



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 10 Rules of Engagement

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8 NKJV

What does this text mean?

Well let's read a little wider in 1 John, verses 4-9, does this help or does it make it harder to understand?

- Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and **sin is lawlessness**. And you know that He was manifested to **take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever **abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him**. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. **He who sins is of the devil**, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:4–9 NKJV, emphasis mine.

Does this wider reading clear things up for you? Do you have any questions?

What law lens are we reading this through?

Do we believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules, or are God's laws design laws, the protocols the Creator built life to operate upon? Does the answer to that question impact our understanding of this passage?

Sin is lawlessness, which means what? Being out of harmony with the design protocols life is built to operate upon.

And what is the protocol life is built to operate upon?

- He who pursues righteousness and love finds life Proverbs 21:21 NIV84.

- Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40 NIV84.
- “God is love” 1 John 4:8
- Love is not self-seeking 1 Corinthians 13:5
- God’s divine nature is seen in what He has made Romans 1:20

God’s law of love is the template, protocol, life-giving principles upon which reality and life is built. Consider this commentary,

- **It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love.** In the light from Calvary **it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven;** that the love which “seeketh not her own” has its source in the heart of God... *The Desire of Ages*, p. 9, emphasis mine.
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. “I do nothing of Myself,” said Christ; “the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father.” “I seek not Mine own glory,” but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life.** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21, emphasis mine.

Do you agree? Have we not demonstrated the truth of this through many examples in nature?

With this perspective in mind—what is sin? Lawlessness, meaning what?

- Whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:9-10 NIV84.

What kind of “rule” is that? Is it an imposed rule? Can love be generated, promoted, obtained, by legislation and through external enforcement?

Paul makes it clear a little later in Romans:

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 NIV84

So sin is lawlessness and the law is love and therefore sin is anti-love, selfishness, and the law of love is broken when we don't trust, lies believed break the circle of love and trust and incite fear and selfishness.

So, no matter what the behavior, if it is done out of fear and selfishness then it is not done out of love and trust and therefore is out of harmony with the law of life, the law of love, and is still sin.

So Sabbath keeping based on the idea that God's law functions like human law, a rule that if we break requires God to punish, leads to fear-based self-centered Sabbath rules, don't do this, can't do that, worry and fear "Did I have the water over my knees, was that behavior legal, authorized to do on the Sabbath" etc., all motivated by fear and selfishness. And keeping the Sabbath based on external law, imposed law, legally, leads such worshipers to crucify the Savior and want Him off the cross in time to keep the Sabbath.

Okay, love is fulfillment of the law and we can only experience the love of God filling our hearts and minds and transforming us to live lives of love through trust, thus anything not of trust is sin because such living continues to live out fear and selfishness.

Let's continue to unpack the passage from John, What does "And you know that He was manifested to **take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin," mean?

The Greek work translated "sins" can be translated "sin" or "sinful" or "sinfulness." And in fact the same word is translated as sins and sin in the same sentence. Which do you think is the best translation, "He was manifested to take away our sins, or sin?"

What did Jesus come to take away—the record, historical acts, of sin, the legal penalty God inflicts for sin, or the actual sin, the sinfulness, the infection of fear and selfishness?

As John the Baptist preached, Jesus is:

- "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29 NIV84.

Jesus came to take away the sin, the infection of fear and selfishness, the distrust, the rebelliousness that stems from distrust, fear, and selfishness and restore trust and thereby restore God's living law of love back into the hearts and minds of all who trust Him.

What does "Whoever **abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him**" mean?

What does it mean to abide in Him?

- Does this mean those who have claimed the legal payment of Jesus' blood to their heavenly record to pay their legal debt? No!

- Does it mean those who read their Bible every day, attend church on the right day, and pay a faithful tithe?

It means those who live in trust, who have an intimate love and trust relationship with Jesus and have surrendered self to Jesus. And if someone lives in love and trust with Jesus, then their actions are no longer driven by fear and selfishness, but motivated by love and trust. They are no longer in rebellion. It is not about the specific behavior and how well it is performed, it is about the heart loving and trusting Jesus and following where Jesus leads.

Those who remain in fear, distrust, rebellion, selfishly seeking to do their own thing and go their own way, regardless of whether they call themselves Christian or not, continue in sin for sin is selfishness driven by fear and distrust. And their continued actions in this way demonstrate they do not know Jesus for who He really is—remember knowing is intimacy with.

This gives us insight to understand, what “**He who sins is of the devil**, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” means.

