

## 2026 1Q Christ in Philippians and Colossians

### Lesson 3 Life and Death

by Tim Jennings

#### SABBATH

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Read first paragraph,

- Death, we're often told, is just part of life. That's a lie. Death is the opposite of life, the enemy of life. Death was no more built into life than wreckage was built into a car. Paul emphatically says that Christ died to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15).  
*Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 20.

Thoughts about this? The question about death is a huge question that often doesn't get talked about because the inherent fear is so great it makes people uncomfortable.

The NIV renders Hebrews 2:14,15:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV84.

This fear of death enslaves the entire human race, it is the core driver of the spirit of fear and selfishness, the concern for self, the fear of non-existence, and every human being has this fear. This is the driver to essentially every false religion and obstacle that interferes with salvation. What do I mean? This inherent fear of death causes us to seek to save self, protect self, advance self, comfort self, do anything to not be aware of this fear.

On a certain level there is psychological denial, the feeling of invincibility in which people repress this fear and defend against it by feeling invincible, which peaks in late adolescence. This is why militaries recruit 17-22 year olds because they are the ones who see jumping out of planes as an adventure and not a threat to their lives.

There are entire schools of psychology that explore the impact on mental health and human functioning of the fear of death and how we respond to it. This is called existential psychology.

People defend against this fear by various means of doing something that keeps something about them alive—such as living on through their children, creating works of various kinds that will live on after them, books, art, music, parks, statues, having buildings named after them. This is one of the reasons for legacy fund raising, offering big donors to have their name on things.

This fear of death is the foundation and cause of Buddhism and Eastern forms of meditation.

Buddhism itself teaches that as a young man Buddha saw a sick man, a decrepit old man, and a deceased man being carried to his funeral and became aware of his own mortality—in other words became afraid of death.

He wanted to escape death and instead of turning to Jesus, to God the Creator to receive a new life through faith, he instead turned inward to self and began meditating, relaxed posture, deep rhythmic breathing, repetitive mantra while gently pushing away any thought until he experienced in himself a euphoria and emotional peace termed “nirvana.”

What is actually happening is that this type of meditation suppresses the reasoning, thinking, and comprehending circuits of the brain, it suppresses the part of the brain where your individuality and identity resides, so that one loses their sense of self. While in this state one’s ability to reason and think is suppressed and one experiences a powerful emotional euphoria and often a disembodied type of experience where one no longer feels as an individual but as part of something larger. This self-induced emotional experience in which truth is avoided, and in fact while in this state the brain cannot comprehend truth, is believed to be transcendence into a higher state of being that connects one with the cycles of energy, purify themselves from moral corruption so that they can live on in new forms in a better and higher state of existence when they are reincarnated.

The devil is such a good liar, he had led people to call this state in which thinking is turned off and the brain regions that comprehend truth are inactive, as a state of enlightenment, which it is in reality an state of darkness.

The underlying belief for the adherents of this religion is, consistent with the first law of thermodynamics, energy is neither created or destroyed but simply changes forms, that at death the energy of a person still exists and through this meditation one can purify their energy to ensure that when it reforms into a physical being they come back with a better more positive existence than the life they had, or if one doesn’t do this they come back with a more degraded life.

There are multiple problems with this religion, 1. it denies how life actually works and what constitutes a living human being; 2. it is inconsistent with science and evidence 3. its method is contrary to Scripture and focuses the mind away from truth and 4. rather than leading one to life it actually cuts people off from life while simultaneously numbing their conscience so they do not experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit that would lead them to repentance. 5. it is a means of saving self, cleansing one’s energy is another way of saying cleansing one’s spirit from sin, from fear and selfishness. But in truth the spirit we have inherited from Adam is corrupt with fear and selfishness and nothing we can do can cleanse it—we can only surrender it, die to self, and be reborn with a new Spirit—the Holy Spirit, who brings us the Spirit, life, of Jesus. And Eastern meditation practices trick people into retaining their terminal spirit of fear and selfishness.

Jesus and the Bible teach that operational human beings are composed of three parts like an operational computer has three parts:

- Soma—hardware—body
- Psyche—software—soul
- Pneuma—electricity/energy-breath of life/spirit

Eastern philosophies merge the spirit and soul into one entity and teach that when energy recycles so does the individual, the soul.

