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2026 4Q The Gift of Prophecy
Lesson 7: Now Hear This!

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Correction to Last Week:

Thank you Stan for pointing out my inaccuracy last week. Last week I said Paul made a mistake in going to Jerusalem after being warned by the prophet Agabus that he was going to lose his freedom (Acts 21:10). However, his going to Jerusalem was not a mistake it was in keeping with God's will. So Paul acts the opposite of the young prophet and stayed on course to do what God called him to do. He recounted his duty to go. So going to Jerusalem was in keeping with God's will—the warning was to prepare him for what he would face.

Why did I get this confused on this point? Because my fallible human memory merged his going to Jerusalem with his concession to participate in a ritual that was obsolete and which gave credence to the legalists position and seemed to give authority to the Jewish leadership which resulted in the series of events that led to his arrest, imprisonment, and eventual death. I found this commentary.

- "Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise concessions, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer. Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any reasonable **concession** he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But **he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked**." Acts of the Apostles p. 405, emphasis mine.
- **"God had not ordained that Paul's labors should so soon end,** but He did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which the course of the leaders in the church at Jerusalem had given rise." Acts of the Apostles p. 417, emphasis mine.

SABBATH

Read the first paragraph,

- Some people today are encouraged to speak "their truth"—their experiences, their ideas, their needs, their boundaries, their -convictions—whatever these may be. Every "truth" is valid (the thinking goes) and should not be silenced. What happens, however, when some of these deeply held "truths" conflict with the Truth, Jesus Christ, and His Written Word? *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 56.

What do you think of this idea of the "your truth" movement?

Is there a difference between what a person experiences, thinks, feels, believes inside their mind and heart and objective reality?

Where did this terminology start and how did it become so prevalent to the point of impacting society?

In an article published in 2021 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* Scheffer et al. (PNAS, 2021) found that from about 1850 onward, fact-oriented words rose and emotion-laden words declined. That trend reversed in the 1980s and sped up around 2007, when fact-related words fell and emotional language rose across languages, along with a shift from collective to individualistic language. Scheffer et al. (2021), "The rise and fall of rationality in language," *PNAS* 118(51): https://comdig.unam.mx/2021/12/18/the-rise-and-fall-of-rationality-in-language

In 2012, Twenge, Campbell & Gentile published in PLOS ONE, a peer review journal of the Public Library of Science, found individualistic words and phrases in American books increased from 1960 to 2008. (Twenge, Campbell & Gentile (2012), "Increases in Individualistic Words and Phrases in American Books, 1960–2008," *PLOS ONE*, DOI 10.1371/journal.pone.0040181: https://plos.altmetric.com/details/831594).

The evidence suggests that the "my truth" philosophy began with modern self-help psychologies in the 1970's and expanded in the 1980s and beyond. This then gain political application through the feminist movement that took the position that personal experience is valid and carries political weight. While in some circumstances "my truth" initially meant only "my experience" and my experience is valuable and deserves to be heard—which is true and healthy, people's experiences are valuable and do deserve to be heard. However, it morphed into "my experience" is to be accepted as reality, as factually and objectively truth, without question—and to question is to assert doubt and undermine the authenticity of the person's genuine experience.

Most accounts point to the MeToo movement in 2017, and then Oprah Winfrey's speech at the Golden Globes in January 2018, where she said that speaking "your truth" is the most powerful tool we all have. She was talking about women coming forward about harassment and assault, where "your truth" meant testimony that had been disbelieved or silenced. So, again, initially this meant to share one's honest internal experience to be evaluated in light of the evidence—which is legitimate and part of the way all healthy societies and relationships work.

But this morphed into "my experience" must not questioned, must be accepted not only as my experience, but as an accurate retelling of reality, of truth and to question it is to deny the person's experience.

This was seen in the accusations against Justice Cavenaugh when the "experience" of the accuser was asserted as truth and attempts were made to obstruct and prevent any objective investigation and inquiry.

- **Senator Mazie Hirono** said women who come forward need to be believed, and told the men opposing her to "shut up" and do the right thing. On CNN, Jake Tapper asked the Senator more than once whether Kavanaugh had the same presumption of innocence as anyone else. Hirono did not say yes, and answered that she believed Ford.
- **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand** said she believed Ford because Ford was "telling the truth," and that "you know it by her story."
- **Senator Chris Coons** said Kavanaugh bore the burden of disproving the allegations, since he was the one seeking a lifetime appointment.

