

Christ and His Law **Christ's Kingdom and the Law**

Lesson #13 for June 28, 2014

Scriptures: Matthew 4:8-9; Daniel 2:44; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 22:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:26.

1. In this lesson we will explore the ultimate reason, purpose, and role of God's law throughout eternity.

God requires perfection of His children. His law is a transcript of His own character, and it is the standard of all character. This infinite standard is presented to all that there may be no mistake in regard to the kind of people whom God will have to compose His kingdom. The life of Christ on earth was a perfect expression of God's law, and when those who claim to be children of God become Christlike in character, they will be obedient to God's commandments. Then the Lord can trust them to be of the number who shall compose the family of heaven. *Christ's Object Lessons* 315.1; *God's Amazing Grace* 148.4 (1900) [Bold type is supplied.]

Would such people be "safe to save"?

In the gift of God's dear Son, a definite view of His character has been given to the race that is never absent from His mind. His very heart is laid open in the royal law. **That infinite standard is presented to all, that there may be no mistake in regard to that kind of people God would have compose His kingdom.** It is only those who are obedient to all His commandments who will become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. These will be honored with a citizenship above, a life that measures with the life of God,—a life without sorrow, pain, or death throughout eternal ages. *The Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1898 [Bold type is supplied.]

Those who enter heaven will not even want to do evil.

2. We have generally accepted the idea that when Adam and Eve sinned, Satan claimed dominion over this world. What happened at that point? Satan claimed to be in charge. Why did God allow that? Could God have prevented it? Why do people believe Satan? Satan's selfishness is more attractive to most humans than God's love! It is not natural for us to be truly loving!
3. Read Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4; and Matthew 4:8-9. On what basis does Satan rule? His power is based on his ability to deceive people and, thus, separate them from God and keep them in darkness. (Isaiah 59:2) He claims to be the ruler of this world. Is he truly?
4. Read Matthew 4:8-9; and Luke 4:5-7. Jesus came to this world to take it back from Satan. What did He need to do to accomplish that? (Romans 8:3) We know that the struggle was not one of power—Satan trembles with fear when he thinks of God's power. (James 2:19) So, what is the issue? **The ultimate question in the great controversy is: Who is telling us the truth?** How do we decide whether we should believe Satan's claims or the truth as revealed through the life and death of Jesus Christ?
5. Daniel 2:44 tells us that one day Christ will return, destroy all previous kingdoms, and set up a kingdom which will stand forever. Do we believe those words? God precisely predicted the rise and fall of all the previous world powers. He also predicted the divided nations of Europe which would never become one single unit again. (Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-8,15-28) Was He right?
6. Read 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13; Ephesians 2:12; Colossians 1:13; Deuteronomy 30:19; and Matthew 6:24. These verses should make it very clear that those who are obedient to God's law are foreigners to Satan's kingdom. Only those who keep God's law will be among the remnant. (Revelation 12:17; 14:12) When we choose to become a part of God's kingdom, we must turn our back on the ruler of this world. (John 12:31-32) But, to do that, we must be willing to be seen as different. Are we prepared for that?

7. Just a brief review: God's kingdom is based on the concept of love; Satan's kingdom is based on the concept of selfishness. Which element do our lives today most clearly reveal? In the great controversy, God has only a couple of weapons: 1) Love, and 2) The truth as demonstrated in Scripture and especially in the life and death of Jesus. Satan will use every weapon he can find including lying, force, misrepresentation, fear, torture, and any other similar means. Does that seem like a fair battle? What has been a result of this conflict in history? Notice these words about the status of things when Christ came the first time.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do.—*The Desire of Ages* 22.1 (1898); *Reflecting Christ* 23.3; *AG* 23.3 [Bold type is supplied.]

8. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Revelation 22:14-15. These verses make it very clear that only those who keep the commandments of God and who wash their sin-stained lives clean will enter God's kingdom. No one who is immoral, indecent, or a sinner will enter there. The wicked are shut out of heaven by their own choice.

It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven: they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 18.1; *Heaven* 66.1. [Bold type is supplied.] (Compare Revelation 6:15-17.)