Jesus and the Bible do not teach this. Jesus and the Bible teach that the life energy (spirit/*pneuma*) originates in God and is distinct from individuality (soul/*psyche*), and at death, body returns to dirt from which it was made, the life energy (spirit/*pneuma*) returns to God (Eccl. 12:7); individuality (soul/*psyche*) is safe with Christ in heaven in a state of sleep, suspended animation, and at the resurrection God brings these three together again (hardware, software, and energy) at the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

So the first two problems with the Eastern philosophies are they are contrary to how life actually is built by God to function and deny science.

Third, the focus of the meditation is on nothing, which is the opposite of Scripture which always focuses our meditation on some aspect of God, His character, law, creation, providences, historical actions in history, sacrifice of Jesus. In other words, biblical meditation calls our minds to think, contemplate, focus, attend, engage, upon subjects larger than self, that are awe-inspiring, to lead us to connect with our Creator in interactive conversation, to ultimately open our hearts in truth to Him and receive a new animating Spirit and via the law of worship and truth we are actually transformed by this process.

Fourth, the internally focused emptying of the mind of Eastern meditation rather than enlightening and ennobling enfeebles and enslaves. Eastern meditation does not free people from their fear of death, they are enslaved by it and must continue to do this type of meditation in order to manage their anxiety. This form of meditation is a self-comfort measure that actively interferes with salvation—why?

Because biblical meditation leads one into truth—truth about God, about themselves, about their terminal sin condition, about the solution for sin and the source of salvation, which leads the person meditating on God and His truth to decision points, places where they have to choose, will they surrender self, the fear-based, self-centered, survival life and all its self-developed coping and comfort strategies and be reborn in love and trust through the indwelling Holy Spirit, or will they continue to choose distrust and self-centered fear-based survival strategies?

Functionally what this means is that when one follows the Spirit of Truth and Love they will be led by their Shepherd in the path of righteousness for the glorification of God by restoration of their soul into Christlikeness, and where the Shepherd leads them is into the valley of the shadow of death. This is not the valley of death, but the valley of the shadow of death. This is the valley that every sinner who wants salvation must go through, it is the place where it feels like one is dying, where one comes face

to face with their own self, their own spirit of fear, their own desperate desire to protect and save self, and they must choose—do they trust Jesus their Shepherd and surrender their life to Him and are reborn with a new life, a new spirit of love and trust, or do they run away back to their dysfunctional coping strategies? This is the valley Jacob entered the night he wrestled with the angel, the valley David entered after being confronted by Nathan and then wrote the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, the valley Peter entered after denying Jesus.

It is the valley where we must die to selfishness and be reborn—and in that valley the Shepherd's rod and staff comfort us—the rod beats back the wolves and the staff, with the crook, lifts the sheep out of the ditch when they fall in it. He prepares a table of spiritual food to nurture our souls in the presence of our enemies, anoints our heads with the oil of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, transform, and cleanse, and God's love and mercy will pursue us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in God's house forever.

Eastern Meditation cheats people from salvation as it teaches them when they start to feel that existential anxiety, that terrible valley of the shadow of death, don't turn to Jesus, don't face the reality of our own terminal sin condition, don't trust in our Creator, instead, turn to self, turn inward, begin suppressing all truth, all thinking, until you alter your brain function enough you feel a sense of euphoria and peace and then you can pretend you have transcended the reality of your terminal condition.

Understand this clearly, Eastern meditation treats the symptoms, the anxiety of our mortality, our terminal sin condition but leaves the person dying in sin; but biblical meditation leads to a trust relationship with Jesus that cures the problem.

If you haven't read our [Meditation Guide](#), the difference between biblical and Eastern, you can get free copies mailed to your US postal address, these are available in Australia and South Africa, and you can also read it online or download the pdf to your device at our website.

## **SUNDAY**

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The lesson asks us to read Philippians 1:19-20:

- For I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. Philippians 1:19-20 NIV84.

What do you hear Paul saying?

Do you hear Paul struggling with human concerns, anxieties, self-doubt, but exercising trust in God and committing himself to God's cause?

Does faith or trust in Jesus mean we don't have fears, anxieties, or stresses or that we are enabled to face and overcome them through the exercise of faith, love, trust, and truth?