I am not accusing or defending Justice Cavenaugh or his accuser. This is merely an historical event that documents the problem of conflating one's internal experience and objective reality and seeking to advance an internal experience without confirming objective evidence.

Consider the problems that will arise if "my truth" functions as ever person's internal experiences is to be accepted as reality, not a real experience they are having, but as reality of history or fact? Can you see this leads only to division with no way for anyone to navigate toward consensus or harmony?

If reality is everyone's internal feeling or belief state to what does one turn when disagreement arises to determine what is real or true? Nothing, there is nothing left for hearts and minds to rest upon other than one's feelings and internal convictions.

And what does the Bible say about how Satan temps?

- When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but **each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire**. James 1.13-14 NIV84, emphasis mine.

And this has led into many of the problems we have today, like people who honestly experience gender dysphoria. They, inside themselves, don't feel like their biological sex. This is truly how they feel—but when people take the position that one's feelings determine reality rather than our feelings must be evaluated by objective reality, it leads to harm.

And this is so sad because those struggling with gender confusion are real people. They are created in the image of God and they have something going on interfering with their health, wellbeing, and identity. They need honest, compassionate, care and help. They do not need condemnation, they need love and acceptance as people who are struggling.

But we do not help them by kindly accepting their confusion as fact, or worse, exploiting them for some political advantage. We do not help any person with any problem, no matter what the problem is, by kindly leading them down paths that worsen their condition.

And the only path for health, no matter what the condition, is the path of truth and love, the path of reality, the path that restores people back into harmony with the design laws that life is built to operate upon.

And foundational to the path of life is truth, reality. One cannot have health while violating the laws of health—even if one prays for it, even if one believes sincerely that what they are doing is healthy!

Denial of reality doesn't change reality, it changes the mind, heart, and health of the one who denies reality.

Thus, the version of "my truth" philosophy that asserts one's inner experience is not to be questioned, not to be challenged, is intended to keep people trapped in harmful beliefs and practices. For as Jesus said, it is the truth that sets free (John 8:32).

Yet, Jesus' approach is to present truth in love and leave people free. Meaning, if people don't want to hear the truth, we don't force them, we leave them free to reject the truth and reap from reality what their embracing of falsehood cause—and pray that reality itself brings them to realize that they are destroying themselves and turn back to the truth.

We do not take the position that "your truth is never to be questioned" but we also do NOT take the position that "our truth must be forced upon you."

God's principles are truth, love, and freedom, we present the truth as we understand it, in love, and leave others free.

Read the second paragraph,

- What happens is that some people will accept biblical truths and turn away from their errors; others, however, will cling to their lies. Some change their behavior in response to truth; others rebel against it. Such has been the history of humanity. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 56.

This paragraph is very interesting because it can mean a variety of different things depending on how one reads it, depending on the law lens one reads through.

Consider the first sentence:

- What happens is that some people will accept biblical truths and turn away from their errors; others, however, will cling to their lies.

This could represent factual truth. Someone believed a factual error, let's say they believed the Bible teaches baptism by sprinkling and they discover that the Bible teaches the ceremony of baptism is by immersion, to symbolize dying to the old life, being buried under the water, and rising to the new life in Christ. And because they discover this new fact truth about the ceremony they get rebaptized by immersion.

Does believing, accepting, and applying that fact truth mean that they have become more Christlike or advanced in God's kingdom? Why or why not?

And what about a person who hears the truth about baptism by immersion, but they don't believe it is relevant, they had been baptized by sprinkling, and they believe that is sufficient, so they do not get rebaptized by immersion. Does that mean they are rejecting the truth of God's kingdom and walking away from Jesus? Why or why not?

What is required for salvation? Was one of the thieves crucified with Christ saved? Is there any evidence he went through water baptism?

Do you think during the persecution of Christians by Rome, when they were being martyred in the arena there were any cases of other criminals, gladiators, or victims who, upon seeing the testimony and witness of these Christlike people, responded like the thief and asked Jesus into their hearts, but before they could go through water baptism they were martyred? Will they be saved?

What about the people Paul describes here,

- All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) Romans 2:12-15 NIV84.

What is the New Covenant? Writing the law of the heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10)—these people have experienced that and yet they have not heard the Torah, the Bible, the Scripture—so in all likelihood they have not gone through water baptism, but they are saved.

Is there evidence that the Bible teaches a certain method of baptism? Yes, by immersion.

Does the Bible teach that everyone who experiences baptism by immersion is saved?

Does the Bible teach that everyone who fails to be baptized by immersion is lost?

