



2026 2Q Growing in a Relationship with God Lesson 13: Into Eternity

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson is about the future world free of sin—the earth made new, after the 1000 years.

Do you ever think about heaven, the earth made new, the universe finally free from sin? What do you think about?

- Do you think of the moment you meet Jesus and the Father? What might that be like? I think I will be without words to express my thanks, awe, amazement, love, and joy.
- Have you ever thought of what it will be like to meet your guardian angel?
- Do you think about the questions you want to ask Jesus?
- Do you think of the people you are going to look for?
- Do you think of how wonderful it will be to have no aches and pains no fatigue, not need any medications, to be fully and completely healthy and happy and never need to sleep again?
- Do you think about traveling the universe?
- Learning new things?
- What about flying? Teleporting? Telekinesis? Walking on water?
- What about having telescopic and microscopic vision?
- Have you thought about the animals that will be there and all of them being friendly, eagles, hawks, falcons without claws, lions, leopards, tigers, and bears without fangs to kill and claws to shred?
- What about no longer having snakes that crawl on the ground, but have wings that fly?
- Graham Maxwell used to ask people if they had ever made a list of the people we wanted for their neighbors in heaven? But he also asked, would we make anyone else's list?

Which seems to take us to our memory text:

- Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2 NIV84.

What does this text mean? Does the text say that we will be declared to be like Jesus even though we are really not? Which is commonly taught in the penal substitutionary fraud in the language of God declares us to be legally righteous when in reality we remain unrighteous.

God is the God of reality—and through what Jesus has accomplished God makes us righteous, in reality, as Scripture says:

- 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.

Through the substitutionary sinless life, voluntary sacrifice, and victorious resurrection of Jesus, God makes righteous all who trust Him. God does not commit fraud and declare people righteous who are not.

What does it mean then to be righteous? To be like Jesus, to be restored to His design, intent, ideal, the image of God restored in heart and mind to be right with God, and we will see Him face to face for we will be like Him.

How? Truth and love revealed that wins us to trust and when we are won to trust we open our hearts and the Holy Spirit enters and we experience new desires, new motives, and as we choose them we experience new power and we are changed in that process being restored to righteousness.

And it is a reality-based change that happens inside the living being as they choose truth, choose to trust, choose to love, choose to say no to the old patterns, preferences, desires.

God presents the truth, the love, and the opportunities with conviction and desire for something better, for us to make our choices, and when we make the choice for truth, love, and trust He also provides divine power to succeed. But the choice is ours and as we make the choice it literally encodes within our brains, changing the substructure of our neurons from where our consciousness arises, and that changes the resonance, the harmonic, the frequency, the energy, the motivation, the desire and we come ever closer and more sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Note the language of the New Covenant:

- This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. Hebrews 8:10–11

This is encoding language, God's design laws of truth, love, trust, freedom encoded within believers by their choice to agree, say yes, and trust. This is why God says:

- "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isaiah 1:18 NIV84.

God directly links reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin—why? Because He is the source of truth and love; we are infected with lies, fear, selfishness, distrust, and only as we reason out the truth, examine it, think it through, weigh the evidence, and then, as Paul writes in Romans 14:5, are fully persuaded in our own minds and choose it does it encode into our being and we are literally healed,

transformed, set right, restored—not from any work on our part, but from the work of God that wins us to trust and which we choose to accept and embrace.

This is reality, all through the Bible:

- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV84.

What is the word of truth doing? It is cutting away from our souls, our psyches, our individualities, our characters, the spirit of fear and selfishness and establishing us in truth, in love, in trust so we are reanimated, reborn, with the Spirit of Christ.

As we study God’s Word, enlightened and led by the Holy Spirit, and choose to say yes, truth by truth, it encodes into our brains and we are brought to points in our lives where we have to choose to follow the truth and trust Jesus, or in fear, insecurity, resentment, anger, frustration, embrace the spirit of fear and selfishness and engage in our old comfort measures.

When we choose the truth and trust Jesus, we will go through various seasons of emotional distress as the sword of the Spirit is cutting our souls free of the spirit of fear and selfishness, but as we trust, we are literally being changed and we come out of such experiences with different motives, different priorities, different attitudes. This is reality and it only possible because of what Jesus has done for us.