The first paragraph states, "Although Paul was not a criminal, this was not the first time he was imprisoned..."

When I read this, I thought this statement has a lot in it to consider, a lot of implications for God's people today.

Was Paul a criminal? A criminal is someone who is guilty of committing a crime, and a crime is defined as breaking of the law, and thus doesn't this statement that Paul was not a criminal depend on whose law one is using to determine that?

For instance, would the legalistic leaders of the Sanhedrin accuse Paul of breaking their law?

Didn't they accuse Jesus Himself of being a law-breaker? And did Jesus break some of their laws? Did they have laws about washing in certain ways, or what was lawful according to their rules to do on Sabbath, or who to associate with, or who to touch? Did Jesus break their laws?

So, were Jesus and Paul criminals?

I agree that Paul was not imprisoned for breaking God's laws, which are design laws. Paul lived in harmony with truth, love, and freedom. He did not act in any way that caused harm, injury, or was exploitative or destructive to others.

However, did Paul's actions to advance truth and love offend others? Did it break some of their made-up laws? Did those who were offended use human governments, laws, and law enforcement to imprison and eventually execute Paul?

Does this give any insight into the problem of believing God's laws function like human law, a system of made up rules that require enforcement through external punishment?

Those who believe God's laws functions like human law are extremely vulnerable to joining with the oppressive and abusive forces in this world. All that is required is that they be convinced the law in question is one of God's laws and they will use the power of the state to enforce it.

Those who believe God's law functions like human law, despite their self-proclaimed motive of virtue and love, are almost completely incapable of doing what is right, and will almost always be deceived into doing the wrong thing.

We saw this during COVID when so many Christians, including church leaders, complied with imposed laws and government mandates that were contrary to God's design laws, laws that coerced consciences of people. And every one of these Christians that went along and used their office, position, power to support the governmental directives through writings, publications, policies, or

simply refusal to stand for truth and colluded with actions that coerced members and employees, **believed they were acting righteously, in harmony with God and heaven—yet were not.**

Why couldn't they see the truth—and why are so many today still struggling to see the truth?

Why did the religious leaders in Christ's day fail to see the truth that their legal approach was wrong when Jesus, God Himself, was there revealing truth in the clearest ways?

Why were they offended when Jesus exposed their legal religion as fraudulent? Why are those who enforced the COVID laws offended when their legal coercive methods are exposed as fraudulent?

Why didn't the religious leaders in Christ's day, in the aftermath of their actions, after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, after they had received the testimony of the Roman soldiers to the reality of Christ's resurrection, and the testimony of the disciples, the evidence of Pentecost, repent and admit they were wrong and support and embrace Paul and the other apostles? Why did they continue to persecute Paul and the other apostles?

Why is it that 4 years later, with all the documentation and evidence that COVID was a man-manipulated virus, the deep propaganda and lies related to the threat of COVID, the manipulation of media, society, restrictions of liberties, the evidence of the cascading harm and deaths that the interventions caused, that leaders continue to deny reality, deny all the evidence and refuse to repent, learn from their mistakes, and openly confess and ask forgiveness and begin leading in a new direction?

Understand what I am about to say, it is not merely a matter of accepting facts, acknowledging data, cognitively agreeing with a truth—it is a matter of the motivation of the heart. And until the heart is reborn with the Spirit of Christ, with the Spirit of love and truth, then the individual is still controlled by the spirit of fear and selfishness and will not humble self. They will still seek to protect self, justify self, externalize, blame others, accuse, distort, and seek to turn attention away from any truth that would expose them.

It is truth, that sometimes, such unconverted individuals are forced by the weight of evidence and circumstance to admit that they were wrong, like Judas who publicly admitted he had betrayed innocent blood, or a president admitting that he did in fact of sexual relations with that woman, but this is not repentance. True repentance, rebirth with the life of Jesus, is a change of spirit, heart, motivation, becoming a new person who cherishes and practices new methods that sacrifice self for the glory of God and the benefit of others and this is manifested in a change of conduct, method, motive, the converted begins to promote the methods, principles, and eternal truths of God's kingdom.

We see this perfectly revealed in the life of Paul, who before the Damascus Road experience used the power of the state, of imposed law and law enforcement to persecute those who believed in Jesus. But after Damascus Road his heart changed and therefore his methods changed; he presented truth in love and left people free. He wrote that every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5), and he wrote repeatedly that there is no salvation by law, only by trust in Jesus.