It means those who choose fear and selfishness, distrust of God, are out of harmony with God’s design laws of truth, love, liberty and are therefore in sin and in the camp of the devil who chose to leave love and trust for pride sake and seek to advance self through deceit, no longer trusting God. All who live by the same motives of fear, selfishness, practicing the methods of deceit, manipulation, coercion, are of the devil who is the originator of such methods.

What does this mean? “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that **He might destroy the works of the devil**”?

What has the devil been working to do? Displace God from the hearts and minds of intelligent beings as the one most loved and trusted and thereby efface the image of God in people and place Satan’s image where God’s should be. Jesus came to uplift the Father, to expose Satan as a liar and fraud and to restore in humanity the living law of God and thereby restore and perfect the image of God in humanity.

Consider this historical quote,

- The life of Christ is to be revealed in humanity. Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God; but **Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image.** *Review and Herald* June 18, 1895, par. 2, emphasis mine.

Laboring is working, Jesus came to destroy Satan’s work, to restore the image of God into humanity while simultaneously revealing the truth that secures the universe unfallen and procuring the remedy to save every single human who trust in Him.

Finally, what does this mean? **“Whoever has been born of God does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he has been born of God.”

What is sin? It is lawlessness stemming from distrust, those who are reborn are reborn with a new spirit of love and trust and thus they are no longer living a life driven by fear and selfishness, but by love and trust. If they have a moment where they fall short, think Romans 7, where one does what they do not want to do, that is not their new self, that is manifestation of old habits, conditioned responses, reflexive actions coming from old brain wiring that was laid down before the heart was reborn to love and trust. Thus, the person who has such an action is grieved in their heart, they immediately call out to God, “What a wretched man that I am who will save me from this body of death?” In other words, these shortcomings are not coming from their true new self who loves the Lord, but from remnants of the old self not yet purged, pruned, and rewired out of their being.

So my paraphrase of these verses when we understand design law:

- Everyone who sins breaks the law of love—the law upon which life was created to operate. In fact, sin is selfishness, which means acting without love—choosing to deviate from the law upon which life is based. But you know that Christ came to heal our hearts and minds and remove the infection of selfishness in order to restore love into our hearts. And in him, there is no selfishness or defilement—no sin. No one who lives in unity with Christ keeps on living for self; no one who continues in selfishness has either seen or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone deceive you. Those who are righteous 'do what is right because it is right'—just as Christ is righteous and always does what is right. He who does what is selfish is practicing the devil's methods and principles, as the devil is the originator of selfishness. The reason the Son of God came to earth was to destroy the devil's work of selfishness and bring the universe back into unity with God and his law of love! No one whose mind and heart have been recreated in Godlike love will continue to live selfishly, for God's character is reproduced in them; they cannot go on living self-centeredly, because they have been renewed in God's very likeness. 1 John 3:4-9 REM.

Read the first two paragraphs,

- A powerful narrative that reveals the nature of the cosmic conflict can be found in 1 Kings 18:19–40, Elijah on Mount Carmel, where the Lord exposes the so-called “gods of the nations.” Yet, there is more behind the scenes about these “gods” than that they are mere figments of pagan imagination. Behind the “gods” that the nations surrounding Israel thought they were worshiping was, actually, something else.
“They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear” (Deut. 32:17, NKJV). Paul adds, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (1 Cor. 10:20, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 76.

The story of Elijah and the confrontation of Baal worship is quite profound. It has multiple important lessons for us.

Who was Baal?

- Baal was the son of El, (El-ohim, El-Shaadi)
- God of weather, thunder, rain, brought the harvest
- Called the mighty of the Earth
- Fought against the great serpent leviathan
- Fought against Mot the god of death and in that battle Baal dies and rises again to bring life to the land
- What is wrong with Baal worship?
- Baal required appeasement, that offerings be made to him in order to pay for sin, to and merit his blessing
- Baal became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Norse people and Jesus Christ to Christians who worship a punishing wrathful god that must be appeased by the blood of a human sacrifice to keep him from killing us.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following with which I agree:

- **“Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal.** Are we worshipping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshipping the true God.” White, E.G., *Faith I Live By*, p. 59, emphasis mine.

God knows that the issues Elijah dealt with were the central issues in the GC and they keep arising through history and thus God had His prophet Malachi write:

- “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” Malachi 4:5-6 NIV84.