How is it we become like Jesus?

- Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:2 NIV84.
- But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV.

This is the law of worship, by beholding we are changed; and the law of exertion, what we exercise gets stronger.

Both of these design laws are built into the operations of reality. Our choices as to what we admire, worship, adore, prefer, prioritize, preference, revere, respect, and therefore choose not merely cognitively to say “Yes I believe that” but functionally, in heart, in motive, in action, what we actually cling to in our inner being, think about, long for, hunger after, and imagine, and therefore watch, read, and act upon, that is what we encode into our brains, that is what we are being changed to become like.

And that is why people do not stay static, people are always changing, either growing more like Christ, maturing, developing, advancing, or regressing, degrading, corrupting.

We talked about why people are looking forward to heaven, have you ever heard of people looking forward to heaven because in heaven no one will know any of the sins they have committed because all their sins have been erased?

What does that reveal about the person?

Have you ever heard of people looking forward to heaven because they are looking forward to standing on the walls of the New Jerusalem and watching someone who wronged them burn, get their just punishment?

What does that reveal about the person?

Why am I asking these questions?

Because the lesson rightly tells us in the third paragraph that, “Regardless of the number of days left for us on earth, we should fix our eyes on Jesus, looking steadfastly to Him.”

But does it make a difference as to what we are looking to Jesus for?

What if a person looks steadfastly to Jesus, confessing their sins, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice to pay for their sins and asking Him to cover them with His blood and erase them from the books in heaven so in the judgment that Father will not see them?

What is that prayer revealing? Doesn't that prayer reveal a person who doesn't actually know God or Jesus? Doesn't that prayer reveal a spirit of fear who doesn't trust God and clings to false beliefs that they cling to because in their heart it makes them feel like their sinfulness is hidden from God, who they falsely believe would be required to punish them if he saw it. But in reality those very beliefs hide God from them—they cannot see God because their minds are clouded by the penal legal lies and they it obstructs their healing—keeping the spirit of fear alive.

How do you think such a person would respond if you told them the truth that God doesn't cover up reality, doesn't hide truth, that sins are not recorded in books as crimes to be legally pardoned and erased, but sin is break down of truth, love, and trust in the operations of the hearts and minds of living beings and God wants to erase that corruption from inside of each one of us so we know Him, love Him, trust Him, and in that relationship there is no fear. And thus we don't fear people knowing the reality of our past sins because we are no longer that person, we have been reborn with a new heart, right spirit, have a new life, it is no longer our old fear ridden sick and diseased, decaying, corrupt self living but Christ lives within us?

How do you think people who pray to have the record of bad deeds respond when they hear the truth?

Those who have hearts genuinely searching for truth will respond with joy, the Holy Spirit will bring the truth home to their hearts and they will desire to know more. They will feel the call of God, they

will study, they will pray, they will choose and they will be set free as the truth frees them from the penal legal lies. In fact, most of us who love this truth came from places just like that—I know I did.

But those whose hearts have hardened to truth, when they hear the truth get angry, hostile, critical, attack, accuse and instead of prayerful study together as friends, they seek to purge from membership, leadership, publication, all accounts of the truth because the idea of truth being revealed frightens them—they are protecting their spirit of fear.

The same is revealed in those who are longing for the wicked to get their just punishments. If we present the truth about hell, about the fires of God’s life-giving glory, about how sin kills and God doesn’t use power to inflict torment and torture. They do not receive that with joy, but with hostility, it sounds threatening to them, it sounds unjust to them. Why? Because they have encoded lies within their brain that become the predictive models, the lenses through which they process new experiences and information and the lies distort everything they hear and read to fit with their preconceived ideas. It is the fallacy of the assumed premise, once one takes a position and has a premise or belief, that premise becomes a filter, guide, lens, through when we process new facts and data—and it requires events of significant importance to that individual to disrupt that encoding and create opportunities for change—but the opportunity doesn’t determine the outcome and people are free to reject truth with each opportunity and when they do they deepen the error encoding and harden their hearts to truth.