Christianity cannot fulfill its mission, to take the eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God to the world, **until we rejected the imposed law lies and return to worshiping God as Creator, which means embracing design law**, being won to trust in our Father in heaven, and being reborn with hearts and minds that operate upon the methods of God.

## MONDAY

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Read second paragraph,

- The most deadly spiritual weapons are ideas, good and bad. Satan uses criticism, betrayal, embarrassment, fear, peer pressure, and a host of similar tools that Christians should never employ. We are, instead, to use love, mercy, peace, gentleness, longsuffering, kindness, and self-control. Our most powerful weapon, judiciously used, is “the Word of God” wielded by the Spirit (Eph. 6:17, AMP), because only God can bring the truth home to a person’s heart. We are merely the instrument that God uses to accomplish His purposes. *Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 22.

Really great focus of this paragraph, spiritual warfare is a warfare for hearts and minds and our weapons are not the weapons of the world.

And is certainly true that the most deadly spiritual weapons are ideas—Satan is the father of lies and lies believed break the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness which separates people from God.

But, I wonder about the qualifier, “the most deadly spiritual weapons are ideas, good and bad”? I wonder if this was a typo or editorial oversight? If they would have said the most powerful spiritual weapons are ideas, good and bad, then it would have been accurate. But I don’t think good ideas are deadly spiritual weapons. Now, if they would have said, ideas that pretend to be good, or ideas that are often considered or believed to be good are deadly spiritual weapons I would also agree. But if the idea is objectively good it must harmonize with God’s design laws for life, all true good originates in God and thus genuinely good ideas are not deadly spiritual weapons.

But the destructive ideas that masquerade as good, they are the deadliest.

And the deadliest idea of all that has been masquerading as good is the lie about God’s law and justice, the idea that God’s law is like human law and justice is when God uses His power to kill law breakers. This idea pretends to be good, it is presented by preachers under the guise of God’s holiness, righteousness, and justice, that as a just God He must enforce His law or there will be anarchy and chaos etc.

Now consider the following—the way one believes God’s law functions determines whether a true statement is healing to them or destructive to them.

**True statement:** God is the Creator, Sovereign, and rightful Ruler of all, and as Ruler He has a perfect righteous and holy law that His kingdom and government operate upon. And God’s law is eternal and cannot be changed and God will uphold His law and see that justice is done.

All Christians that I know would agree with this statement. Those of us who believe God’s law is design law agree with this, as do those who have accepted the lie that God’s law functions like human law.

But notice the difference upon people if they understand this true statement through the two views of God’s law, and the impact if someone accepts this true statement, but has already believed the lie that God’s law functions like human law.

Those who understand God’s law to be design law, realize that God is not only the Creator but the Sustainer of all things and life operates only in harmony with Him, upon the eternal principles, design laws that originate and emanate from His being. As such people realize that sin severs our connection with God and causes death and that salvation requires God to provide the solution to remove distrust, restore trust, remove the spirit of fear and selfishness and replace it with a new sinless spirit, life, the life of Christ, so that we are actually restored to righteousness through faith. Thus God saves through the upholding of and outworking of His design laws of truth, love, and freedom.

But the moment the idea of law is degraded to be nothing more than the types of laws creatures make, made up rules, that require enforcement through punishment, then this truth becomes truly deadly because it causes distrust in God. God is viewed as the enforcer of His law, the source of death inflicted for justice sake, and what people trust in is the legal mechanics, payments, intercessions, and mediations being done to God because they don’t trust God without them. This functionally means people don’t open their hearts to be reborn with the life of Christ, but hide behind a legal mechanic, claiming legal payment in a heavenly court system, and the protection from God their heavenly defense team (Jesus—and sometimes Mary and the Saints) provide in their behalf. And then, because they are not reborn, but actually cut off from the Holy Spirit by their distrust, they are still motivated by fear and selfishness and become legalistic, like the Pharisees in Christ’s day. They become concerned with religious rules, right doctrines, right policy, procedure, deeds, and persecute people in the name of God for not conforming to their religion. This persecution can take on physical persecution, but often is psychological and spiritual, denigrating those who don’t believe the way we do, purging and shunning etc.

