



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 12

Love *and* Justice: The Two Greatest Commandments

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20 NIV84

Is this true? Why? Isn't it possible to love God and not love another person? Aren't we supposed to have a different attitude toward the vile and evil person, surely toward Satan, or are we supposed to love Satan too?

What about Jesus, do you think that Jesus still loves Satan?

Jesus said,

- "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 4:43-44 NIV84.

Would it be a problem for us if we didn't love evil people, if we held onto any attitude other than love toward our enemies? What would be the problem for us? Would it be a legal problem? Would God say, "I gave you a rule, a command even, to love your enemies, and I see you still are looking forward to the Nazis burning outside the city. I'm sorry, but you broke my rule and the law that I imposed, that you have broken, now requires Me to torture and kill you too." Is this the problem?

No--what happens inside a person who doesn't love their enemies? If we don't forgive and have a heart that desires their deliverance, their healing, their transformation to be like Jesus? If we hold to hate, resentment, bitterness, grudges, then we become like them! And why did the Nazis kill the Jews and so many others? Because of hate, jealousy, fear, and selfishness. Thus, if we are not reborn with a new heart and right spirit that loves others, including our enemies, and longs for their salvation, if instead, we retain a heart of resentment, hate, and desire for vengeance, it is evidence that we are not reborn, are in fact becoming more like God's enemy, and saying that we love God while we cling to hate for others is a lie.

Does having a heart that loves mean we trust our enemies?

Does loving others mean we surrender our choices to them?

Does living out love mean that we do what others want us to do in order to keep them happy with us?

Read first two paragraphs,

- Though we have confidence that God will make all things right in the end, it still matters what we, as Christians, do in the here and now. Though there may be many injustices and evils that God will not now eradicate (because of the parameters of the cosmic conflict), this doesn't mean that we can't be used to help alleviate whatever suffering and evil we come across, at least to whatever degree possible. In fact, we are obligated, as Christians, to do just that.

As we have seen, love and justice go together; they are inseparable. God loves justice. Accordingly, if we love God, we will love justice, as well. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 92.

We absolutely believe that God is love and God is always just, always does what is right, and that true, genuine, godly love cannot function unjustly.

And we believe that those who love God in truth are the righteous, the just who live by faith, who trust in God, and their lives of love do what is right or just.

But, consider this, how do you think the people referred to by Christ in this passage would answer the question as to whether they love God and are seeking to do God's justice?

- "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 7:21-22 NIV84.

In whose name do these people believe they are ministering? Would these people believe of themselves that they don't love God or are doing injustice?

But what is an evildoer? Aren't evildoers doing injustice?

Is it possible that Satan could use **the pursuit of love and justice as a means** of getting people to side with him and in their pursuit of love and justice they end up enemies of Jesus? How could Satan do this?

Can you think of a way that Satan could get people to pursue God, pursue Jesus, pursue love and justice but introduce some corruption, some lie, that ends up causing these people to actually be promoting Satan's kingdom of injustice, of evil while they are proclaiming by words the name Jesus?

During the Dark Ages, is it likely there were some people who genuinely believed it was right and just to burn heretics at the stake? That in doing so they were only seeking to honor God and promote eternal salvation, in fact the only reason they were doing it was because they wanted to save souls from eternal hell?

Do you think such people were on the side of Jesus because they sincerely believed what they were doing was right?

In more recent times, were there people in our own fellowships, families, communities, who had in their hearts motivated to save lives, and with their desire to save lives they used their influence, position, authority, power to coerce the consciences of others to participate in medical experimentation?

Is it in harmony with God, Jesus, and their kingdom of love to coerce the consciences of others?

Contrast these two examples with the true story of the doctors who treated George Washington when he died of pneumonia, and describe why the examples above were evil, but what the doctors did to George Washington was not.

When George Washington got pneumonia the doctors bled him and leeches him to bleed out the evil humors trying to save his life, but of course they destroyed his immune system and accelerated his death. Why is this action, while medically harmful, not evil and how is it different that burning people at the stake or pressuring people into taking a medical experiment?

1. The doctors were acting in love, in good conscience, to do all in their power to save and they had no evidence or knowledge that they were denying or ignoring that would have exposed what they were doing as harmful.
2. They did not force George Washington against his will to take this treatment, they did not use coercion to compel another's conscience.
3. In other words, they practiced the principles of God, love for others, applying the truth as they currently comprehend it with honest hearts, and leaving others free to make their own choice.