SUNDAY

The lesson rightly emphasizes the dangers of delaying living for Christ, of putting off decisions to a later time, quoting James,

- Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:13, 14 NIV84.

The lesson emphasizes the shortness of one’s life, we don’t know if we will be alive tomorrow, so make your choice while you can.

There is wisdom in that—but that perspective misses a deeper reality as to why delay is so dangerous. And that is the reality of how God created us and that we are in a constant state of change based upon our choices and experiences.

If we are brought to decision points, truth is presented, we are convicted, we know the choice we should make but we say no to it. The choice to say no encodes. Our choice changes our brains, molecules reshape in our brains, and the changes in those molecules changes what we are sensitive to, what frequency, harmonic we respond to. If we encode truth and love we become more sensitive to truth and love, more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. We can hear the still small voice more easily. But if we encode lies, fear, selfishness, denial, we become less sensitive to the Holy Spirit, our consciences

become dulled, we don't hear the still small voice of the Holy Spirit as easily. God must raise His voice, events must get more intense, to get through to us, and if we resist again and say no again, we deepen the encoding errors into our brains, we become more and more out of harmony with truth and love, more aligned with the corruption of this world.

Delay doesn't mean we are cast off by God; it doesn't mean we are, at that moment, lost or that God changes, but it does mean we are hurting ourselves, making it harder for God to reach us and ALSO making ourselves sicker so that if/when we finally do surrender, do choose the truth, the pain, the suffering, the difficulty of being set free, transformed will be harder on us—that is how reality works.

I do want to differentiate the saying “no, I don't want to follow truth now, I will follow it later” attitude, with the person who delays, not out of rejection, not out of wanting to stay in sin, but out of uncertainty, confusion, and honest questioning in the struggle to be free of old encoding, old allegiances, old attachments. That is a natural process of healing.

Truth presents, your heart and mind respond to it, you see elements of application that are right for you. You haven't said no to the truth, but you haven't said yes either, because your yes would mean a price, a cost, you might have to break up a dysfunctional relationship, you might have to quit a job, you might have to change careers, or sell a property, and you are struggling for a variety of reasons.

You see the truth; you want to accept it; you haven't rejected it, but you are struggling to find a way to apply it that won't cost what you think it will cost. And sometimes this is framed as, “How can I apply this truth without offending” this person or that person?

And one is not wrong, when truth comes to bear, to consider how to accept and apply it to their life in the most gracious, loving way—*how do I let my family know I am no longer agnostic, I have given my heart to Jesus?*

And a person is in this position, which may last a while, is not at peace, the truth and the Holy Spirit are constantly moving upon them. When the old patterns, attachments, methods, motives, present, they are convicted this isn't right. They will experience greater distress, anxiety, worry, pressure, maybe even exhaustion, burn out, fatigue as it is exhausting to try and hold two opposing values, priorities—clinging to something out of fear of the result and Jesus and the truth out of love for Him. They will continue the burnout experience until they make their choice for truth or reject it. When they choose the truth, no matter the cost, and trust Jesus, then a huge burden lifts. Their heart is freed from that struggle, and their brain literally changes, their spirit shifts, they are settled on that point and have a period of joy, peace, relief inside themselves even if they lose some relationship, position, or object of value. And then the next advancement of truth comes.

But if they eventually cling to the old and persistently reject the truth, they slowly lose the urgency, sensitivity, desire for the truth and will come to wonder why they ever thought it was something worth following.

Read the last paragraph,

- We all need revival in our lives. It's so easy to get complacent or even to be forgetful of what God has done and is doing for us. What faithful believer, even if struggling, could not pray something like this: "Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!" (Ps. 80:19, NKJV)? When you accept what Jesus has done for you, when you know that your sins have been forgiven and that you are covered by His perfect righteousness, credited to you by faith, you can know that you are saved in Him. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 105.

Let's break this into two sections, first what do you think of, "What faithful believer, even if struggling, could not pray something like this:

- Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:19 NIV84.

What does this mean?

If having God's face shine upon us saves us, then why did God say to Moses,

- "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live"? Exodus 33:20 NIV84.