This is not talking about the individual Elijah who is now in heaven, it is talking about people who arise before Christ returns to do what Elijah did—call Baal worship false and call people back to worship God in truth. This requires rejecting the lie that God’s law is imposed and returning to worshipping God as Creator whose laws are design laws. If we accept the lie of Romanism, that God’s law functions like Caesar’s, imposed rules, then we teach that God’s justice is using His power to inflict punishment, including death on the wicked, and that God needs a payment of sinless human blood in order to not kill us. That is Baal worship. When we return to worshipping God as Creator we recognize that God does not have to use power to cause death, that as the Bible teaches Satan wields

the power of death, death comes out from sin, and God, through Christ, destroys death and removes sinfulness from all who trust Him. We realize that God is using power to destroy sin, death, Satan, and save all who trust Him and any person who dies in the end dies not when God uses power to inflict harm, but when God stops using power to prevent the destruction that sin brings.

The real historical events of the life of Elijah also serve as powerful object lessons to the plan of salvation.

We already identified how Baal counterfeits very closely the truth, but with the lie about God being a punishing God requiring appeasement. But there are other lessons from these events.

These events document that:

- God cannot win the war with physical might and power. After the fire fell at Carmel all the people shouted “The Lord He is God.” But they did not stay faithful afterward. This is evidence that confirms, along with other historical events recorded in Scripture, that God cannot win this war by using might and power, this is why Zechariah tells us, not by might nor by power but by the Spirit says the Lord. What God wants, our love, our trust, our loyalty, our devotion, our friendship and our faithfulness to Him—none of that can be obtained by imposed law with law enforcement. It is only obtained by the living law of love and truth being internalized into the heart and mind of the believer. That is why God writes His law on our hearts and minds—we are won by the evidence of the truth of God’s character of love and in trust we are reborn with new heart and new motives.
- The two altars, one to Baal and one to Yahweh, symbolize two types of hearts and minds.
 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your **bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind Romans 12:1-2 NIV84, emphasis mine.
 - We are to present ourselves as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God. And the two altars represent the two views of God, the true God and the false god, and subsequently what is brought represents the two types of people who worship them.
- The water which Elijah had poured over his altar symbolizes the washing of our hearts and minds with the Word and the Holy Spirit
 - “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through the word**, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” Ephesians 5:25-27 NIV84, emphasis mine.
 - The altar of Baal was not cleansed with water, just as the hearts of those who worship the dictator god do not have their hearts and minds cleansed from fear and selfishness by the Holy Spirit, why? Because they reject the Holy Spirit, they choose instead the spirit of fear and selfishness. The Holy Spirit cleanses by truth and love, and when the truth is rejected people are refusing the cleansing of their hearts and minds.

- Then fire falls and consumes the sacrifice and the altar—this is symbolic not of punishment, not of anger, not of wrath, but the cleansing power of God to cleanse hearts and mind, when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost they saw two streams of fire the fires of truth and love. The physical fire called down by Elijah is the type the Holy Spirit is the antitype that came down at Pentecost but will come down again on the Elijah people at the Latter Rain, which I believe we are going to experience very soon. But the fire of the Latter Rain only falls on the altar, hearts and minds, of those who have been washed by the water, the Word, to be cleansed from the lies about God and worship Him in spirit and in truth, in love and truth. Elijah and the altar with physical fire is the object lesson, the hearts and minds of people being purified by the Holy Spirit is the reality.
- The altar to Baal had no fire fall, because hearts and minds that internalize lies, distortions, fear, selfishness rather than truth, love, trust are not cleansed and are not empowered by the indwelling Spirit, they do not have the power of love burn out the fear, guilt, shame, selfishness and cleanse them, no matter how desperate the people. And they ultimately cut themselves, injure themselves, harm themselves like the prophets of Baal, not necessarily literally, but they cut themselves off from God, cut their souls, wound their hearts and minds with their refusal of the truth and their preference for lies and the methods of evil.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the story in Daniel 10 where Daniel prays for God to deliver his people and 21 days later Gabriel comes and tells Daniel that his prayers have been heard but that the prince of Persia has been opposing Gabriel for the last 21 days.

Let's read some of the text in Daniel 10, Gabriel speaking:

- “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the **prince of the Persian** kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then **Michael**... came to help me, because I was detained there with the **king of Persia**... Soon I will return to fight against the **prince of Persia**, and when I go, the **prince of Greece** will come... (**No one supports me against them except Michael**, your prince). Daniel 10:12-13, 20, NIV84, emphasis mine.

What do you understand is going on here?

The Good News Translation helps us, it reads in verse 13:

- The **angel prince of the kingdom of Persia** opposed me for twenty-one days. Daniel 10:13 GNT.

Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world, (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

So Satan's subordinate fallen angels, assigned to their own territories, are referred to here as princes of Persia and Greece. These are fallen angels who are working against Gabriel—how do they do that?

Another player in the text is the King of Persia, that is Cyrus. Cyrus has to decide to release the Jews and let them return to Jerusalem or not.