It is a terribly corrupt system of ideas that pretends to be good, but instead is truly deadly.

Questions about this?

Read the third paragraph,

- Because the battle is spiritual, we're in a war of ideas and values. Yet, Christ has won the victory at the cross for us, and as long as we stay connected to Him, we can never be defeated, even if we are killed. Paul surrendered his life to whatever happened to him here on earth, however unjust, because he entrusted his life and his future to a higher court. *Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 22.

The spiritual battle includes ideas and values but is more than this, it is motivational energy, the spirit that drives us. Are we living our lives from the spirit of fear and selfishness or have we been reborn to live a new life of love and trust in Jesus? This new life is only possible in a living relationship with our Creator. Such a relationship includes ideas and values, but is more than conceptual, cognitive, it is experiential.

And the legalists don't get this—the legalists, like the Pharisees who crucified Christ, and the legalists in the church today, don't understand that salvation is an actual change in the operational basis of the individual human heart and mind. They falsely think it is about the right doctrines, right beliefs, right ceremonies, right diet, right dress, right denominational affiliation, right behaviors on the right days of the week, and getting one's legal record declared to be right in heaven. But, the entire evidence of Scripture and testimony of Jesus and His prophets is that the behaviors are secondary, that salvation is not legal adjustments in books, it is always about the heart. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart.

This is why we see in the hall of faith in Hebrews after people like Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses we have people listed like “the prostitute Rahab,” Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah...think about that.

These people didn't always perform in the best of ways, they had doubts, they struggled between competing motivations, they had various forms of bad deeds—but in the end they all trusted God.

And God focused on the condition of their heart and cleansing them from the spirit of fear and selfishness and sealing them in love and trust with Him.

What do you think of the suggestion that Paul entrusted his life and future to a higher court?

Seems a strange way to describe it—unless one is caught up in the legal way of thinking about things.

Perhaps they are thinking of Daniel 7 when the court is seated and books are open. Have you heard of this scene before? And have you heard this text used by some to assert that this is a legal court that functions like our human court system?

Let's read those verses—I just want to demonstrate how people can read into Scripture what is not actually said in Scripture and completely miss the evidence of what is written in Scripture because they read it with their preconceived ideas, particularly the lie that God's law functions like human law. This idea causes their mind to filter the evidence of Scripture into interpretations that are not inherent in the text and often to not even see or consider the truth right before them.

- As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Daniel 7:9-10 NIV84.

What do you hear? To those who believe the lie about God’s law this is so obvious, so straightforward, so clear to them. They will say, can’t you read, it says the court was seated and the books were opened, that is a judgment, it is a legal system, a legal court, and God’s heavenly tribunal is now going to investigate the records, the books, and make His pre-advent judgment.

The problem, they ignore what the Scripture actually describes has taking place when the court is seated and books are opened:

- “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. Daniel 7:13-14 NIV84.

This court is not a judicial court, it is the royal court, the heavenly court where God sits and reigns and where Jesus receives His investment after His work of salvation as ruler, sovereign, and He begins His final work of sealing His saints on earth to join Him in the celebration the wedding feast.

This same scene is described in multiple other places in Scripture, it is the wedding of Christ to His Bride, it is the cleansing of the Sanctuary, where at-one-ment happens, where the two become one, where the church is united in eternal love, loyalty, and trust to Jesus so they can never be moved, being both intellectually and spiritually settled, it is described in Revelation as Jesus receiving His bride, which is the New Jerusalem.

There is nothing legal going on, it is the reality-based requirement for sinners to stand in the presence of God—and what is that? We must be converted from fear and selfishness to love and trust by being reborn with a new spirit, the spirit of Christ. Then we must be cleansed and sealed, so that nothing will ever causes us to betray our loyalty Christ, like Job, able to stand through every trial and tribulation.

The heavenly records are not like legal records, they are like medical records, they have an accurate accounting of you, everything about you, just like an accurate medical record. And if you had cancer the medical record would document all the pathology. But, if you took treatment, the record would show that, and if your completed your treatment and the cancer is in remission, the record shows that as well.

Understand this very clearly—the heavenly record is an accurate transcript of you and ONLY way to have your heavenly record cleansed from sin is to have your heart and mind cleansed from sin! In other words, to be reborn with a new spirit and trust Jesus with your life.