So, is the ritual, ceremony required for salvation?

But, is there a baptism that is required for salvation, and which every saved person will have experienced, including the thief on the cross and the martyrs in the arena or Rome? What is that?

- He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:5-7 NIV84.

It is the immersion of the heart and mind fully and completely in trust to the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Christ and we are reborn in the inner person to be animated by the Spirit of Christ; we die to the spirit of fear and are not only reborn, but from that moment on mature, grow, advance and are transformed from the old sin-sickness because we live in loving trust relationship with God.

So, with all of this in mind, back to our lesson's first sentence, which I found interesting:

- What happens is that some people will accept biblical truths and turn away from their errors; others, however, will cling to their lies.

What this lesson has done has subtly replaced "the truth" that saves with "biblical truths." Are these the same?

Did the Pharisees who crucified Christ cling to biblical truths? But did they accept the truth? In fact, don't the devils believe biblical truths and they tremble in fear? Why, because they reject the truth about who God is, His methods of truth, love and freedom.

One can accept biblical truths without accepting the truth that save. And this is a core feature of the false penal/legal religion that infects Christianity. It focuses on fact truth, doctrinal correctness, detail accuracy, ceremonial precision, right rule definition, proper legal accounting, but does not know the truth—in fact this false religion wars against the truth just as the legalistic Pharisees with their Bibles in handle, quoting biblical truths crucified Jesus.

And this leads to the rest of the lesson's paragraph,

- What happens is that some people will accept biblical truths and turn away from their errors; others, however, will cling to their lies. **Some change their behavior in response to truth; others rebel against it. Such has been the history of humanity.** *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 56, emphasis mine.

What is it that the lesson is emphasizing that needs changing? Behavior…hmmm…thoughts about that?

Is there a danger in focusing on behavior modification, behavior change?

If the heart changes doesn't the behavior change in harmony with the heart's desires, values, preferences in every way that matters to God? When we love others will we knowingly exploit them or harm them? When love God will we betray Him?

But what about behavior change without heart change?

What happens to people if they make behavior change that their heart disagrees with? They either:

- struggle to find the truth and bring their heart in line with it, if they have some motive to change that they value despite their current disagreement with the truth—but this only works if they are left in freedom
    - this is loving relationships that we don't compromise on principles of truth but leave people free—we love them, but don't collude with their lie.
    - the relationship they value is a reason to continue to wrestle with the truth despite their disagreement as long as the relationship works upon principles of freedom
    - But if the relationship becomes coercive, threatening, forceful—then it closes opportunity to influence for good
- they rebel and become and enemy of the truth
- they surrender individuality and become a shadow person if they change is based out of fear and submission

When we have an imposed law approach, when we falsely believe God's law functions like human law, rules we must understand, accept, and obey, and which must be enforced by inflicted punishment, then our focus and hearts shift away from knowing the truth, to knowing "truths" and we focus on knowing the right facts, and doing the right behaviors and we become intolerant of those who don't know the right "truths" or practice the right factual rituals regardless of their heart.

Is the distinction I am drawing between changing behavior in response to truth and being reborn with a new heart, a new life, a legitimate distinction or am I nit-picking?

Read the last paragraph,

- Biblical prophets were often called to deliver messages that people did not want to hear. As a result, many were criticized, ostracized, even threatened with death or indeed killed (Heb. 11:32–38). Despite all this, God's prophets faithfully proclaimed their messages because divine prophetic guidance was not optional for them. It was lifesaving instruction for the people of God. Hence the messages had to be delivered, no matter the personal cost to the prophet. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 56.

Another interesting paragraph, with potential diverse meaning depending on how one reads it, specifically depending on what law lens one reads through and what kind of God one believes God to be.

This portion is interesting,

- God's prophets faithfully proclaimed their messages because divine prophetic guidance was not optional for them. It was lifesaving instruction for the people of God. Hence the messages had to be delivered, no matter the personal cost to the prophet.

What is meant by "it wasn't optional for them" to proclaim the message?

Are they saying that when God calls someone to a mission they lose free will, they lose the option to say yes or no?

Are they suggesting all the prophets were so mature in their walk with God that they were fully persuaded in their mind about the value of the mission and would rather die themselves than not carry it out and therefore it was no longer an option within their framework, priorities, values?

Are they saying that the prophets were between a rock and a hard place, they knew God called them to their mission and if they didn't do what God said that He would severely punish them so it wasn't an option, as much as they might not want to do it, they knew it would be far worse for them if they disobeyed so they did it?

