn't take Him at His word. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104).

Does this tempt us to look back at them and feel sadness for them, “Poor disciples, why couldn’t they just take Jesus at His word?”

But do we apply it to ourselves? Are we ready for the final events that are about to come upon the world? Are we taking Jesus at His word or are we falling into similar traps the disciples did?

What does it mean “They didn’t take Him at His word.”?

What does it mean to take someone at their word?

Is the lesson suggesting that if Jesus said it, we should believe it, not doubt it, and not question it?

Hmmm....

When Jesus came to Abraham and told him that He was going to destroy Sodom, did Abraham simply take Him at His word—“God has said it, I believe it, that settles it.” Or did Abraham start questioning—humbly and respectfully to be sure, but did he question? And Abraham is called a friend of God. What about Moses when God told Him He was going to wipe out the people and start over? And also later when God told Moses he could not go into the promised land, did Moses simply say “—“God has said it, I believe it, that settles it.” Or did Moses ask questions, and Moses is called a friend of God.

Does God want us to simply hear the words He has spoken and do them, or to ask questions, to seek to clarify, to comprehend the true meaning?

Let’s check a little church history about the problem of taking Jesus at His word.

In 831 Frankish abbot Paschasius Radbertus released a paper entitled *De corpore et sanguine Christi* (Concerning Christ’s Body and Blood). According to former Secretary of Education and historian William Bennett from his book, *Tried by Fire: The Story of Christianity’s First Thousand Years*:

“Radbertus concluded that since God is truth and cannot lie, Jesus’ declaration that the elements of the bread and wine used in communion were his body and blood and must be taken literally. For Radbertus, the consecration of the elements mystically transformed the bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ.” (Bennett, William, *Tried By Fire: The Story of Christianity’s First Thousand Years*. Nelson Books, Nashville, TN, 2016).

And from this paper came the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, that when a person takes the communion wafer and swallows it, it mystically, magically, transforms into the actual flesh of Jesus.

For over 800 years, no one, Apostle, prophet, pope, or peasant believed such an idea, but in the mid 9th century this idea came forward, based on what? On an abbot who took Jesus at His word, literally taking the words spoken concretely and failing to understand the true meaning conveyed in the words.

This came from the inability of people to see past words, symbols, metaphor to reality, to the truth the words symbolically represent and instead taking words literally.

The disciples were doing the opposite, they were failing to realize Jesus was being literal, was telling them what was going to happen to Him in reality. But the truth He was telling them was too distressing so they either didn't believe it, or interpreted it in some way that meant something different than what Jesus meant.

What is the lesson? We must seek the enlightening presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that inspired the Bible writers with the truth that they communicated in their words so that when we read it we can understand the true meaning behind the words.

And truth builds on truth, establishing foundational truths that are testable truths are essential in rightly understanding the Bible. What are some foundational truths that impact what meaning we derive from the Bible?

- How we understand God's law—which determines how we understand God's character and methods
 - If we believe God's law functions like human law then we always conclude God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as just punishment for sin and create theologies to hide and protect us from God. If we embrace the truth that God's laws are design laws and return to Creator worship, then we realize that pain suffering and death originate in breaking the laws of life and severing our connection with God. Then our theologies are focused on advancing the truth about God and removing the barriers that Satan has placed between us and God, restoring trust in God, opening ourselves fully to God so we can experience His healing and recreative presence restoring the image of God in us.
- How we understand God's character and methods
 - God is love and is the source of life; death comes out from sin and breaking away from God. God's actions are always for the healing and restoration of His creation. Thus any interpretation that suggests God is the one who destroys, is the source or cause of eternal death—wages of sin death—is a lie and we can reject such interpretations of the Biblical record.
- The various design laws themselves, like truth, love, liberty, worship, exertion etc.
 - If theologies teach ideas that violate these design laws we can reject them. Such as the law of liberty; love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. God cannot achieve His goal of restoring us to love, trust, friendship, loyalty by threatening to kill us if we do not love and trust Him. Thus the Bible teaches God works “not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord” Zech 4:6. This is testable, we can test our theologies and interpretations of Scripture against this.
- The method one uses to determine truth—is it prayerful, humble examination of the evidence in harmony with truth thus far understood, exercising one's reasoning ability to integrate the various threads of evidence into harmonized comprehension; or is it by praying long and hard for a warm feeling despite what the evidence reveals?