And understanding this leads us to the last paragraph,

- As Christians, we should not fight so much for our rights as for what is right. It's not "might makes right," but "right makes might." Submission to God's will is honorable; in fact, it is the only way to be victorious in the war in which we find ourselves. Jesus, of course, is the quintessential example of submission to the will of God, as Paul will bring out in *Philippians 2. Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 22.

This is absolutely true, those who are reborn with the life of Christ are not motivated by self, their rights, but are motivated by love for God and others and while they have no desire for pain, humiliation, suffering, they will go through it for God and others, because they love God but also understand how reality works! **A person cannot advance life while cutting themself off from life.**

One cannot become more loving and Christlike while actively choosing to be more selfish and self-promoting! You cannot experience greater trust in God by choosing to trust in self.

The truth that genuine Christianity is self-sacrificial, like Jesus, and does not seek to promote our rights, but to glorify God, has been twisted in recent years into a great deception. In recent years enemies of Christ have been teaching that Christianity is a religion designed by elitist European whites to enslave and abuse blacks. They suggest that the pagan slaves taken from Africa were taught Christianity to teach them that they should not fight for their rights, that they should suffer like Jesus did and submit to their slave-masters. They go on to teach, after distorting history to apparently support this lie, that Christianity and its principles taught in America are corrupt and should be rejected. And you have seen over the last century how Christianity and its true principles of valuing every human being as a child of God created to be an image bearer of God, to be developed to the highest levels of individual development, of religious and civil liberties, has been eroded.

Sadly, these corrosive ideas have taken root in many minds in our society. The truth is that slavery has existed in every single society and group throughout human history as far back as human records exist, in every religion, and every culture.

There has only been one religion, when it became dominant in society, that has eliminated slavery and made it reprehensible and that is true Christianity. Why? Because true Christianity sees every person as a child of God, an image bearer of the Creator, that in Christ there is not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, black or white—true Christianity values all human beings equally, and moves upon societies to establish the highest forms of freedom in this sinful world.

It was the Christian abolitionists who sacrificed themselves, put their lives at risk to help end slavery in modern times. More than this, it was Christianity that ended human, including child, sacrifices in the Americas by the various tribal cultures in both north and south America.

But what we see happening today is an attack on Christianity, the attack that falsely claims Christianity was used to devalue people and promote slavery, when the opposite is true, but this lie then leads to another attack, that Christians fights for their rights, that we don't rejoice in our sufferings and trust Jesus with our futures, but we become political and seek to take governmental power to pass laws that will protect our rights, that true justice is found in just laws and law enforcement.

And all of this fuels and is fueled by the spirit of fear and selfishness. In the end, as the final events unfold, the righteous will be like Daniel, the three worthies, Paul, the martyrs through history who were mistreated by corrupt governments, and they are described in Revelation as:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:11 NIV84.

## TUESDAY

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The lesson focuses on death and the misunderstandings in Christianity about death, yet in my opinion doesn't do the best job of clearing up the confusion. For instance the lesson states in the second paragraph,

- But we must also recognize that the dead are really dead. They "know nothing." They rest in the grave till the resurrection (see Eccl. 9:5; John 5:28, 29). That's why Jesus said of Lazarus, who had died, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). *Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 23.

This statement is not the most accurate statement, consider Jesus words:

- "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26 NIV84.
- But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Matthew 22:31-32 NIV84.

So are those who die in a saving relationship with Jesus really dead? Or are they asleep? Is death from sin and sleep death the same thing?

The Bible describes two deaths:

- The second death is the punishment from sin, the wages of sin, and is the total annihilation of body and soul, the eradication and permanent elimination of the individual sinner from which there is no resurrection that only the unsaved experience.
- The first death is a temporary cessation of activity, a sleep, a pause, a time-out from operations and from which there is a resurrection (Matthew 9:23, 24; John 11:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; Revelation 2:11, 20:6).