Or is this in fact simply not true and God's calling for us is always optional? And, in fact, many of God's prophets did seek alternative options rather than immediately and directly fulfilling God's calling?

- Did Moses argue with God about taking the message and God eventually compromised and had Aaron come to assist him until Moses finally agreed? Exodus 3:10–4:17
- Did Jonah respond as if he had an option to take the message or not? Jonah 1:1–3; 3:1–4:11
- Jeremiah's initial response isn't "I have no option" but to protest that he was too young. Jeremiah 1:4–10.
- King Saul, commissioned and anointed to lead Israel, given the gift of prophesy, but repeatedly chooses other options based upon his own judgment rather than following divine instructions, most explicitly in his treatment of the Amalekites. 1 Samuel 9–10; 13:8–14; 15:1–23
- Samson, did he demonstrate he had options Judges 13–16

In fact, do we find that God works with weak, stumbling, struggling humans to accomplish His purposes? And those people do have options in how they respond?

Does God have foreknowledge? Does God know before He calls someone what their responses will be? What does that mean then, when He calls people and they choose these various options?

Does it mean that because He foreknew what they were going to do that He preferred for them to act this way? Does it mean their actions were in harmony with His will?

Or does this history demonstrate, by reality, that God gives us real freedom? That God is not selfish! God gives blessings, abilities, talents, opportunities, truth, wisdom, insight, healing, calling, mission—but every person is still free to choose their response, and in fact **it is required** why?

It is the only way God can save us—what do I mean? External power and might cannot generate love and trust. God cannot win hearts and minds by force, imposed law, and coercion, or behavior conformity. He can only save by truth and love that we are left fully free to choose for ourselves. That is the only way it encodes into our brains and we retain our individuality.

If we choose a fact truth out of coercion we, in encoding the fact truth, also encode fear, distrust, and selfishness and the heart closes to the Holy Spirit and we become more like God's enemy while at the same time embracing a fact truth—like God is Creator, or the Bible is inspired. Fact truths do not save, fact truths, when believed and embraced as evidence that leads us back to the source of all truth and we accept the eternal truth, the eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God we surrender our hearts in trust and are reborn. This is the truth that sets free, not a fact truth.

So God gives everything for our good, life, love, truth, power, opportunity, revelation, discipline if we need it, but the one thing God cannot do for us is choose our response.

He cannot choose how we interpret life, evidence, experiences—what we believe or disbelieve; He cannot choose for our hearts to respond to Him with love and trust. He cannot choose for us to choose Him in the face of fear and doubt, we must stop, think, reflect, consider, pray for wisdom, and choose to open our hearts and minds to Him, and in the face of fear, temptation, old longings, choose to trust Him in applying to ourselves what we will do in harmony with His will.

So the Bible is a record of this very process. God calling people, commissioning them, gifting them, guiding them, chastising them, forgiving them—but in the end every person decides for themselves whether they stay connected to God and are saved or break their connection with God and are lost. That is how reality works.

So we see King Saul choosing to break trust again and again and give in to his spirit of fear and selfishness, misinterpret the blessings and evidences, act upon his fear and selfishness and harden his heart and eventually, despite all the blessings from God, chose the option of going his own way and cutting himself off from life and dying.

We see Jonah being called and initially running, but eventually surrendering, getting back on mission, fulfilling the task, but being disgruntled and God acting with the vine to give him more truth and new options to choose to love and trust.

We see this in Samson who God blessed with strength but Samson was left free to use those abilities as he pleased. He eventually broke his trust relationship with God and lost God's blessing of strength and suffered the consequences, but God still loved Samson and in the end Samson opened his heart back to God and was saved.

We see this Elijah who after Mt Carmel becomes discouraged suicidal and depressed and runs away, and God meets him in the cave. And Elijah is confronted with new evidence and reflects and thinks and chooses anew and soon thereafter is translated to heaven.

We see this in Solomon who was given wisdom from God but then chose many options not in keeping with God's calling, blessings, methods, principles, or wisdom. Again, the record reveals reality, God does not take our options, but leaves us free to choose and then reap consequence because that is how reality works.

And then God is there with us, seeking to pick us up, heal us, and get us to learn, to realize that when we opt to deviate from His will, His design laws, His plan, that is the cause of the pain, suffering, and loss. And so to return to Him in trust and love and get back on track with him.

So we learn that God calls, blesses, enables, but we always have options and depending on the choices we make, the options we choose, the outcomes change for us and the fulfillment of the mission.