- What do we prioritize in our understanding of Scripture? Is it the claims and proclamations or the actions, achievements, accomplishments of God in history?
 - Do we ignore the evidences of God’s actions through history and instead focus on the places where God is proclaiming? Or do we require our understanding of God’s proclamations and declarations to be harmonized with His actions in history?
 - The Bible says “God is love” but this text alone, without the historical evidence of God’s actions through time, particularly in the life of Jesus Christ is meaningless. It is the accomplishments, the actions of God that are the most persuasive evidences, not the syllables spoken. Thus, Jesus is the Word made flesh—Jesus in living action is how we understand God, how we see the truth.
- Do we prioritize miracles and wonders over evidence, facts, and testable truths?
- Do we integrate the entire inspired record or base our beliefs on a little bit here and there?
 - One of the things I have found to be a source of conflict, disagreement with those who hold to the penal model is that often those models are built in limited data, Scripture without science/nature and experience, or a few verses of the inspired record not balanced and harmonized with others. The more pieces of the puzzle you can bring into place the clearer the picture becomes.
- Preconceived ideas or biases which are assumed to be true that obstruct or prevent us from understanding the real truth. For the disciples they believed things like sickness was punishment from God. God governs with might and power and the Messiah is coming to overthrow Rome and establish Himself on David’s throne and rule with a rod of iron.
 - Do we have biases about the events leading up to the return of Jesus that could blind us to what is actually happening?
- Others?

Read the fourth paragraph,

- We today can be in danger of doing the same thing: **hearing or even reading the Word of God but not listening to it, not abiding in it, and not obeying it.** That is, **not accepting it** as the light that should guide our thoughts and actions. This, unfortunately, is where, perhaps unwittingly, too many Christians are. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 104, emphasis mine).

You see the portions I highlighted—it struck me quite profoundly, why did the authors not include in this list, “not understanding, not comprehending, not seeking the true meaning, not reasoning?” As God has said, “Come let us reason together though your sins are like scarlet they will be white as snow.” (Isaiah 1:18). It is by reasoning out the truth with God that we are cleansed from sin.

Could one of the traps of Satan be to get people to be very religious and even read the Bible but to take it literally, as it reads, without seeking the meaning, the divine truth contained within and thereby deceive people through their reading of the Bible? Or replace the true meaning with false meanings of those words—thus believing because the book said so, not because it is so.

I want to suggest the danger is in reading the Bible without a humble surrendered heart to God that genuinely desires to know the meaning, the divine truth brought by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

When we approach the Bible like a code book, with the belief it is God's list of rules for us to obey, we close our minds to the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit and end up legalistic religionists just like the Jews who crucified Christ.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Jesus after His resurrection when He meets the disciples on the beach and His conversation with Peter in which Jesus asks Peter three times if Peter loves Him.

What do you understand this conversation is about? Why is it included in Scripture? What are we to learn from this? Does it tell us anything about the character of God? Does it tell us anything about God's methods? Does it tell us anything about our human nature and what we need for salvation?

Let's read this encounter and I want you to think—what is revealed, what is evidenced, what truths are contained in this account, what are we seeing and what are we not seeing?

- When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”
“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”
Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”
He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”
The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (John 21:15-19 NIV84).

What do you see, learn, understand from this story?

- Perhaps the most obvious lesson and reason this is included in Scripture is to assure the church, the believers, that Jesus accepts Peter back into fellowship and recommissions him as His representative, ambassador, Apostle. So, one reason this story is here is so that all Christians through history can know that Peter was reconciled to Jesus and his ministry was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and his writings are inspired and trustworthy.