Satan's methods are driven not by love, but by fear, which leads to selfishness, and the need to force others to comply or destroy those who won't because their very lives of righteousness condemn the guilty, or as during COVID, the lives of the unvaxxed who were recovered with naturally immunity were seen by the vaxxed as a threat to the vaxxed and thus in order to make self feel safe we must force others to do what we want. Additionally, Satan's methods will ignore, deny, and distort evidence and truth already available that would refute the action being taken—during the Dark Ages the Scriptures were available that refuted the practices that were being carried out. But more than this, the actions themselves were objectively wrong, they counter our own consciences and the Holy Spirit would convict that this is wrong. Anyone can tell that love cannot be obtained by force, by threat, by infliction of punishment even without the Bible.

So, what if it is for a good goal, a godly goal even, like saving lives, if people use coercive power for a good goal are they operating in harmony with Jesus? Are they advancing God's kingdom? Are they doing justice or injustice?

Consider this Bible commentary, do you agree?

- God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon **goodness, mercy, and love**; and the presentation of these **principles** is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine.

Do we agree that God's kingdom is the kingdom of love and justice?

But is there evidence that people can think they are operating in God's kingdom of love and justice while they are actually supporting Satan?

What is the key to actually being in God's kingdom? What is the difference between the two? What is the truth that people must know to differentiate the two?

What law are they operating upon? God's or Satan's?

What is it that determines whether something is just, what defines justice? The law of that domain, land, system.

- It is right and just to drive 140mph on the Autobahn in Germany, but unjust on the interstate in the USA.
- It is right and just to punch someone in the face in boxing but unjust in baseball.

The question is always about God's law. What we believe about God's law **directly determines** what we believe about God's character, government, methods, and how love functions justly. And that determines whether we believe God can be trusted or whether He needs something done to Him to not hurt us. So, all those who teach we must trust God, but teach that God is the source of inflicted pain and suffering in order to enforce His imposed law for justice sake, are actually creating obstacles to trust, because the functional outcome of that teaching is that God is the one who will hurt us and that means we need someone to do something to God in our behalf.

And this sets up for the rise of the beast of Revelation. Those who follow that beast will not follow it thinking they are doing in justice. It does not rise to do injustice, it rises to do justice, but it replaces the design laws of God with imposed laws, laws that require the infliction of punishment. And this leads good-hearted people to believe that justice is judicial, is using power to kill, and the people who believe this end up worshipping an imposter god, Satan masquerading as an angel of light. They will

eventually support the use of power to torture and kill those who won't recant, won't repent, won't bow down, won't worship the god they think is Jesus.

And this is how Satan infects hearts and minds to believe they are serving God while they are in reality serving God's enemy.

But the method of law and law enforcement cannot win the war. Understand, God **cannot** achieve what He wants. He cannot win the war and bring an end to sin through law and law enforcement. Why not?

Because what God wants for all of us is the restoration of His character of love into our hearts. He wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship, and agreement and none of that can be achieved by external law enforced through punishment. Any attempt to use might and power destroys what God wants. That is why the Bible tells us, it is not by might and power but by God's Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love that God wins (Zechariah 4:6).

Paul dealt with this repeatedly in his ministry, the question of law versus trust/faith. Trust or faith is the surrender of oneself to God to be reborn with a new heart, a new spirit, a new life of love that brings new animating energy to give a new life that grows and develops in harmony with Jesus. But the penal legal salvation doctrine obstructs that reality and leads people to seek legal adjustment through law keeping, if not by the sinner, then by legal-loophole law keeping by Jesus who they claim as their legal substitute and payment.

Paul wrote,

- All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:20-11 NIV84.

The righteous live by trust, by faith, and receive a new heart and right spirit in which God's living law is written upon their hearts and minds and they are transformed to actually, in reality, love God and others, including their enemies. The image of God is restored in them.

The ones who think they are serving God but who are in fact are evil-doers are those **who are not reborn with hearts that love**, but who instead claim a legal solution to their sin problem through a legal payment to a god that they believe is required by justice to use power to punish sin. And they believe this because they believe God's law functions like human law and imposed law requires imposed punishments.

Consider these historical quotes:

- **The last great conflict** between truth and error is but the final struggle of the **long-standing controversy concerning the law of God**. Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle**

between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. *The Great Controversy* p. 582, emphasis mine.