Gabriel came to influence him to do this and the prince of Persia is working against Gabriel.

How? Gabriel is influencing with truth and love and the prince of Persia with lies, fears, selfishness, doubt, etc.

You can imagine the types of thoughts Cyrus might be struggling with? *What will be the economic loss of all these slaves? Can my kingdom afford it? Will I be releasing people to turn into a future enemy to attack me? Etc.*

And Cyrus has to decide what he will do.

But, what do you think of the fact that only Michael was able to help Gabriel?

First, who do we understand Michael to be?

Is Michael Jesus in His preincarnate form? The Jehovah Witnesses teach that Michael and Jesus are the same and that Jesus is not fully God but is a created being.

SDAs teach that Michael and Jesus are the same but that **Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, possessing life original, unborrowed, underived, of the same substance as the Father** and having been one with the Father from all eternity. So, our discussion is not about whether Jesus is fully and completely God, we believe He is. The question is, prior to His incarnation, prior to Him becoming human, in what form did He choose to present Himself to the angels?

The Bible tells us that one member of the Godhead chose to manifest Himself in the form of an angel. The following account is Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. Notice that the One who is speaking to Moses from the bush is called both the angel of the Lord and God:

- There **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him **in flames** of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, **God called to him from within the bush**, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”** At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:2-6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

The New Testament supports this same series of events in Acts 7:30-38.

In Judges 2 we find Samson’s parents have an encounter with God and again find that He manifested Himself in the form of an angel:

- The **angel of the LORD** went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, **“I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?”**

He replied, **“Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.”** Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, **the angel of the LORD** ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the **angel of the LORD** did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.

“We are doomed to die!” he said to his wife. **“We have seen God!”** Judges 13:16-22 NIV84, emphasis mine

Who was the One who delivered the people from Egyptian bondage, led them in the land and formed the covenant with the people? It was God, Manoah acknowledges this in the end.

So we find Biblical evidence that one member of the Godhead has chosen to manifest Himself in the form of an angel. The next question is, was this Jesus, and did He go by the name Michael?

Paul tells us explicitly it was Jesus who led them out of Egypt:

- They were all baptized into **Moses in the cloud and in the sea**. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the **spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ**. 1Corinthians 10:2-4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But we have more evidence, Jesus said:

- “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear **the voice of the Son of God** and **those who hear will live**... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will **hear his voice** and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned John 5:25,28,29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Who did Jesus say will call the dead to life? He will. It is His voice that opens the grave and gives life to the dead. Therefore, we can positively identify the member of the Godhead who took the form of an angel as Jesus because the Bible tells us it is at the voice of the archangel that the dead rise, so the angel whose voice sounds must be Jesus:

- For the **Lord himself** will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the **voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first
1Thessalonians 4:16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

So the final question, did Jesus, in the form of an angel prior to His incarnation as a human, use the name Michael? Evidently, according to Jude, He did for Jude tells us it was Michael who raised Moses back to life:

- But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Jude 9 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Further, the name Michael means “who is like God?” or “one who is like God.” Both fit perfectly with Christ who said, “anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” John 14:9.

Finally, for those who have a hard time imagining that Jesus could have chosen to present Himself *in the form of an angel*, consider, didn’t He choose to become a human being? And didn’t He do such a wonderful job of being human that most people in His day never realized He was God?

So, we have identified Michael as Jesus in His preincarnate form, the next question is, why is Jesus the only one who can help Gabriel? Doesn’t the Bible teach that 1/3 of the angels fell and 2/3’s stayed loyal? So shouldn’t there be at least a 2 to 1 advantage for the good angels? Then why are there no angels to help Gabriel?

Because the war is not about might and power. It is about truth and love. Gabriel took the position that Lucifer vacated when he rebelled. That position is as covering cherub in God’s very presence. There is not another created being that is closer to God, is more intimate, knows cognitively, but also by experience, more about God, His character, methods, and the power of His love and truth than Gabriel. No other angel could bring a stronger influence of love and truth than Gabriel. The only other being that could, is God Himself, and thus the only one able to help Gabriel is Michael, Jesus, who is fully God and can bring infinitely more truth and love that Gabriel can bring. And ultimately, the influence of fear, lies, selfishness is countered and Cyrus freely chooses to let the people go.

WEDNESDAY

I found the title for this week’s lesson strange, and then this day’s lesson was quite bizarre to me. Let’s read some of the lesson,

- We have seen in previous lessons that, within the cosmic conflict, Satan and his cohorts are temporarily granted significant jurisdiction in this world, limited according to **some kind of rules of engagement**.