- Do we learn anything about the character of God? God is gracious, merciful, forgiving and longs for reconciliation with us even when we sin, when we act selfishly, when we willfully choose what we know is wrong, God is longing to restore us to sonship with Him. As Paul wrote God is for us—always for us.
- Did Peter need this experience? Why?
 - What had his actions done to him?
 - Had his denial of Jesus caused Jesus to love him less?
 - Had Jesus become Peter's enemy?
 - Was there some anger or wrath or legal demand that Jesus had that needed to be ventilated and expiated so that Peter could be reconciled to Jesus?
 - Or was Jesus always on Peter's side, always for Peter?
 - So Peter's sin did not change Jesus. But did it do something to Peter? What?
 - Did it cause him to experience fear, guilt, shame, doubt, worry, dread, apprehension, inadequacy? Could his sin cause him to doubt whether he could be accepted back? Could his sin cause him to consider that Jesus might have a right to be mad at him and expect some punitive action from Jesus?
 - Did Peter need to have his guilt, shame, fears, doubts, and all such consequences of his sin removed from his heart and mind? Do you see this happening in their interaction?
- Was Peter fully restored and reconciled to Jesus? Was Peter saved after his denial and sin?
 - Did you find anything in this encounter of a penal legal nature? Do you find Peter asking Jesus to apply His blood to Peter's record in heaven to pay for the sin that he had committed?
 - Understand what this reveals—it reveals reality, the problem of sin, which is a condition of being, fear and selfishness, which manifested in Peter when he chose to respond to the temptation of fear by acting selfishly and denying Jesus. And fear is only overcome by love, perfect love casts out fear. And Peter's guilt and shame is removed by experiencing the truth of who Jesus is, and surrendering himself in trust and he is reconciled, reborn, no longer trusting in self to stand up and do right, but humbly submitted to Jesus.

Read the bottom question,

- Why is humility so key in anyone seeking to know the Lord? (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 105).

As I was reading the lesson for this week I just happened to read the following in the book *The Desire of Ages*, consider this in light of the question, it is commenting on Jesus' warning to beware the leaven of the Pharisees:

- The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was the product of **self-seeking**. The **glorification of themselves** was the object of their lives. It was this that led them to **pervert and misapply** the Scriptures, and **blinded them** to the purpose of Christ's mission. This **subtle evil even the disciples** of Christ were in danger of cherishing. Those who classed themselves with the followers of Jesus, but who had not left all in order to become His disciples, were influenced in

a great degree by the reasoning of the Pharisees. They were often vacillating between faith and unbelief, and they did not discern the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ. Even the disciples, though outwardly they had left all for Jesus' sake, **had not in heart ceased to seek great things for themselves. It was this spirit** that prompted the strife as to who should be greatest. **It was this that came between them and Christ**, making them so little in sympathy with His mission of **self-sacrifice**, so slow to comprehend **the mystery of redemption**. As heaven, if left to complete its work, will cause corruption and decay, **so does the self-seeking spirit, cherished, work the defilement and ruin of the soul.** (The Desire of Ages p. 409, emphasis mine).

MONDAY

Read John 21:20-23:

- Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”
Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” (John 21:20-23 NIV84).

What do you understand is going on here? What is revealed? What are the lessons for us?

Is there an almost irresistible temptation to look at what others are doing, to compare self to others, to investigate the mission, calling, and mission of others?

What is the problem with doing so?

- Can incite jealousy, envy, and competition, division, and strife
- Can divert us from the mission God has called for us
- Takes our focus off of Jesus and we lose sight of where He is leading
- By beholding we are changed, and if we don't remain focused on Jesus and fulfilling His calling for our lives then we interfere with His plan to transform and heal us as well as whatever the mission He has for us

Other concerns?

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on Light and Darkness, what do these terms mean in the context of good and evil, righteousness and sin, salvation and damnation?

Light is a symbol of truth, of being enlightened, of understanding reality, the way things actually are; darkness is a symbol of ignorance, confusion, of falsehood, fantasy, fiction, myth, and fable.

God lives in unapproachable light—this isn't about photons, it is about truth, infinite truth and it is unapproachable by finite beings because we can never assimilate, process, contain, all knowledge, all truth. While we can advance in the truth, grow in the truth, move forward in the truth, we will never approach infinity, there will always be more for us to learn, discover, and advance in.

But Jesus said,

- The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22, 23).

What does this mean? Is the eye, the lamp, the light? No, it is not the light, it is not the truth, but the medium through which the light or truth shines.

Jesus is telling us that if something is wrong with the faculties that are designed to recognize, understand, process, and receive the truth, then rather than being enlightened, one will not only remain in the dark, but also the previous understanding (light) they had will prevent them from seeing new light.

So how exactly does heavenly light become darkness to people? How does truth that was once believed become lies that prevent one from understanding further truth?

In 5 CE, when Jesus was just a toddler, it was heavenly truth (light) that the Messiah who was promised to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15) and who would descend through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was soon to be revealed to the world and start His earthly ministry.

But since 33 CE, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, is it still heavenly light—truth—that the Messiah is going to be born in Israel, that the Messiah is yet to come?