9. Surely, none of us would deny the fact that God created a perfect world. We cannot imagine a better environment in which to live than the Garden of Eden. But, when sin entered, our world was severely damaged. Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden. So, what really happened there? We lost our knowledge, appreciation, and love for the character of God because we believed Satan's misrepresentations. The only solution to this problem is to investigate for ourselves until we learn the truth and come to once again appreciate the truth about God's law and His character and agree to live accordingly.
10. And what will be the result of this sin experiment? Will sin ever arise again? Read Daniel 7:27; John 3:16; and Revelation 21:4. There will be no more death, i.e., no more sin.

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and his law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures he has made. **Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its punishment. (*Great Controversy* 499.1)**

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rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 42.4) [Bold type is supplied.]

11. So, if we are to change from being fully selfish—the condition in which we were born—to becoming truly loving—the condition in which we will be able to enter the kingdom of God—how is such a radical change to be brought about? Read Jeremiah 31:31-34; GC 555. If God can write His law on our hearts and He does that arbitrarily, why doesn't He do it for everyone? Of course, the challenge is our freedom. God will never violate our freedom.
12. We know from experience that death rules in our world. And death rules because of sin. So, what will happen when God reestablishes His kingdom on this earth at the third coming? Read Revelation 20:14; 21:4; and 1 Corinthians 15:26. What is implied by the idea that death will be thrown into the lake of fire?
13. Would you agree that God cannot do that arbitrarily? Death will no longer exist or have power over us because none of us will ever choose to rebel against the only Lifegiver and, thus, separate ourselves from God. (Isaiah 59:2) When sin is finally eliminated—and with it death and the Devil—things will return to their original condition.

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109.2.

14. This does not mean that God's law will be abolished. It means that all who enter the kingdom of heaven will have come to realize that God never asks us to do anything which is not for our own best good. We will come to love Him and love the way His government works so completely that we will never want to rebel again. We will be completely free to continue doing what is right.
15. What is our role in that transformation? And how do we go about being transformed?

Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts. (COL 314.4) [Bold type is supplied.]

16. Was it only because of His divinity that Jesus was able to keep the law? Could we partake of that divinity? Will there be a group of people at the end of this world's history who will keep God's commandments? (Revelation 12:17; 14:12)

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12. **This power is not in the human agent. It is the power of God. When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ.** (COL 314.5) [Bold type is supplied.]

Review COL 314-315 in Item #1 above.

17. Could we truly live lives like the life of Christ? Is it possible for us to be transformed by following the example of Jesus?

He came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them. **Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.** (*Desire of Ages* 664.4) [Bold type is supplied.]

God wants to be our Friend and Partner.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. (*Desire of Ages* 668.3)
[Bold type is supplied.]

18. Think of all the things that people are working for on this earth today. What are their ultimate goals? Fame? Money? Political power, etc.? How many of these things will persist in the world to come? Is there any amount of fame, money, or power that you could give in exchange for eternal life?
19. By living the perfect life that He lived and dying the terrible death that He died, Jesus demonstrated once and for all the truth about God, His law, and His government in contrast to Satan's falsehoods. We have the choice: 1) Following His life to the best of our ability with the help of the Holy Spirit, and living forever; or 2) Living the selfish lives which come so naturally to us, and then, dying the death which He died which is the second death. Do we understand all the issues involved?
20. So many Christians focus their attention on the initial steps in the Christian life. There is nothing wrong with this focus, but it is inadequate. We need to move beyond those initial steps and practice living a Christ-like life. Could we truly reach the place where sin would become hateful to us? Are we accessing the divine power which is available to us to live Christ-like lives? Do our neighbors and friends realize that we are different because of our Christianity?
21. Satan rebelled in heaven because of envy and jealousy. He wanted to be on a plane equal with God, or better yet, to be over God! When he was cast down to this earth and spoke to Eve through the serpent in the tree, "**We see misrepresentation turning into distrust, distrust maturing into alienation, and alienation ripening into fear (Gen. 3:1,6,8,10).**"—Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009), p. 464. [Bold type is supplied.]
22. In light of all of this, shouldn't God have foreseen this terrible emergency and prevented it? Was our plan of redemption an afterthought—just a response to Satan's rebellion?

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. . . It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. **From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency.** (*Desire of Ages* 22.2) [Bold type is supplied.]

23. We have presented some very stark contrasts in this lesson: Human beings living a Christ-like life in contrast to Satan's envy and jealousy leading to his downfall in the great controversy. On which side of that controversy do you want to be?
24. God is offering you an incredible retirement plan that is "out of this world!" But, He can only safely admit to heaven people who really want to live in a totally-loving environment. Are we ready for that?
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