- **Between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.** Upon this battle we are now entering—a **battle not between rival churches** contending for the supremacy, but between the religion of the Bible and the religions of fable and tradition. *Prophets and Kings* p. 625, emphasis mine.
- 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* p. x1, emphasis mine.
- The great sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ; **the great sin of the Christian world would be their rejection of the law of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth** *The Great Controversy* p. 22, emphasis mine.
- I tell you, God is testing us now, just now. **The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. That light** is shining now, and how hard it has been for proud hearts to accept of Jesus as their personal Saviour; how hard to get out of **the rut of a legal religion;** how hard for them to **grasp** the rich, free gift of Christ. **Those who have not accepted this offering will not understand anything in regard to that light which fills the whole earth with its glory.** Let every heart now seek the Lord. Let self be crucified, for rich and glorious blessings are awaiting all who shall maintain contrition of soul. With them Jesus can abide; they will let nothing interpose between their souls and God. *7LtMs*. Letter 10, 1892.892.25, emphasis mine.

We are entering the very final moments of the controversy here on Earth, and the final movements are going to be rapid. Those on the side of God's enemy will believe they are doing justice, that they are doing what is right. But their form of justice is the justice of law and law enforcement and that is the justice of the kingdoms of this world, and Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world.

God's justice is something completely different, it is the justice of design law, of healing, cleansing, renewing, restoring, making what is sick healthy, what is wrong right, what is dirty clean, what is impure pure, what is unfaithful faithful, those who are untrustworthy trustworthy, those live in fear and selfishness people who live in love and trust.

God's justice is delivering the oppressed not punishing the oppressor, why? Because without God's divine action to redeem, cleanse, heal, and restore, the punishment from sin is unavoidable. As the Bible teaches, sin brings death, not God (James 1:15, Galatians 6:8, Romans 6:23).

If love and justice cannot be achieved by the imposition of law and through a legal justice system that enforces those laws, then why did God give so many laws through Moses?

And this was the question the Jews had and what Paul wrote so much about, and it is the question that derailed the Reformation at 1888 Minneapolis General Conference: Why then the law?

Paul, throughout his writings, constantly contrasts the righteousness that people seek to obtain through law versus the righteousness that comes through trust/faith. And his point is that there is no righteousness that comes through law, true righteousness only comes through faith.

Well, what is righteousness? It is being right, in heart, mind, character, and conduct. And what does it mean to be right, it means to be just, and a person who is restored to rightness, or rightified, is one who is justified or restored to justice. And in the Greek NT the word for righteous and justice is the same, there is only one word.

God cannot restore people to rightness with Him through external law, it is only through trust, through faith, that He can restore within people His design law, His living law of love, truth, freedom, and trust. That is why the New Covenant is God writing His law on hearts and minds.

In 1888 GC, the truth of real righteousness by faith, of people actually becoming righteous, was presented, but it was rejected by those who held to the lie that God's law functions like human law and replaced with the lie that we do not actually become the righteousness of God as 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, but we get declared to be legally righteous while we remain unrighteous.

If we want to finish the work, if we want to lighten the world for Christ's return, we must reject the Romanization of Christianity, the idea that God's law functions like human law and return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we understand His law is design law.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the two great commandments to love God with our entire being and neighbor as ourselves.

What do you understand these commandments to mean?

Can love be commanded? So what is going on?

Are these rules, imposed laws, or protocols for life?

These are simply and only describing how life is built to operate. God is love and all life is built to operate upon love. If we want to live we must be restored to love and love lives to give, it is not self-seeking. This means our natural inclinations, drives, desires, motivations inherited from Adam of me-first fear-driven survival-of-the-fittest must be replaced with a new life, a new motive of love and trust.

And we cannot do this by force of will, by working hard, or any legal adjustment. It is only experienced by restoration to a trust relationship with Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells the rich young ruler that in order for him to find eternal life he needs to sell all he has, give it to the poor and follow Jesus. Why did Jesus tell him this?

Was Jesus setting up a rule for all humans?

Jesus was not setting up a rule to be obeyed that says that if we want treasure in heaven we must give away all earthly possessions. He is accurately pointing out to this young man that the man valued his riches and trusted in material things more than he loved and trusted Jesus. He trusted his wealth, in part, because it was taught that wealth was evidence of being right with God, while poverty meant one was cursed by God. But eternal life cannot be found in earthly wealth, power, position, or status—only in surrendering the heart fully to Christ.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- According to Jesus Himself, the two greatest commandments are love for God and love for one another. And carrying out these commands involves sacrifices that tangibly show love to others, which is what following in the footsteps of Jesus is really about. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice* p. 94.