How do you reconcile these two verses, God's face shining upon us saves us but seeing God's face kills us?

In our sinful state we cannot assimilate, process, thrive in the unveiled glory of God. It is too much and would overwhelm us and we would die. That is what God is saying to Moses—we must first be won to trust, healed within, have God's living law written upon our hearts and minds and then we can see God face to face.

The Psalmist, however, is describing the healing reality—we are corrupt, filled with lies, selfishness, fear, guilt, shame, and we are decaying. The only possible salvation is restoration of God's perfection within. Truth must replace lies in our hearts and minds, love must replace selfishness, trust must replace distrust. This is the only possible way us to be saved because salvation is literal and reality-based restoration to God's perfect design for life; it is healing; it is reality-based cleansing from the internalized corruption within us.

And the ONLY way for that to happen is for us to connect with the source of perfect truth and love and that is God. So we need the light of truth and love shining from the face of God to win us, lead us, transform us and then as we encode that truth and love through our trust relationship with Him we are transformed and one day will see Him face to face for we shall be like Him!

What do you think of the last half of the paragraph,

- When you accept what Jesus has done for you, when you know that your sins have been forgiven and that you are covered by His perfect righteousness, credited to you by faith, you can know that you are saved in Him. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 105.

How, in your opinion, from your experience in your own Christian journey and what you know of other friends and family in the church, do you think most people hear and understand this?

Isn't this typically heard and understood to mean something like this quote from *Perspectives Digest*, A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society:

- Many world religions teach that when their gods are angered by the misbehavior (sin) of their followers/worshippers, **the gods need to be appeased—usually through sacrifices**. In this way the wrath/anger of the god or gods is turned away from the worshipper, and the god or gods are no longer displeased. This is called propitiation.

But in Christianity, the sinner is doomed to face the wrath of God against sin. God gave Christ, however, as a substitute for the sinner. Because Christ carried our sins on Himself at the cross, He faced the wrath of God for all sinners. He became the propitiation for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and therefore met the demands of divine law and justice.

His death satisfied and appeased a God who hates sin and is radically opposed to it. His holiness and justice demand that atonement be made to change the condemned condition of the sinner, who faces the wrath of God. And love provides this atonement. Divine love makes provision of propitiation for the sinner to be received by faith (Rom. 3:25). In the end, God is just and the justifier of those who have faith (who believe) in Jesus Christ (vs. 26).

Perspectives Digest, A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society, vol 18, issue 1, emphasis mine.

Don't most people hear the forgiven and covered language in a legal way, paying legal debts to a punishing God in order to covering over the legal record of sins, paying legal penalties, obtain legal forgiveness from God because the legal demands of the law have been paid?

And all of this is fiction, fraud, falsehood, distortion, this legal presentation is Satan's mischaracterization of God. It is all predicated, built, upon the lie that God's law functions like human law and therefore God's justice is that of a creature, imposed punishments, and salvation is legal and external.

So let us be precise and clear on each of these elements.

Forgiveness: It is absolutely true that no sinner could be saved from sin *if* God were unforgiving, if God did not forgive. God's forgiveness is an absolute requirement for salvation. However, was God's forgiveness ever a barrier? Was God ever unforgiving? Was God ever in the position of needing something done to Him to enable Him to forgive? Absolutely not! And the penal legal fraud always

mischaracterizes God as a being who is unforgiving until something is done to Him to enable Him to forgive.

The proponents of the lie will try to suggest that God is love and because He is love He sent His Son to provide the sacrifice so He could forgive. But notice what they are doing, they are diverting attention away from the question—does God forgive outright, or not? In their view, if they were honest, they would say, “Well because He is love He would like to forgive outright, but He cannot do so because the law requires punishment and He isn’t able to actually forgive until the payment to the law has been received. That is why He sent Jesus to make that payment so He could forgive.” And of course the law is an expression of God’s character so they are saying God refuses to forgive until He gets a blood payment of an innocent in place of the guilty—that God commits a legal fraud and calls it righteous.