These **rules of engagement** limit not only the actions of the enemy—the devil and his cohorts—but **they also limit God’s action** to eliminate or mitigate the evil that (temporarily) falls within the jurisdiction of the enemy. Because the Lord will never break His promises, to the extent **He has agreed to the rules of engagement**—thus affording some limited and temporary rulership to the devil—God has morally limited His future course of action (without lessening His raw power)...

Nevertheless, **there are “rules” that limit what God can do** while remaining true to the principles behind His government. These limits include at least (1) the granting of free will to creatures and (2) the **covenantal rules of engagement, which we are not privy to**, at least now. Such **impediments and limitations on divine action** have significant implications for God’s moral ability to reduce and/or immediately eliminate evil in this world. Thus, we see continued evil and suffering, which can indeed cause many people to question either God’s existence or His goodness. However, once the background of the great controversy is understood, and **the limits God has placed on how He will deal with evil**, we can to some degree better understand why things are as they are—at least until the final triumph of God over evil. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 80, emphasis mine.

What does this sound like to you? Does it almost sound like some system of agreement, rules, regulations, oversight, arbitrary restrictions have been implemented and God has made a bargain, an agreement, a code of war that He has obliged Himself to operate within, similar to human nations who have the Geneva Convention?

I don’t know if that is what the lesson authors intend or not, but if they do then they are completely wrong and such a construct misrepresents God and undermines His power to win.

Any view which suggests there are external rules that God is obliged to abide by undermines God’s plan of salvation because God wins by truth and love, not by might and power. Whenever we undermine truth and love we obstruct God’s healing power.

There are no imposed, made up, rules, regulations, agreements between God and Satan—it is directly and simply how reality works, how the laws that God built reality to operate upon function. God is limited by reality—God cannot create mature character. It is not possible for Him to create a being with mature character. He can create sinless beings, beings without any fear, sin, selfishness, guilt, shame, beings operating only upon pure love and trust. But if character is to be formed, it can only form by the free exercise of the individuality and power of choice of the intelligent being. This is not a rule, an agreement, a regulation, it is how reality works, how love works, how truth works.

If God wants free beings who love and trust Him, then He creates them with freedom to choose and the ability to comprehend and to love. If God wants only robots who appear to be loving in their behaviors, He can certainly do that, but robots cannot develop character, individuality, and cannot love, trust, or become friends.

So all of God's actions are always in harmony with His character of love, and the design laws of reality He has constructed all life to exist and operate upon. There are no arbitrary, made-up rules of engagement. And to present it this way seriously risks misleading people into lies about God.

Any questions about this? Any stories in the Bible that would suggest there are rules of engagement?

THURSDAY

Read Mark 6:5-6:

- He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Mark 6:5-6 NIV84.

And in response to this text the lesson states,

- Some limits or rules of engagement seem to be in place, dynamically related to such things as faith and prayer. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 81.

So there a rule—and the rule says if you don't have enough faith, at least a mustard seed's worth, then God is forbidden from using His power to perform a miracle. The devil has multiple demons, with faith meters going around and measuring the faith levels, "Wait, stop the miracle Jesus, that person's faith is only 19 nanomoles per kilogram of brain tissue. You have agreed to the rules of engagement and only when a person's faith is 20 nanomoles are you allowed to heal them."

Do we think there is some rules of engagement like this? This is quite preposterous.

They should eliminate all such language and simply speak of reality. Faith is the same as trust. And God cannot help people who do not trust Him, not because of some external rule agreed upon with Satan, but because love doesn't operate in hearts that do not trust. It is that simple.

And worse, while God still has power to perform physical miracles on the bodies of people who do not trust Him, what would be the result if He did? If they believed in Baal, or goat-demons, or Beelzebub, or that the ritual of whatever sacrament, and they have placed their faith in those things or systems and Jesus heals them anyway, because He loves them, what does His healing do? Doesn't it reinforce the lies, the falsehood, that their false god sent Jesus to heal them?

Or if they didn't believe in God and they were sick because of wild living and drug abuse and God healed them physically, but they have had no change of heart, what does that result in? More abuse of

self, with more harmful interpersonal and societal actions that addicts inflict on those around them, and all those actions further harden their hearts searing their consciences making them more like Satan in character and less likely to come to repentance. But if He allows them to reap the pain and suffering their own rebellious lifestyles are sowing into their lives, then those consequences may lead them like the Prodigal son to come to their senses and repent and go home to their heavenly Father and experience healing and restoration.

The point is there are not external rules of engagement there is only God and His character of love and His design laws of love built into the operations of reality.

MONDAY

The dragon and beast of Revelation 13.

What do these represent?