If one rejected the truth that Jesus is the fulfillment of those promises, if one rejects the truth that Jesus is the unfolding and realization of those promises then those very truths become darkness to those who have rejected Jesus.

If someone today rejects Jesus as Messiah and clings to the Old Testament prophecies about a Messiah who they believe is yet to be born in Bethlehem, are they in the light or are they in darkness?

Because the eyes (minds) of those who rejected Jesus were biased, prejudiced, selfish, and preferred the lies to the truth, the light was rejected and did not “enlighten” those who crucified Jesus. Likewise today, all who reject advancing truth will find that previous truth has, in fact, become darkness (falsehood) to them. And until they accept the truth that they are currently resisting they will remain in the falsehood of presenting a truth from the past which is not truth for today.

This has happened throughout human history when people discover a truth appropriate for their time in history but do not advance in the unfolding truth.

Can you think of any examples of this?

One example of this in the Adventist Church is how the message of the three angels of Revelation 14 was initially presented as the heavenly light shown down upon Adventist reformers, but as the truth was advancing, many in leadership rejected the advancing light at the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis and, thus, the truth has become darkness to them.

In our magazine [The Final Message of Mercy to the World: The Three Angels](#), we describe in detail what we understand to be the unfolding truth of these messages. The truth that was rejected by leadership in 1888 was the truth about God’s law being design law—the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate, and that the Ten Commandment law was not always in existence but was added by God as a gracious therapeutic tool specifically designed for human sinners.

But if one rejects the advancing light, if one understands God’s law to be imposed rules, the kind of laws that sinful humans make up, then one not only ends up worshiping a creature instead of the Creator, but they also interpret Scripture, including the three angels, via human legal systems—heavenly courtrooms, legal records, legal judgments, legal payments, inflicted punishments, etc., and thus the light becomes darkness.

However, when we return to worshiping the Creator and understand His laws are design laws, then one reads the three angels as they are supposed to be read—God’s final warning to the world of how reality works and what happens to those who reject Him and His design laws for life and the light does its job, it enlightens and ennobles those who accept it

The high points of the 3 angels’ messages are:

- The central thread of the messages is about worship.
- The first angel focuses on the eternal good news, which is the good news about God that is true in eternity past as well as eternity future—that God is not like Satan has alleged Him to be. He is the God who creates reality, whose laws are design laws, the protocols life exists and operates upon. We are called back to worship Him as Creator, and we are to stop worshiping a creature in the place of the Creator, and, thereby, give glory to God, for the hour in human history has come for people to make a right judgment about God—the hour of *His* judgment has come!

- When we recognize the truth about God, we realize the system of imposed law with a punishing god is the fallen system of Babylon, the system of confusion that has resulted in the more than 41,000 different Christian groups arguing over whose doctrines are right, whose creeds are correct, whose fundamental beliefs are accurate. We are called to come out of that worldly way of thinking and functioning and return to worshiping our Creator by living in harmony with His designs for life (i.e., have His living law written upon our hearts and minds—Hebrews 8:10). When we return to design law understanding there is unity rather than division. Human laws cause arguments over such things like should marijuana be legal, for medical uses only or recreational uses? Can people grow their own or should we regulate it and tax it? How much can one produce, should we fine people who sell without a license? But no humans argue over whether we can pass laws to make marijuana healthy or not—it is what it is, it is either healthy or harmful and our laws cannot change the reality of what it is. Design law understanding always brings unity, imposed law always causes division.
- But if we don't return to design law, if we instead reject the light and cling to the imposed-law lies, then, via the law of worship (by beholding we are changed; 2 Corinthians 3:18), we become like the false creature-god we worship and are marked in our characters (foreheads) and works (hands) to be like the beastly god we worship and ...
- Via the law of liberty, God sets us free to reap that which we have sown into our hearts, minds, and souls. After long, patient, gracious, merciful interventions by God, when people ultimately reject His truth and love, God gives them freedom and lets them go to reap the results of their own choices (Galatians 6:8). He stops using His power to protect them from what sin does, and this is known as God's wrath (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28). When God no longer shields people from the devastation of breaking His design laws, then they reap the suffering that unremedied sin brings.
- And via the law of love and truth, when the wicked stand in God's life-giving glory, the eternal fires of infinite truth and love that flow out from God like a river of flames (Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:29), the unsaved come into full awareness of their own selfishness, guilt, shame, and evil and they can no longer hide from the reality of who they have chosen to become and what they have done to others. And the unremoved sin in them causes them to suffer and flee from existence. They choose to die rather than live in God's presence. But the memory of their condition and choices remain forever as lessons for all the righteous.