No doubt those who are like Jesus will live sacrificial lives of love and service for the benefit of others. Does that mean everyone who is doing actions that are sacrificial and have benefit to others are followers of Jesus, or have a heart that loves?

Can actions that bless others be done, not out of love, but out of selfishness?

Can a politician to such actions to get votes?

Can a co-dependent who fears rejection do sacrificial actions to get approval and praise for self?

How can a person tell if they are doing something out of love or out of fear for self?

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 135:13-19:

- Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, through all generations. For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them. O house of Israel, praise the LORD; O house of Aaron, praise the LORD Psalm 135:13-19 NIV84.

The lesson points out the OT taught to love God above all else and contrasted it with the greatest sin, idolatry.

Why is idolatry the greatest sin?

Because of the law of worship—by beholding we are changed. We become like the God we admire and worship and whose methods we practice.

We are created to be image bearers of God, living temples where God dwells by His Spirit, and Satan wants to destroy the image of God in people and place his image where God's should be. Satan wants to enthrone himself into our hearts and minds as the one most loved and trusted and then shape our characters to be like his. And he does this by getting us to worship anything other than God as Jesus revealed Him to be. And this is why idolatry is the greatest sin, not because it hurts God's feelings, but because it destroys the image of God in us.

How successful has Satan been at doing this to humanity?

How does Satan do this? What tools or methods does he use?

Lies about God that break love and trust and incite fear and selfishness, and fear and selfishness lead to forming beliefs and attitudes about God that seem just, like law and order and just punishments, but which perpetuate the lies about God.

What are the weapons of God that we are to use that defeat Satan?

Truth, love, freedom—the Word of God, prayer, faith/trust in God, the power of choice.

What does winning look like?

What is it that Jesus dislikes so much that He states it makes Him sick enough He wants to vomit?

- “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, **because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.** Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelations 3:14-22 NKJV, emphasis mine.

What makes Jesus want to vomit?

What does it mean to be lukewarm? Mixing hot and cold? Appearing to be hot for God’s truth with hearts that are cold in selfishness?

Claiming to be rich in truth, wealthy in righteousness, holy in character and in need of nothing more because we are God’s specially chosen people blessed with a prophetic messenger, the true Bible Sabbath, a special end-time message, the sanctuary message, health message, schools and health care institutions, we are the remnant of God—we are rich and in need of nothing!

But have we been duped into choosing the imperial Roman view of law and teaching that God is the source of inflicted pain and death and that we can only be saved by paying this god with human blood so he won’t kill us? Have we been tricked into believing that salvation is claiming legal justification, telling people that they are legally declared righteous while they remain unrighteous? Is this it?

This would be like telling people dying of cancer that if they get a healthy person to be examined in their place and legally declare that person their legal substitute, then the doctor will declare them to be cancer free even though they are still dying of malignant cancer. If someone was teaching this, and led millions of people who are dying of cancer to refuse a real and free treatment that would cure them, and instead have them claim that they are declared to be healthy and cancer free and thus they all felt good and in need of nothing, wouldn’t that make you sick? That is what Jesus sees when He sees the legal religion replacing the truth of His design law kingdom of love.

What is His counsel?

- Buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Revelation 3:18 NIV84

The gold is symbolic of Christlike character refined through trial; but how do we **buy** the life of Christ, the character or Christ? It is the barter method, we exchange our sinful life for His sinless life, our corruption for His incorruption, our fear and selfishness for His love and trust—and then it is no longer “I that live but Christ lives in me” and we “become partakers of the divine nature.” When we do this then we have a new heart and right spirit, the old is gone the new has come and we are covered

by the life, the blood of Christ, the robe of Christ's righteousness and our eyes are anointed with the discernment of the Holy Spirit and we understand reality as God built it.

Consider this commentary, about being covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness:

- When we submit ourselves to Christ, **the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.** Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 311, emphasis mine.

This is reality, healing, renewing, regenerating in the believer the life, righteousness, spirit, animating energy of Jesus that purges fear and selfishness and replaces it with love and trust and then we live the life of Jesus.

There is nothing penal legal going on, there is something divine, recreational, regenerative going on.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Psalm 82:

- God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods": "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler." Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. Psalm 82:1-8 NIV84.