If you haven't read our magazine [Unmasking the Beasts of Revelation 13 and 17](#), I encourage you to do so. You can download a digital copy online or print versions are available at no cost in the US, South Africa and Australia.

The dragon represents Satan and the beast corrupt powers, but the dragon and the beast have ten horns and seven heads, what do these represent?

The 10 horns represent the 10 powers wielded by the dragon and the beast and they are:

1. Lies—Satan is the father of lies and, since all the kingdoms of the earth are his, all the kingdoms of the earth wield lies. They lie to other kingdoms and to their own citizens. They use propaganda and other forms of misinformation to advance their agenda.
2. Imposed laws—These are made-up rules that require external enforcement and always result in unequal, arbitrary treatment and injustice (Isaiah 1:10; Ecclesiastes 5:8). These human-made laws stand in contrast to God's laws, which are the protocols upon which the Creator built reality to operate (laws of health, laws of physics, the moral laws) and which treat everyone the same (Luke 6:43–45). Harmony with God's design laws brings life; breaking them automatically injures the lawbreaker and results in death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15; Galatians 6:8). God's law is perfect and brings life to the soul (Psalm 19:7). Satan is not the Creator, the governments of earth are not God's (John 18:36; Matthew 4:8, 9), and the laws of the kingdoms of this earth are also not God's; they are imposed rules. Wielding this power, human governments make up rules that determine what is "legal" and "illegal." And these rules change from place to place and time to time. God and His law never change. All earthly governments are based upon the so-called "rule of law," which are made-up rules requiring external enforcement (Daniel 7:25, Jeremiah 8:8).
3. Police and prosecution—the power to accuse and bring charges (Zechariah 3:1), restrict liberties, enforce fines, and arrest and imprison in order to compel and control a population. God's kingdom does not use these powers (2 Peter 2:11; Jude 9). Jesus explicitly stated that He

would not accuse us before the Father (John 5:45). Satan is the accuser, and his agents used this power when they arrested and accused Jesus (Luke 22:54) and the apostles (Acts 12:3). All human governments use this power.

4. Judicial—the power to determine guilt or innocence, to pardon or convict, and to determine punishment. We see this power wielded by Pontius Pilate in unjustly convicting and sentencing Jesus to death (Matthew 27:19). God’s power is the power of truth. Thus, His judgment is the accurate pronouncement (diagnosis) of what actually is. God’s judgment doesn’t determine the condition of a soul; it confirms the condition of a soul (Matthew 12:33–37; Revelation 22:11). Human governments, however, pass external judgment determining guilt or innocence under their imposed laws—irrespective of actual guilt or innocence. In human systems, the guilty often go free and the innocent are found guilty. God’s judgments are the accurate diagnosis of the condition of each heart and mind.
5. Economic—the power to print money, regulate currency, manipulate its value, and control commerce—all used to exploit populations through taxation, tax incentives and loopholes, currency manipulation, inflation, commerce, and trade. Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24; 22:17–21).
6. War—the use of military force to compel, control, or overcome other states to expand a nation’s wealth and power; the power to raise a military and compel service; all powers bent on attacking and destroying others for the protection of the state (Job 1:14, 15; Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:11).
7. Death—Satan’s kingdoms wield the power of death, the ability to take life in war, by police action, and through execution; the power to deceive souls, cutting people off from God, the source of life, resulting in eternal death. Satan is the “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44); Jesus came to destroy him “who holds the power of death—that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84).
8. Education—the power to educate the populace, setting a national educational narrative, moral values, and history; the power to deny education/access to truth (e.g., the Bible) to those they want to keep disempowered. Moses was educated in the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). Daniel and his friends were educated in the ways of Babylon (Daniel 1:5). God’s people are to be educated in the ways, methods, truths, and principles of God’s kingdom. Satan uses the kingdoms of this world to educate people in the ways of this world.
9. Ownership (Genesis 47:16)—the power to determine ownership of lands, peoples, goods, resources, activities, and business endeavors—who can own a license to make certain products or open a school, hospital, or refinery, etc. But the truth of God’s kingdom is that all things in heaven and on earth belong to God: “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14 NIV84, see also Psalm 24:1, 50:10, 89:11; 1 Corinthians 10:26). We own nothing. We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him to use His resources for the uplifting of His kingdom (Genesis 1:26–28; Luke 12:42, 43; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 4:10). It is Satan’s deception to get us to believe that we are the owners, which inflames selfishness, jealousy, conflict, and division.
10. Fear—as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they ran and hid because they were afraid (Genesis 3:10). Every other power (horn) used by Satan’s beastly systems ultimately exploits and works through the power of fear. When lies are believed, they break the bonds of love and trust and result in fear and selfishness, motivating people to protect self at the expense of others.