When God told Adam that in the day he ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil he would surely die, He meant that Adam would die eternally, the second death, the wages of sin death, the annihilation of his individuality. That is the natural result of sin if God does nothing, as the Bible teaches:

- “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 6:23 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- “Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” James 1:15 NKJV.
- “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature will reap destruction**” Galatians 6:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

If God did nothing after Adam sinned, Adam would have died the second (eternal) death. Therefore, because God is love and He loved the world so much, He intervened. God stepped in—as the Bible teaches,

- “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20 NKJV). God interceded in the natural course of sin to save humanity. Jesus dedicated Himself to be our substitutionary Savior, who is God’s “Lamb that was **slain from the creation of the world**” Revelation 13:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

God intervened by not only promising Jesus to be our Savior but also by putting enmity between sinful humans and Satan (Genesis 3:15). The Holy Spirit immediately began working in human hearts to bring conviction of sin; a desire for love, truth, righteousness; a dissatisfaction with evil; a longing for our Eden home of peace; and reconciliation with God.

God also intervened by veiling His life-giving glory that Adam and Eve had previously walked in and placed Earth in an artificial bubble of reality, one in which His presence is hidden, because if God did not do this, His life-giving glory would consume and destroy the very sinners He desires to save—as Scripture teaches: “Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29 NIV84).

In the future, when sin is eliminated from human hearts, God's life-giving glory will again flow freely over this planet. When the Ancient of Days takes His throne, it is blazing with fire, rivers of fire will come out from Him, and the saved will stand in this fire (Daniel 7:9, 10). And in the New Jerusalem, the sun will not need to light Earth, for God's presence will be its light (Revelation 21:23). When God restores His universe and this planet to perfection, the saints and angels will all walk in the "fiery stones" of His presence, just as Lucifer had done before his rebellion (Ezekiel 28:14,16).

Earth today is a dark place compared to heaven and what Earth will be when God's glory covers it again. However, this planet *is* now being protected by God's grace intervening to create this artificial—meaning not natural to God's kingdom—bubble in which God's plan of salvation can be worked out.

### **The Artificial Death**

As part of His grace, God intervened to create another artificial condition, another state that would not naturally occur if God didn't act to make it so, another manifestation of His grace—the first death, the artificial death, the state of sleep in which a person is not destroyed but is in suspended animation, a state in which the body decays but the soul (the mind, the individuality) is retained in a state of sleep awaiting the resurrection. This is like a computer whose software is backed up on a "cloud" server and the hardware is destroyed. Our body is analogous to the hardware, and our individuality (mind, soul) is analogous to the software. Without the hardware, the computer is not operational—so the software sleeps, is stored, awaiting download into new hardware. This is what the Bible teaches about the first-death experience; we sleep awaiting download into new hardware (bodies).

The great Reformer Martin Luther wrote,

- "It is enough for us to know that souls do not leave their bodies to be threatened by the torments and punishments of hell, but enter a prepared bedchamber in which they sleep in peace" (Weimarer Ausgabe, 43, 360, 21–23 (to Genesis 25:7–10); also Exegetica opera latina, Vol 5–6 1833 p. 120 and the English translation: Luther's Works, American Edition, 55 vols., St. Louis: CPH, 4:313).

This artificial state of being is not the natural result of sin—the natural result of sin is eternal death, eternal separation from God, destruction of both soul (individuality, mind) and body. This sleep state would not exist if God did not intervene to provide it in order to restrain the full destructiveness of sin while He, through Jesus, eliminated the cause of death from humanity and opened the way back to unity with Him and eternal life.

Jesus was referring to this artificial state of grace when He said,

**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me **will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** Do you believe this? (John 11:25, 26 NIV84, emphasis mine).**

Jesus is saying that those who believe in Him will not die eternally; they will not be annihilated; they will not have their individuality destroyed; they will not cease to exist; they may sleep, have their daily

operations suspended, and have their souls (individualities, software) safely secured in heaven with Jesus on the “heavenly servers” (Lamb’s book of life)—but they will not die the wages of sin death.

Then when Jesus returns, as Paul describes, these sleeping souls who are safe with Jesus in heaven come back with Him to be downloaded into new bodies:

- Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to **grieve** like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have **fallen asleep**. 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**. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 NIV84, emphasis mine).

What good news! An incredible promise!

Understanding the difference between eternal death (second death), which is the wages, penalty, natural result of unremedied and unremoved sin, versus the sleep death (first death), which is the artificial state of grace in which living operations cease but the individual is not destroyed, allows us to understand the true meaning of a variety of Scriptures, such as:

- “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand” (Deuteronomy 32:39 NIV84).
- “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up” (1 Samuel 2:6 NIV84).