This is the God of reality restoring all things back into harmony with how He constructed life to exist and operate, back into harmony with Himself and His design laws for life. And this is the message of light to enlighten the world but it becomes a message of darkness when it is presented through human law with a dictator god who is having legal tribunals and uses his power to torture and kill.

WEDNESDAY

The title for the day is Theology from “Above” or From “Below”

What does this suggest to you?

Read the first paragraph,

- This man came to Jesus, the Light of the world, but he had made up his mind to believe only if Jesus healed his child. We could say this man’s theology was a “theology from below.” Theology from below sets rules and standards for God and His Word. Human ideas, as flawed and as limited and as subjective as they are, become the final authority on how people interpret the Word of God. What a dangerous trap to fall into! (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 108).

Is there anything more human, more corrosive, more destructive to our theology than replacing the truth of God’s design law with human imposed law? There are many historical quotations that document how Christianity accepted Roman law in place of God’s law. I encourage you to check out our magazine, [The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ](#) which is filled with references, here are two:

- The great controversy [is] between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God’s holy law. Satan’s enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. **The same hatred of the principles of God’s law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator,** may be traced in all the history of the past. **Satan’s efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator,** and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love, his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements, and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers (*The Great Controversy*, x.1.emphasis mine).
- **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being. All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of the laws that He has established. And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon health reform. He **publishes His law** and the penalty that will follow the transgression of it, that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims His law so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it

if they will. ... **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord** (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3. p. 161, emphasis mine).

THURSDAY

What have you found in your experience that helps you abide in Christ?

FRIDAY

Question 3 asks,

- “Why is it usually difficult to lay aside self as the arbiter of truth?” (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2024, Themes in the Gospel of John p. 109).

Do you find this a good question or is it a flawed question?

What did Paul mean when he wrote in Romans 14:5 that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind?

Or Hebrews 5:14 that the mature have developed by practice the ability to discern good from evil, truth from falsehood?

What do these texts mean? That we think or don't think, that we reason or don't reason?

The question is flawed because it advances Satan's imposed law lie way of approaching things.

According to dictionary.com an arbiter is:

- a person empowered to decide matters at issue; judge; umpire.
- a person who has the sole or absolute power of judging or determining.

This is how human authority works, a ruling power *determining* what is true or not true, balls or strikes, guilt or innocence. Because the lie about God's law is accepted, many conclude that it is presumptuous for us to be arbiters of truth, that only God can decide what is true or not. But this is a subtle deception.

Truth is truth and our perspectives, beliefs, understandings never determine what is true or not true—we decide in governance of ourselves what we believe is true or not. We each must decide what we will believe. The truth is reality itself, the way things are, and we absolutely cannot change that. But each of us has the power to decide what we will believe and we are either developing minds that love

truth, are advancing in truth, want to comprehend and embrace truth, and thus are developing the ability to differentiate truth from falsehood, or we are not. And in fact truth has no saving power on a person unless they determine for themselves it is truth and choose to believe and apply it. We must be fully persuaded in our own minds of the truth it is the only way we can be won to trust and it is through trust that we are healed, saved, transformed.

One of the ways the devil tricks people into not developing the discernment skills, not maturing, is by such ideas as are imbedded in this question. We are not arbiters of truth, we are not to think, reason, question, we are simply to take God's word as it reads and believe because the Bible said so, or God said so, or Jesus said so, or the prophet said so, or the pastor, priest or teacher said so. But this is not what God wants nor what the Bible teaches.

So, I believe people who write such questions do so in all innocence, without any evil intention, this is an artifact of ignorance, of believing a lie, but they introduce a falsehood and advance false principles. And this is exactly why every person must think for themselves, even the apostle Peter had to be corrected by Paul.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

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- **The Atonement through the Seven Levels of Moral Decision Making**
- **Codependency**
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- **The Wedding of Christ to His Bride**
- **Cosmic Conflict Over God's Character Bible Study Guide**
- **The Lie That Deceived Angels, Infects Christianity, and Delays the Second Coming of Christ**
- **Job** pamphlet

C&R SA has created a Telegram support/discussion/prayer group. If you would like to join: <https://t.me/+dwEVCIVrXoM1MDc0>