Imposed laws instill the fear of getting into legal trouble with subsequent inflicted punishment, enforced by police and judicial powers; economic policies incite fear of poverty, debt, foreclosure, and loss of whatever one “owns;” war inflames the fear of pain, suffering, loss, and death; and people are educated to be afraid of going against the state. All beastly systems advance their power through fear. In God’s kingdom, “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 NKJV).

The Seven Heads of the Dragon and Beast

While the ten powers (horns) are used by worldly kingdoms to advance their agendas, the seven heads direct the use of those powers. The head is where one thinks, reasons, and worships. These seven heads, each with a blasphemous name, represent the seven false religious philosophies that have manifested throughout human history and which have directed the formation of the various beastly governments and their use of the ten powers.

In Revelation 17, we’re given more details regarding these seven heads:

- The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while (vv. 9, 10 NIV84).

Why are the seven heads also described as seven hills? In Scripture, hills (i.e., high places) represent places of worship. Zion was called God’s holy hill (Psalm 2:6). But in this case, it is blasphemous worship being represented; in the Bible, hills can also represent places of pagan (false) worship (Leviticus 26:30; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4). Thus, the seven heads with blasphemous names are seven hills, representing the seven false religious philosophies Satan has used throughout history to capture minds in order to separate people from God.

At the time John was writing Revelation, the first century after Christ’s ascension, five of these systems had already been exposed as false by their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. One was in power at the time but had not yet betrayed Christ and fallen into corruption, and one would arise in the future and remain for a short while before Jesus returns.

The seven false religious systems are:

1. Paganism—earth and nature worship, sun and moon worship, idol worship, all forms of beliefs in pagan gods (Baal, Molech, Voodoo, witchcraft, etc.)
2. Godlessness—the belief that there is no God or gods (evolutionism, humanism, scientism, etc.)
3. Eastern mysticism—the mystical religions of spirit worship, ancestor worship, or energy/cosmos worship (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.)
4. Islam—while not formalized until much later, this refers to religious beliefs going back to Ishmael and his twelve sons. Islam recognizes Muhammad as the last of the prophets, not the first. Thus, Muhammad did not create Islam; he organized and codified it based upon the religious beliefs of the Arabic people, who have historically believed that the promised Messiah would come through Ishmael.
5. Judaism—it fell when they rejected Jesus as the Son of God, our Messiah, crucified Him, and then persecuted those who accepted Him. Their system was left to them desolate (Matthew 23:37, 38).

6. Roman Catholicism—it fell when it rejected the truth that Jesus taught, a religion based on design law, freedom, and healing, and replaced it with a religion based on Roman law, imperialism, and authoritarianism. It has taken the “rule of law” concept and created a religion modeled after the Roman hierarchy while co-opting Christian language. Thus, the Roman church became beastly and persecuted the saints throughout the Dark Ages.
7. False Protestantism—the Protestant churches that continue to embrace Romanism’s lies about God’s government and methods and seek to advance their self-styled plan of salvation through the imposed-law lie, teaching that salvation is a legal process rather than a process of restoration and healing.

Again, in the first century after Christ, when John wrote the book of Revelation (circa ad 96), the first five of these religious systems had all rejected Jesus, the Son of God, as our Messiah and proven themselves to be fallen into corruption, blasphemy, and lies.

The new head, the sixth—Christianity—was just arising, soon giving way to the Roman church that became corrupt when it embraced pagan Rome’s imperial law as the way God’s law also functions; as a result, it built a false legal system of salvation.

This sixth head was followed by the final head to rise (the seventh)—apostate Protestantism, which, while protesting some doctrinal differences with Rome, continues to embrace and promote the imposed-law view of God’s kingdom, a legal plan of salvation, while wielding worldly methods to forward its view of justice.

It should be noted that true Christianity is not fallen; it is represented by the virtuous woman that fled into the wilderness (Revelation 12:1-6) so as not to be destroyed by the dragon and his beastly powers.

The Chameleon Beast of Revelation 13:1

This beast, depicted with seven heads and ten horns, is actually a composite representation of all the earthly powers that Satan has used and is using to advance his kingdom on this earth. This beast is a chameleon that manifests itself with different attributes, dominating in different places and times in history, but always using the methods and powers of Satan and always working to oppose God.

Remember, heads do the thinking; the horns are the weapons used by the heads to advance their agendas. Thus, in all societies throughout history, it is the religious beliefs and philosophies (heads) embraced by the leaders that direct the governmental powers (horns) to advance their agendas using the powers of Satan (also horns).