Think what they are saying, it is so corrupt. God is bound by some rule that He doesn’t even want to enforce (but it originates in His own character), but is willing to kill His Son so He can then have permission to commit another fraud, the fraud of claiming that the unrighteous are really righteous through a legal adjustment in a book, through an external legal payment.

The truth is that God was always forgiving:

- If God is for us who can be against us...Rom 8:31
- For God so loved the world...John 3:16, 17
- While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Rom 5:8

God’s forgiveness is extended freely from God and was never the problem and suggesting it was is a lie, and turns the minds of sinners away from the real problem, which is sin in us, our corruption, distrust of God, decay, error, rebellion in us.

Covered by His perfect righteousness, means in truth that when we are won to trust, when we open our hearts to Jesus, we are filled with the Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Christ, we are reborn with the very life of Christ, no longer animated by fear and selfishness as the controlling power within, but by love and trust in Jesus. We are internally, in heart, in mind, being washed by the Holy Spirit and every error is being corrected, every corruption purged, every defilement cleansed. Jesus’ righteousness is covering us internally, our thoughts are being merged with His, our desires with His, are character is maturing to be like His.

This was taught in the object lesson of the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant.

Notice the name was “the ark of the covenant”—what covenant? The covenant of salvation, the agreement to save sinners from sin, the agreement amongst the Godhead that Jesus would be the member of the Godhead to provide all that is needed to destroy sin, Satan, and purify sinners from sin.

And what do we see in the symbolism of the ark? Jesus is the lid, made out of solid gold. Paul uses the word for the lid to refer to Jesus as the *hilasterion*.

Gold represents the perfect sinless righteousness of Christ, and the lid is solid gold. And through the covenant of grace, Jesus

- reconciles to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:20 NIV84

And above the lid we see heaven and its host represented by the cherubim on the lid and the shekinah glory above the lid—connected to Jesus, but below the lid represents this earth and fallen humanity. The box was made out of acacia wood, a porous wood with holes in it and it was covered completely in gold with all the holes filled in.

The box represents sinful human beings who are perfected by Christ's righteousness, in reality. The box was literally covered in gold and every hole filled with gold. We, when we trust Jesus, get a reality based infusion of the Holy Spirit who fills our hearts and minds and we are led day by day to embrace ever increasing love, truth, and trust, ultimately coming to the point we are sealed, settled, and like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, would rather die than betray the one we love.

And notice what God says through the prophet Jeremiah:

- “Return, faithless people,” declares the LORD, “for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion. Then I will give you **shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding**. In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “men will **no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’** It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. Jeremiah 3:14-16 NIV84, emphasis mine.

God calls His people back to Him, those who have wandered, been faithless, who have not trusted God, who have encoded error, been going after the false gods of this world, the penal legal gods. And He tell them He will give them shepherds, and shepherds are pastors; and the pastors or shepherds will be after God's own heart—and what will they do?

The pastors God gives will lead the people into knowledge and understanding—of what? Of God, of reality, of truth; they internalize, encode, truth, love, trust and are transformed in the inner person—thus they don't need to think about the symbol, the ceremony, the object lesson, and they don't need it to be brought back, built again, focused on, sought after. Why? Because reality—because the living law of God has been restored to the place where it belongs, inside the hearts and minds of believers and we are united, at one with God and heaven again.

And I want to go on record that any future movement that focuses upon the physical box, the physical ark of the covenant as anything more than a historical object lesson is a deception. It is designed to lead hearts and minds away from the reality to which the object lesson was intended to teach and that is healing the inner person.

And this is why Jeremiah a few chapters later writes:

- “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 31:31-32 NIV84.

It will not be a covenant of ceremony, ritual, or animal sacrifice. It will not be the covenant of imposed law, of rules, of added law and enforcement that you needed because you were so rebellious. It will not be a covenant that focuses on a temple, a box, and external performance but leads them out of the false religions of the world how?

- “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:33-34 NIV84.

God is saying, “I will send pastors who will teach the truth about me, my design law, how reality works, and they will lead you into the knowledge of truth.”