SUNDAY

The title for the lesson is Anger at God's Messenger.

Thoughts about this? How do you understand it? How would you explain it?

Why would anyone be angry at a message or messenger from God?

The natural state of the human heart from birth, because of Adam's sin, is that of fear and selfishness. We come into the world animated by fear.

We are all born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5); it is not our fault as individuals that we were born this way. None of us chose to become sinners from a sinless state of being.

- Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12 NIV84).

We are all born into the world animated, motivated, energized, driven by the spirit of fear and distrust of God that we inherit from Adam. That spirit, that motivation, causes all humans to seek security, safety, comfort, protection, and survival; thus, we come into the world distrusting, fearful, and self-motivated to do what we must to protect, advance, and promote ourselves.

Therefore, as we grow, as we experience life, we internalize life experiences through the spirit of fear and survival. We form beliefs, attitudes, understandings, and attachments framed in the context of what makes us feel secure, empowered, safe—or what is painful, threatening, scary. We seek what feels good and avoid what feels bad.

We bring into our hearts all kinds of things that comfort us. Some may be, in their own objective design, healthy for us, ***if they are in the right*** orientation to our heart, such as forming attachments and relationships with parents, siblings, neighbors, church family, or doing physical exercise, or having a healthy diet.

But if human relationships, diet, and exercise are internalized to occupy a space in our soul, our hearts, our identity, our sense of self, our reason for living, our security, beyond what God designed them to occupy, then these healthy elements can become unhealthy in our engagement and use of them.

If we form our identity, our inner sense of security, wellness, goodness, peace, from these things instead of from God, then they become barriers to salvation, and our condition worsens. We become a person who finds their identity in their fitness, their healthy living, their religious rule-keeping—like the Pharisees in Christ's day did.

Exercise, healthy diet, and religious practices may in and of themselves have a healthy place, but if done from a spirit of fear, for the purpose of making one feel valuable, worthy, righteous, then it becomes a barrier to salvation. And one will not have peace, but eventual exhaustion and discouragement, as no matter how hard they work, they are still filled with fear.

And then in this state if someone presents the truth in a way that threatens this false security, the false structure, it is not initially met with thanks and rejoicing, but is experienced as a threat against the self. And is responded to with defensiveness, the kill or be killed survival of the fittest motive of this world.

Jesus said,

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe **stands condemned already** because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone **who does evil hates the light**, **and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed**. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3:16-21 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They stand condemned already because we are all born with a terminal condition. This is not a legal condemnation, it is reality, a lethal situation with which we are born. Thus if we refuse the remedy, the treatment, there is no legal condemnation, we are already terminal and will die without Christ.

It is the spirit of fear with which we are born that infects our minds, hearts, attitudes, causes us to distort the evidence, mistrust God, run and separate ourselves from Him who is our source of life. Instead of trust Him, the spirit of fear causes us to form our own fig-leaf garments, our own systems of beliefs and attachments to make us feel safe and when that system is threatened, it feels scary, like an attack, so we get angry and seek to destroy those bringing us saving truth.

This is why love and truth are to always advance together. We must love people and communicate that love to them. Truth without the platform of love will only frighten and drive people away. Yet, loving compassion and care for people without truth only colludes with their sickness and promotes worsening of their condition.

Healing is the combination of truth and love together which is the true gospel message and was revealed in the ministry of Christ and is practiced by all those who are advancing His design law kingdom of love and truth.

This gets distorted and obstructed whenever the imposed law lie takes root in Christianity, because the imposed law lie will separate the truth and love, it will focus on rules, enforcement, behavior and ultimately end up teaching salvation by doctrinal purity of factual truth, like right method of baptism, and miss the entire reality of living function.

And this is why Jesus said in the judgment it doesn't come down to doctrinal accuracy, but living His design law of truth in reality—He said:

- "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

  "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:31-40 NIV84.

- "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

  "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" Matthew 25:41-46 NIV84.

This is reality! God's plan of salvation is the actual restoration within the living being of the kingdom of God. As Jesus said,

- "The kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21 NIV84.

The plan of salvation eliminates from the living being the spirit of fear, selfishness, and distrust that built upon lies and restore within us the Spirit of truth, love, and trust built upon truth.

It is a reality-based transformation, regeneration, recreation, restructuring, rewiring, rebuilding, realigning of the living being to operate in perfect unity with our Creator. And this happens when we trust and receive His indwelling Spirit.