- During the Dark Ages, it was the Roman Catholic head that advanced its agenda and controlled populations through the use of various state powers (horns): lies, imposed laws, police (accusations of people, even kings, as heretics), judicial (Inquisition), economic (taxation, indulgences), death (executions), war (Crusades), education (restricting access to the Bible, teaching catechisms), ownership (church ownership of property and wealth), and fear—the fear

of earthly suffering, punishments, and torment *and* of eternal torment and damnation to hell if one rejected the church's dogmas.

- In many Arab countries (Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.), Islamic beliefs (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In much of ancient Rome, Greece, and Africa, it was pagan beliefs (head) that directed the horns (state/tribal powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In communist countries (China, Cuba, etc.), the godless beliefs of evolution and humanism (head) direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.
- In modern Israel, the Jewish beliefs (head), including that the Messiah has not yet come, direct the horns (state powers) to enforce its dogmas.

This first beast is a chameleon; it changes and adapts as social, political, and religious circumstances change. At one point and place in history, the Roman Catholic head dominated; at another point and place, the godless head dominates; at another point and place, the Islamic, Jewish, or false Protestant heads dominate. But whatever head dominates, it is the same beast using the same beastly powers to compel, coerce, control, and oppose God and His people—because this beast receives its power from Satan, the dragon.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the book of Job,

If you haven't read our pamphlet [The Book of Job and the Last Days: A Cosmic Overview I](#) encourage you to do so. It also is available for digital download on our website or for free in print in the US, South Africa, and Australia.

The pamphlet outlines seven lessons from the book of Job, and each of these are unpacked and discussed in the pamphlet, but seven end-time lessons for us are:

1. The War Is Bigger than Us
2. The Enemy Force Is Led by a Supernatural Deceiver
3. Pain, Suffering, and Death Originate with Satan—But God Gets Blamed
4. Family and Friends Can Be Used to Tempt and Discourage
5. Bible Perfection Is About Unshakable Love, Trust, and Loyalty to God. It Is Not About Task Performance or Rule Compliance
6. Health and Wellness Are Not Evidence of Righteousness
7. The Highest Calling for Each of Us Is to Say of God What Is Right

And we could add an 8th,

- And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Job 42:10 NKJV.

The righteous overcome in the end by being restored to Christlikeness within, they love God and others and they will pray for those who abuse them, they will not love their lives so much as to shrink from death, but have the love of Christ in their hearts which overcomes the fear that Satan tries to inflame. And no matter what we lose in this world, for all those who trust God, He will restore far more than what was sacrificed.

FRIDAY

The lesson quotes a paragraph from EGW, let's unpack it:

- “Fallen man is Satan’s **lawful captive**. [what law? Imposed, legal condemnation? No, it is very simple, the law of life is broken, and human kind is under the law of sin and death, no longer naturally operating upon the law of love. This is why we must die to self and be reborn with a new heart and right spirit. Notice what is said next.] The mission of Christ was to **rescue him from the power of his great adversary**. [Satan’s power is not legal, it is the power of fear, selfishness, greed, lust, deceit, it is the power that operates in the inner man and obstructs the truth, obstructs love, and obstructs our ability to trust God.] **Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan’s suggestions**, [Because of the fall we have a heart that naturally prefers fear and selfishness, thus are inclined to sin, bent toward doubt and survival drives] and he cannot successfully resist so terrible a foe unless Christ, **the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him**, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. [When we are reborn we receive the life of Christ, new animating energy of love and trust via the Holy Spirit that empowers us to say no to the old life of fear and selfishness.] God alone can limit the power of Satan. He is going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. He is not off his watch for a single moment, through fear of losing an opportunity to destroy souls. It is important that God’s people understand this, that they may escape his snares. Satan is **preparing his deceptions**, that in his last campaign against the people of God **they may not understand that it is he**. 2 Corinthians 11:14: ‘And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.’ While some deceived souls are advocating that he does not exist, he is taking them captive, and is working through them to a great extent. Satan knows better than God’s people **the power that they can have over him when their strength is in Christ**. When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believer in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host. He is too cunning to come openly, boldly, with his temptations; for then the drowsy energies of the Christian would arouse, and he would rely upon the strong and mighty Deliverer. But he comes in unperceived, and works in disguise through the children of disobedience who profess godliness.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 341. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 82, emphasis mine.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

March 8, 2025 2-4 p.m. Spiritual Warfare: Angels, Demons, Quantum Mechanics and Your Brain: A Special Presentation by Dr. Jennings. Where, our ministry building. The event will be streamed live.

PODCAST—Designed4More: Please share our new podcast with others. If you have topics or questions you would like to see a show on, you can email your question or topic to questions@designed4more.net