Life eternal is to know God—and that is the covenant, it has always been the plan, the agreement, the intent, to purge from hearts and minds the lies, the fear, the guilt, the distrust, the shame, and restore in us God’s perfection, His love, truth, reality, to recreate us to be like Him so we bear His name and glorify His character. Then no one will need to tell another to know the Lord for all will know Him for themselves.

And God is saying, “When that happens, I won’t need to think about your sin-sickness any more; I won’t need to focus upon defects, corruption, lies, errors encoded, because all sin, defect, corruption and error is removed and I will never have to think about that again.”

This is reality. God longs to heal every single human being from fear, guilt, shame, lies, distrust, rebellion, corruption, every defect from His perfect design of truth, love, and trust. But He can only do that as we choose to accept truth and surrender in trust to Him and receive the Holy Spirit who indwells us with the life of Christ transforming, recreating, and cleansing us from within.

This is what covering means, not covering over, but covering for—taking over the responsibility of fixing the problem. Jesus covers our problem with a healing solution in reality and this is why EGW wrote the following in COL:

- This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us... 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* 311.

This is reality and the penal legal fictions that teach heavenly records being erased or God covering over reality keep people trapped in sin and prevent their salvation.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on the Bride of Christ, but they seem to be confused about who is the Bride. The lesson, rightly recognizes that Revelation identifies the New Jerusalem as the Bride, but seems to struggle because they also recognize the church is the bride. I like their suggestion that perhaps it is because the saints are in the city that the city is called the bride.

What are your thoughts about this?

Well what do you think this symbolism is trying to suggest:

- It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Revelation 21:12-14 NIV84.

What is written on the gates? What is written on the foundation?

So what is the symbolism suggesting?

The New Jerusalem is described structurally as being in the shape of a cube (Revelation 21:16). This is the exact shape of the most holy place in the sanctuary (1 Kings 6:20). And as we compare the New Jerusalem to the most holy place, we discover multiple God-inspired parallels:

- The most holy place was covered in gold; the heavenly city is paved in gold. In Scripture, gold is symbolic of the purity of Christ, the righteousness and holiness of God's character of love.
- The most holy place was lighted by God's Shekinah presence; the city is lighted by God's eternal presence (Revelation 21:21, 22).
- In the most holy place was the covenant box, the place where the covenant was accomplished—the covenant of cleansing, uniting, bonding; in the city are the saints, the living temples in whose hearts the new covenant (marriage covenant) is accomplished.
 - The manna was the first element placed in the covenant box and represents the saints first partaking of the “bread of heaven” (John 6:32–35), Jesus the living Word made

flesh (John 1:1, 14; 6:53–58); the truth as it is in Jesus wins them to trust (betrothal/conversion).

- The law was the second item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints, once betrothed (converted) to Christ, opening their hearts to Him; He writes His living law of love into their hearts and minds (wedding/new covenant/cleansing) and renews them in righteousness.
- Aaron’s rod that budded was the last item to go into the covenant box; this represents the saints who were dead in trespass and sin but, having accepted the proposal (converted) and experienced the union (wedding/cleansing), come alive and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness. This symbolically represents both the reborn life bringing forth Christian fruits and also the glorification of those wedded to Christ living eternally fruitful lives in loving union with the Lord.
- The most holy place is where the high priest conducted a special ceremony: the ceremony of atonement; the ceremony of cleansing; the ceremony of washing away sin and purifying the people (bride); the ceremony of bringing the people into “**at-one-ment**” with God, of two becoming one. In other words, it was a wedding ceremony! And this ceremony happened at the end of the annual cycle of feasts, right before the Feast of Tabernacles; i.e., tabernacling or cohabitating with God.

The Old Testament ceremonial system had no direct ability to save; salvation is found only in Jesus, who is the “Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8 NIV84).

The purpose of the ceremonial system was to teach the plan of salvation, to teach the reality of Jesus. In that symbolic system, there were seven annual feasts that were like a theatrical play meant to illustrate, to teach sinful humans, God’s saving plan from the fall of Adam to the earth made new. Each of the seven major feasts had a real-life fulfillment and covered a portion of human history from Adam’s fall all the way to the earth made new:

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God “passed over” their sins. He “left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who “takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam’s sin until Christ’s death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam’s sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to “passover” our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from our

terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.

- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):** The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!
- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Just as the Old Testament Passover feast had a real and literal fulfillment when Jesus died as our Passover Lamb on Passover Friday, so also there is a real and literal cleansing, uniting, bonding, and at-one-ment of the Bridegroom and His bride that precedes the second coming. We are living in that time right now!

Just as Paul described in Ephesians chapter five, Jesus cleanses His bride in order to bring His people into at-one-ment with Him. This is the marriage of the Lamb, when Jesus cleanses her from all

defilement and clothes her in the white robes of His righteousness—the two become one. This cleansing work is the function of our heavenly High Priest and was acted out symbolically during the Day of Atonement ceremony. When Jesus finishes cleansing His people (bride) from sin, we are then able to stand in His presence without any further “mediating” work by Jesus, because He has restored us to oneness with Himself and the Father.

This cleansing of His temple (people) prior to His second coming is also described by Malachi:

- See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant**, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; **he will purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver (Malachi 3:1–3 NIV84).

Prior to His appearing in glory, Jesus goes to His temple to perform the sacred covenant of uniting His people in eternal at-one-ness with Him by purifying them, the priesthood of believers, from all sin, fear, selfishness, and defects of character; writing His living law of love into their hearts and minds, sealing them to Himself so that they are at-one with Him for all eternity. This is the restoration of the kingdom of God within us (Luke 17:21). It is Christ receiving His kingdom (Daniel 7:13)—that is, the receiving, cleansing, and joining Himself to His bride; this is the wedding of the Lamb.

The cleansing of the bride and the cleansing of the sanctuary describe the same event. Jesus is now in heaven working to completely heal the hearts and minds of those who have exercised faith in Him (accepted His proposal) so that when He returns, we are able to stand in His presence and see Him face to face (1 John 3:2). We who are alive on the earth cooperate with Him for the healing and cleansing of our minds, hearts, and characters to make ourselves ready for His return:

- Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and **give him glory!** For the **wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.** Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” [Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.] Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” (Revelation 19:6–9 NIV84).

This wedding is the intimate joining of the hearts and minds of the people with Jesus, the final cleansing of their characters, bringing them into at-one-ment with Jesus, which occurs *before* His appearing; it prepares us to stand in His glorious presence. The wedding supper of the Lamb is the celebration and feast that the saved experience *after* the second coming, when the mortal puts on immortality and we are again in His physical presence.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson references Revelation 14:4,

- These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Revelation 14:4 NIV84.

What is the context for this verse and what does it mean?

The 144,000 is a symbolic number representing, according to Revelation 7,

- Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of **the servants of our God.**” Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000. Revelation 7:3-4 NIV84

And in Bible symbolism, who are the “servants” of God?

God’s prophets are repeatedly called His servants. And prophets are not primarily prognosticators and predictors of the future, they are primarily God’s spokespersons, the people who have been inspired by God to take a message to the people at that time. Jonah going to Nineveh was a servant of God etc.

So, the 144,000 from 12 tribes, represents symbolically, the people from the four corners of the earth who have cooperated with God to receive the latter rain to enlighten and empower them with the message that is to go to the world to prepare the world for Christ’s return. These 144,000 did not defile themselves with women.

In Bible symbolism women represent the church, and thus these did not participate or worship false gods and promote a false system of faith in an imperial dictator god who functions like Satan in character.

They follow the Lamb and have the testimony of Jesus—meaning they give the same testimony about God, God’s law, God’s design for life, sin, and salvation that Jesus Himself gave.

And from the witness of this group of spokesperson’s for God a great multitude responds and comes out of Babylon, that fallen system of legal Christianity with a god that makes up laws and uses his power to punish law breakers. They hear the voice of those who follow the Lamb and they realize it is time in history to stop judging God to be an imperial dictator, to judge Him to be exactly as Jesus revealed Him to be, our Creator and Savior whose laws are design laws and thereby return to trust, encode truth, open the heart and be reborn and thereby give Him glory.

THURSDAY

The message is a call for people to come to God.

If you were to share this message, calling people to come—what would you call them to come to God for?