What do you hear in this psalm?

Who are the gods referenced here? These are the false gods, the pagan gods, which are all inspired by demons.

And how do all the false gods govern? What type of law do they rule by? Imposed law and what is the result of all imposed law? Injustice to some—some innocents are prosecuted and punished, some guilty go free, the laws benefit some and harm others. Judges rule differently on the same set of facts—even when all are being honest.

All such systems not only do injustice when everyone is doing their best, but they can be corrupted. A judge can knowingly pardon the guilty and convict the innocent. And all human government have

corruption like this, where the laws get manipulated, misapplied, ignored, applied to harm one's opponents.

But design law doesn't do this. Design laws, the laws built into reality, treat everyone exactly the same, the difference in outcome is never because of the law, it is because of the choices of people in relationship to the law.

If a Jew, Christian, and Muslim all jump out of an airplane together, does gravity treat them differently? If one of them wore and parachute and the other two refused a parachute that we freely offered them before they jumped, now does gravity treat them differently? No, gravity hasn't changed, but the parachute, interacting with the air causing drag slows how fast gravity pulls the one with the parachute through the atmosphere and that changes the outcome. The outcome difference is not in the law, it is in the choices of the people.

What is justice in human law? Punishing the oppressors, the wicked.

But what is the justice in this psalm? Delivering the oppressed, bringing healing to the wounded, setting the captives free, binding up the broken hearted, which is the outworking of God's truth and love through Christ in harmony with the design laws built into reality.

Is there a righteous use of imposed human type law? Can you describe it? Where can imposed laws be used righteously?

In sinful spaces with people who need restraint...

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 23:23-30, and asks

- What does Jesus teach here about what is most important? What do you think He means when He refers to "weightier matters"? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 96.

So let's read that section and consider the questions

- "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’” Matthew 23:23-30 NIV84.

What is Jesus teaching that is most important? What are the weightier matters?

Is Jesus making a distinction between deeds, rule-keeping, law-keeping, and motivation of heart?

Are there two kingdoms contrasted here? In these passages do you see the kingdom of Satan being contrasted with the kingdom of God?

Is it possible for those serving in the kingdom of Satan to carry out the same duties, perform the same activities, observe the same rituals, celebrate the same festivals, worship on the same day, pay the same tithe, use the same language, proclaim to be worshiping the same person as those who are part of the kingdom of God?

What is the difference? What is Jesus trying to get all of us to understand? Are the two kingdoms different because they will always have two different behaviors or because they operate upon two different types of law?

If one accepts the lie that God’s law functions like human law and justice is inflicting punishment, then one can take all the right doctrines, rituals, festivals, activities and perform them from fear, from obligation, from selfishness and despite doing the activity that God directed one to perform, because the motive is from fear and selfishness the person becomes more like Satan. This is exactly what happened to those religious leaders who crucified Christ.

But those who return to worshiping God as Creator, understand that the heart must be renewed, reborn, recreated, that God’s laws are design laws, and the law of love is a living law that cannot be understood on stone, but only realized in a living being who operates upon that law—just as Jesus did. And then, when the heart is renewed the actions done from love, from trust, to benefit others and glorify God are part of the maturing, developing, and transforming experience, not because the deed itself has power, but because the motivation to love and live truth becomes solidified in the believer when they choose to live out the truth in love and trust.

Those who read these verses from the penal legal model will often read the “woe” as a threat from God, that they are breaking God’s law and they are piling up crimes that one day God will punish. But that is not what Jesus is describing at all. Jesus is describing reality to them. Just like saying to a

smoker who keeps on smoking, woe to you for the only outcome from such action is pain, misery, and suffering.

This is my paraphrase of these verses:

- "Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You keep rules, such as proudly paying a pre-tax tithing and even giving a tenth of the herbs in your garden, but you fail to do what actually matters—to live in harmony with God's Law, which is his design for life. You fail to 'do what is right because it is right.' You are not merciful but judgmental and critical, and you cannot be trusted to protect those struggling with sin. You should have lived lives of love for others, without neglecting the simple instructions of God. You are truly irrational and unthinking teachers! You are so focused on keeping the rules — such as dietary laws — that you fail to understand that their purpose is to promote health. You're so confused that you actually think it would be a virtue to die of starvation rather than eat something not on the 'approved' list.

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You work so hard to make yourselves look good on the outside, but the inside—the heart—is full of selfishness, arrogance, and greed. You truly don't understand anything about God's kingdom! The mind, the character, the heart — they all must be cleansed first, and then the outside will also be clean.