These texts are talking about the artificial state of sleep, the first death, the state of mercy and grace that God controls and that allows people to rest from all the pain, suffering, and conflict that this world of sin brings as they await resurrection into life eternal—when there will be no more sin, pain, suffering, disease, or death for the righteous—or, for the wicked, into death eternal.

God’s grace in providing the first death also limits the life of the truly evil, those like Hitler and Stalin, limiting the harm they can cause in this world.

### **The Second Death**

But the eternal death, the death that is the result of unremoved and unremedied sin, as described in the Bible texts above, is not a manifestation of God’s grace nor a result of His power. This death is the domain and power of God’s enemy, the result of breaking away from God’s design laws for life, and is destroyed by God, the source of life:

- “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**” (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death**” (1 Corinthians 15:24–26 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Eternal death, the second death, is caused by sin, and its power is wielded by Satan and is destroyed by Jesus Christ! Eternal death is the natural result of what sin does if sin is not removed from the sinner.

## **WEDNESDAY**

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The lesson focuses upon unity—what do you understand this to be?

How does God achieve unity?

What does this mean?

- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **until we all reach unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is this unity?

Unity in the faith—does this mean we all become members in the same denomination?

Does it mean unity in doctrines? Unity in behavior, we all eat the same diet, or dress in the same way?

What is this unity?

It says in the knowledge of the Son of God—does that mean we know the same facts, or is this the knowing of experience, that we know Jesus for ourselves, we have our own personal love and trust relationship with Him, and know His character, His methods, His principles, His design laws and we have become like Him in character, that we prioritize what He does, love, truth, freedom.

When the heart is united with Jesus and we valued His methods and live them, there is an inherent unity that comes even while we have different understanding of facts, we have unity of love for each others, and the principles of pursing truth and leaving others free. We use our abilities to build up others and not tear down.

## THURSDAY

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Read first paragraph,

- Satan's strategy is to divide and conquer. Disunity is deadly. Jesus said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25, NKJV). It's a simple principle that Satan is delighted for us to forget. Our unity helps enable us to fulfill our prophetic role as the remnant of Bible prophecy (Rev. 12:17), proclaiming the "everlasting gospel" to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6). Because unity is crucial to fulfill our mission to spread this God-given message, and Jesus' prayer in John 17 highlights "the truth" of God's Word as one of the most important keys for unity (John 17:17, 19), our message cannot be separated from our mission or our unity. All three stand or fall together. If one of these three keys is missing, we can't succeed. However, if we have all three in place, there is nothing to fear. We need not be "in any way terrified" by opposition (Phil. 1:28, NKJV). Satan is a defeated foe. Even if we should be put to death for our faith, nothing can harm us if we "become followers of what is good" (1 Pet. 3:13, NKJV). The devil is powerless to stop the onward march of God's truth. *Adult SS Guide 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 25.

What does this mean,

- Because unity is crucial to fulfill our mission to spread this God-given message, and Jesus' prayer in John 17 highlights "the truth" of God's Word as one of the most important keys for unity (John 17:17, 19), our message cannot be separated from our mission or our unity. All three stand or fall together. If one of these three keys is missing, we can't succeed.

So the three keys are Message from God's Word, mission, and unity?

What is the God-given message we are to take to the world? Do we have unity on what that is?

Some might say the 3 Angel's Messages of Revelation 14. If we accept that as the message to go to the world, would we achieve our mission if we united in having that message read straight from Scripture over every radio and TV station in every language of the world? If we did that couldn't we say we have taken the message of the 3 angels to the entire world? But if we did that would that be the same as taking God's end time message to the world? Would it result in the world being ready?

Or does taking God's end time message to the world entail more than reading a few verses of Scripture to every person in the world?

What does it entail? Doesn't it entail communicating a message that opens hearts and minds to reality, that breaks them out of a fantasy based way of thinking, which includes everything that obstructs their knowledge of God and His kingdom—such fantasies as life evolved on its own and there is not God; or God is an imperial dictator who makes up rules and uses power to kill rule breakers; or every other thing that keeps people from genuine engagement on a reality-based way with God.

So is the message one primarily of right doctrines? What about the truth about God, why sin is sin, what it does to the sinner, and how God resolves it in a way that doesn't incite more fear, rebellion, and sin?