This cannot happen by rule, rule enforcement, declaration, legal adjustment, or any other external procedure. It only happens by the living being choosing to respond to the truth and trust God and choose to obey and apply the unfolding truth to themselves day by day.

As you do this your life will change, and your presence alone will cause some to be uncomfortable, just as the Pharisees were uncomfortable in Jesus' presence. And those who choose to protect self, to embrace the spirit of fear and survival will get angry at you and all those who are advancing truth.

MONDAY and TUESDAY

The title is Destroying the Message—meaning God's message.

How do those opposed to God seek to destroy God's message?

The lesson cites the king that destroyed Jeremiah's manuscript—so one way is to burn books or writings.

Are there other methods used that seek to destroy God's message?

- Attack the messenger—arrest, imprison, execute those with the message, this is a long standing strategy used through history. But if one is unable to physically interfere with the messenger then what?

- Name calling and character assassination of the messenger
    - But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" Matthew 12:24 NIV84.

    - "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. John 7:20 NIV 84.

    - The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" John 8:48 NIV84.

- False accusations
    - Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" Matthew 26:65, 66 NIV84.

- Misrepresenting what the messenger has said

- Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” Matthew 26:60, 61 NIV84.

- Divert from the message or messenger by appealing to false authority—divert from the authority of truth to office and expert opinion or credentials.
    - Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

      “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared.

      “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.” John 7:45–49 NIV84.

- Using Church Organization and System Power to Intimidate away from the message.
    - His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. John 9:22 NIV84.

- Mocking, derision and physical abuse
    - They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. Mark 15:17–20 NIV84.

Do you see any of these methods used today?

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on hypocrisy, teaching one thing but doing another.

What is hypocrisy evidence of? Does it reveal diagnostically what is wrong? Can we explain the cause of hypocrisy?

Hypocrisy is the practice of professing standards and beliefs but living contrary them—when this happens isn’t it diagnostic of the problem? And how would you diagnose what this reveals?

An unconverted heart.

Religious hypocrisy is the inevitable, predictable, unavoidable result of a penal legal religion Christianity why?

Because the legal model teaches the doctrinal, fact, truths that God is Creator, we are sinners, Christ is our Savior, God is love, sin is transgression of the law, that God's people look and live like Jesus etc. Thus, they recognize the standard cognitively, but the penal legal fraud places the problem and its solution outside the heart and mind of the sinner.

It teaches that the problem is legal and the solution is legal in the courts of heaven. Further, it teaches God is the source of inflicted death for law breaking, which inflames, rather than removes the spirit of fear, and leads to more legalism and rules.

Thus, they have a form of godliness without power because they don't truly trust God, don't open their hearts to Him and are not reborn with the Spirit of Christ. So their attempts to keep the commandments, obey and follow Christ, are all done from the spirit of fear, and this is hypocrisy. It results in a false legal system of religious forms like the Sadducees and Pharisees.

So, cognitive agreement with the truth is not salvation, and cognitive agreement without internal rebirth with the Spirit of Christ always results in hypocrisy, proclaiming a standard that is contrary to the true operations of the heart.

THURSDAY

Focuses on the reality that the biblical record was inspired by God to be a lesson book to us. Read 1 Corinthians 10:6-13:

- Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:6-13 NIV84.

What does this mean?

Do you recognize that the individual stories are not only inspired, but that the entire landscape of Scripture was inspired, the various stories and events were put together to tell an integrated story that expands and reinforces the others parts.

How would you describe the grand theme of Scripture?

Any examples of the stories of the Old Testament revealing more than just historical events, containing larger great controversy object lesson significance?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SWAHILI: *Could It Be This Simple?* is now available in Swahili. It is available on our website for digital download. And Kenyans who would like a print copy please email Wycliffe at kenya@comeandreason.com

God and Reality in all 66 Books: Heads up that after we complete this quarter we will start the God and Reality in all 66 books series to create a new enduring resource. Our first study in that series will be an overview with our framework, goals, principles and an outline for what the sequence will be. And then we will continue until we complete that series. While it is broken down into 52 studies, it will take more than a year as I will be out some weeks for vacation etc., and a few of the studies may take two weeks to complete. However, we have already received very encouraging feedback to proceed in this direction and are hopeful this will be a resource that reaches an entirely new audience.

NEW PAMPHLET: *The Alpha and Omega of Apostasy: God's Message and the Seventh-day Adventist Church,* is now available in the US at no cost. You can read it online, order print copies to be mailed to a US postal address for sharing, download the pdf for printing. We encourage you to read it and share it with your friends.