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You are like highly polished burial vaults: they look beautiful on the outside, but inside are nothing but the bones of the dead, and everything that defiles. You are just like that. On the outside you appear to people as good and righteous, but on the inside you are full of lies, selfishness, and evil. You are great counterfeits!

"Misery is yours, you who teach a legal religion, you penal theologians, you counterfeits! You go to great lengths to give praise and honor to God's spokespersons and church leaders of the past. You say, 'If we would have lived back then, we would never have rejected God's spokespersons or joined those who killed them.'" Matthew 23:23-30 REM.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- In direct contrast to the enemy, who grasped for power and sought to usurp God's throne, Jesus lowered Himself and identified with those under sin, injustice, and oppression (without being infected by sin), and He defeated the enemy by giving Himself in love in order to establish justice as the One who is just and the Justifier of all who believe. How can we claim to be concerned about the law that Christ died to uphold if we are not concerned about what Christ

calls the weightier matters of the law? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 97.

How did Jesus, by giving Himself in love, establish justice and defeat the enemy?

How did Jesus' death uphold the law?

Have you heard He died to uphold the law by paying the legal death penalty so we wouldn't have to? Is that what it means to uphold the law? That is the type of law creatures make.

Is there another way to understand how Christ's death establishes justice, is just, and upholds the law?

Let's be clear: Jesus' vicarious, self-sacrificial, substitutionary death provides for our salvation, for our redemption, rebirth, and cleansing from sin.

Let me be explicitly clear on this point: No human being could be saved from sin without the substitutionary sinless life and sacrificial death of Jesus.

I believe that Jesus became a real human and voluntarily put Himself into a position that was not naturally His own for the purpose of delivering us from the position that was naturally our own; that is, He took our place. He substituted Himself. We should never deny this—for it is eternally true!

The question is: Why was His death required to save us?

My view is that Christ's death was to accomplish what the apostle Paul described:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

According to this passage, the reason for Christ's substitutionary sacrificial death was not a legal one; it was not for a penal reason. It was not a payment. It was not to assuage God's wrath or propitiate His anger, for God was never our problem. God has always been for us (Romans 8:31); God was in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). God was not changed by Adam's sin, nor did His law change. Rather, it was the condition of Adam that changed from sinless, loyal, faithful, and trustworthy to sinful, disloyal, unfaithful, and untrustworthy; he became a fear-ridden and selfish being. Adam no longer had a pure heart and right spirit!

Thus, Jesus became our human substitute, taking up the humanity that had been damaged by Adam, so that we might *become* the righteousness of God, so that humanity might be cleansed from sin and restored to His perfect ideal.

But why is it that Christ's substitutionary death was required for us to become righteous? Why was Christ's death necessary to save humans from sin? How did Christ's voluntary and substitutionary sacrifice achieve the righteousness of God in humanity?

After all, if God is love and He loves the world so much that He sent His Son (John 3:16), if God is merciful—full of mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31), pardons freely (Isaiah 55:7), and does not keep a record of our wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5)—then why couldn't He just forgive us outright without the death of Jesus?

First, God *did* forgive us outright! It was His love and forgiveness that sent His Son to do what was necessary to save us.

But God's forgiveness, extended freely from His loving heart, *does not* remove sinfulness from us! And salvation is something more than forgiveness—it *is* healing! Salvation requires that sinfulness, fear and selfishness, in us be replaced with sinlessness, love and trust, resulting in righteousness, purity, and holiness.

Thus, as John the Baptist said, Jesus is

- “the Lamb of God **who takes away the sin** of the world.” John 1:29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Jesus came to take away sin, to destroy death (2 Timothy 1:10) and the cause of death (Hebrews 2:14), thereby healing this creation. And the fear and selfishness, which is the corrupting, elemental aspect of sin infecting, tainting, polluting, and decaying our spirits (hearts) and souls (minds), must be purged, removed, destroyed, eliminated, cleansed from humanity.

Jesus had to provide **the truth** to free our minds from the lies of Satan—in order to win us (morally influence) to trust in Him—but He also needed to provide, in order to save *the human species created in Eden*, **a cleansed, purified, renewed, and perfected human spirit** (life, heart, motivational energy) that we receive through our trust in Him.

When Adam sinned, he corrupted himself, infecting his life with sin. His spirit (life, heart, motivational energy) became contaminated with fear and selfishness; his energizing motives to action were no longer love-driven selflessness but were fear-driven selfishness, the survival-of-the-fittest instinct.

And every human being is an offspring, outgrowth, extension *of that same life (spirit)!*

We are all born infected with sinfulness, with fear and selfishness, with unholiness (Psalm 51:5). In order to save us from this terminal sinful condition, Jesus had to not only restore our trust in God by a revelation of truth, but He also had to purge, cleanse, remove, eliminate, eradicate, destroy the sinfulness (fear and selfishness) from humanity.

And in order to do that, Jesus had to partake of the humanity, of the very life (spirit) given to Adam in Eden, that Adam had corrupted and to purify that life.

God can create new species any time He wants. After Adam sinned, God was free to gather up some dirt, form a new body, breathe the breath of life into that body, and create a new sinless human being—but such a being would not be part of the creation He had made in Eden. It would not have been related to Adam and Eve but would have been a new, similar, yet distinct creation. Creating a brand-new human would not save Adam, Eve, and their descendants from their terminal sin condition; it would not save the creation God had made in Eden. It would not purify the life given to Adam.

So, what was needed to save humanity from this terminal sin condition?

A human being who is part of Adam, part of *this* creation, a human being who partakes of that same life, that same spirit or life-energy, that was breathed into Adam in Eden, that life which is now infected with fear and selfishness, and who then overcomes and eradicates the contamination and purifies that life, thereby destroying the terminal condition, purging the fear and selfishness, and restoring God's perfect, pure, undefiled love back into this human creation, by perfecting/cleansing the spirit—the life given to Adam and shared by all of us.

Thus, Jesus came as the second Adam, partaking of the very same life that was given to Adam and passed down through David (Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:14). He received His human life through His mother Mary—a humanity, life, that has been damaged by sin, infected with fear and selfishness, and terminal because of Adam's fall (Galatians 4:4). Jesus' human lineage through Mary is how He was able to be tempted in every way just like we are (Hebrews 4:15), and we are tempted by our own evil desires (James 1:14). Jesus' humanity, life, received from Adam was capable of tempting Him with fear and selfishness, which was revealed in Gethsemane when He suffered terrible human emotions and anguish tempting Him to act in self-interest and not go to the cross.

But because the Father of Jesus' humanity is the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18–20), Jesus was also born with, invigorated with, a pure, undefiled spiritual life-energy. As a real human being, partaking of the life passed down from Adam *and* the life given by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to face temptation and use only His human abilities to say no to every temptation coming from the infection in the human spirit (life) he received from Adam and yes to God and live a holy, pure life (Hebrews 4:15) in harmony with the Holy Spirit. (We receive that same ability to choose to live in harmony with God at conversion when we are reborn with a new heart and right spirit—when we receive the new life/spirit—by the indwelling Holy Spirit.)

And on the cross, Jesus chose only the pure life, the pure energy of love, that He received from the Holy Spirit and, thereby, destroyed the death-causing infection, the impure corrupting quality, character, inclination, motivation of fear and selfishness contaminating the life-energy breathed into Adam (2 Timothy 1:10). At the cross, Jesus destroyed the carnal terminal sin nature and arose in a purified humanity and became the new head of humanity (Hebrews 5:9), and He now stands in God's presence, not only in His pre-incarnate position as the Son of God but also as the representative head of humanity—Jesus, a real human being, sinless and perfect. He stands in the heavenly counsel as Adam's substitute, fulfilling the role that God had originally designed for Adam.

Now through faith, each one of us can receive that same pure, divine life-giving energy (spirit—life) via the indwelling Holy Spirit, who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us, invigorating us

with a reborn new spirit. Christ is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5), who, being grafted into Christ by faith, receive the new invigorating spirit (life) from Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We die to the old spirit of fear and selfishness and live a new life with a new spirit of love and trust. As Paul wrote,

- For **Christ's love compels us**, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves** [no longer live the life of selfishness] but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 NIV84, emphasis mine.

We, with our new life, our new spirit, our new purified spiritual energy are motivated, animated, compelled with new desires, attitudes, and priorities so that we become literal partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). As our spirits, our internal life-energy, our motives, drives, desires now come from Jesus and no longer come from what we inherited from Adam, we grow daily in godliness and, despite ongoing temptations from our old habits and conditioned responses, our renewed reborn spirits are no longer captive to fear and selfishness.