

THE NEW COVENANT *Enemy Love Story*

*Exploring the two covenants in light of the Father
and Son's unrivaled enemy-embracing love*

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Part 1 of 7



How the cross of Christ crucified a thousand and more sacred violence arguments and how it continues to crucify Satan's subtle lies, legal fiction and false pictures of God

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Contents

PREFACE.....	4
INTRODUCTION	7
Purpose of this Series.....	11
CHAPTER 1 Disenchanted.....	17
CHAPTER 2 Artificial Legal Enforcements Versus Intrinsic Enforcements Built into Nature Itself	22
CHAPTER 3 Groupthink	31
CHAPTER 4 Dark Sunshine	37
CHAPTER 5 The Healing Judgment	43
Conclusion.....	50

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PREFACE

In this series I invite you to come with me on an exciting journey as we travel through the highs and the lows, the mountains and the valleys, of the two covenants, exploring the “length, breadth, height and depth” of God’s amazing character of love (Eph. 3:18).

DON’T HAVE MUCH TIME? THEN THE SERIES QUICK READ METHOD IS FOR YOU.

The spiritually mature wisely “test ALL things,” employ their powers of “reason” and after careful evaluation, or reevaluation, of a given topic, they “hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21 and Isa 1:18.) This might mean radically redefining some doctrinal teachings they thought they knew!

I am very conscious most of us in this crazy world are “too busy” and don’t have oodles of time. If that’s you, or you don’t feel quite prepared to read this series systematically, then you can choose the “quick read” option. And that is, skim over the standard text paragraphs that you are reading now and simply peruse and reflect on the

Large italicized quotations interspersed throughout the series.

If you follow this method you will not obtain the full context of the new covenant enemy-love story. However, you will get a fair idea of

key storyline points FAST. This might stimulate more desire in you so that you then feel motivated to set aside time to read the full text.

Many Christians read the Bible in a linear fashion. They believe every narrative, poetical stylized theme and text has equal merit and represents God's ideal. As a result, they have no defining way of resolving conflicting passages and texts that clash with another – and there are many! Consequently, they support one set of texts at the expense of another set.

Although I do present a number of texts that I consider crucial in explaining others, the method delineated throughout this series involves reading the two covenants in the Bible more as STORY than a collection of “key texts.”

The Bible's two covenants storyline is not all peaches and cream! Its trajectory contains infamous accounts of genocide, unspeakable cruelty, and horrendous “sacred violence.” We will also try to make sense of the “competing imagery” in Revelation. On the other hand, at the center of the story are Jesus and His love of His enemies. We will explore many positive narratives and life-changing principles in the light of the Father and Son. So you can be assured that you will be gently challenged, newly inspired and greatly encouraged!

As in the natural world so in the spiritual world:

Light appears brighter amidst dark. **Sunshine is welcomed** during cold. **Smooth and sweet are more desirable** than sharp, bitter and bland. **The living drink water more freely** after war, famine and drought in the land.

The light from the Father shines brighter than the false light of Satan. **God's warm-embrace contrasts** Satan's chilling indifference to the race. **God's heart transforming, enemy-love surpasses** humankind's sentimental, self-centered love. **God's “good seed” of the Word of truth yields greater harvests** than Satan's “corruptible seed” of deceptive untruth. **God's words of life supersede** Satan's language of death. **God's healing power transcends** the adversary's soul ruining power. **God's water of life is better** than Satan's barrenness, bitter springs and fountains of death (Psalm 119:105, John 3:21, James 1:17, Matt 5:44, 1 Pet 1:23, Matt 13:37-39, John 6:63, 4:10, 13-4, 7:37-38, Rev 22:7)

At the end of the day, the futility of fearfully living in accord with the serpent's kingdom of fear and selfishness, pride and performance, rewards and punishment causes depression, anxiety, and disappointment, eventually leading to misery, heartache and death.

Living in accord with God's design law, truth and relational kingdom of love brings heart renewal, fullness of joy and life without end. More than this it brings the complete reversal of misery, suffering and death!

Disclaimer: Throughout this series I quote from a range of people when particular statements they make harmonize with the Agape Covenant theme and the points I make. This does not necessarily mean I align with all their beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

I want to share a bizarre experience that connects to the main theme of this series – the mischaracterization of God versus seeing God “as He is.”

One perfect summer evening a little over two years before the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, some friends and I visited Thai Seasons - a lively and busy 4.5 star restaurant.

After demolishing five mounds of mouthwatering stir-fry ... with the zesty ginger and chili flavors typical to Thai food lingering in our mouths, we strolled the esplanade and breathed in the calm ocean air.

We then stopped to get some unneeded ice cream to replace the spicy aftertaste. It was hard to choose from so many flavors – hazelnut, macadamia, mango, pineapple, coconut, lemon, cherry... with vegan options too! (Overloaded with carbs we pressed pause on “health reform” that evening!!)

As I dug my spoon into the smooth swirl some familiar faces noticed us, sat down, and joined the conversation.

Suddenly, the discussion on my side of the table took a strange detour. During the chatter I overheard the Adventist guy next to me bluntly say, “You know, the local Baptist Pastor Lofty (or whatever his name was) is killing his church.” Of course no one hearing this took his statement literally! He was not referring to some psychotic pastor crazily firing shots! It seemed obvious to me that he meant Pastor Lofty is trying to tear down his church members’ worship style, creed or theology that does not align with what he thinks church should look like. He was persuading or intimidating those who hold “traditional” views to abandon such views.

That night, while reflecting on all this, it occurred to me that the Pastor's church was likely already dead, or close to it – just like the church of Sardis (Rev 3:1-2).

Alive but ...

According to Rev 3:2, many churches are “alive but dead.” Christianity in the west is dying - and it is dying for a reason. Churches were meant to be an alternative community to that which was offered by the world, but what exactly is their relevance and purpose in our modern technological society? I wondered; was the guy at our table implying Adventist Pastors could employ the strategy of Pastor Lofty? Was he suggesting they should do what it takes to deaden their churches and then try to transform them into “culturally relevant” bigger, livelier churches? When the church fails to live up to its true identity and instead merges with the identity of the world, it dies.

IF THE CHURCH IS LIKE THE WORLD, THE CHURCH IS UNNECESSARY

Overly compromising to the surrounding culture is usually seen as a problem among liberal Christians. These liberals see themselves as being free from the separationist mentality that many conservatives have due to their rigid legal law mentality of looking at the world. In my opinion **LEGALISM is no less damaging and deadening to the church than compromising liberalism!!!**

However, under the surface, it is not only conservative theology that has its roots embedded in legalism. Even liberal “new theology” is partly based on legalism. For example: liberal theology typically consists of *legal justification*, and a *legal atonement*. Yet, when you think it through, **there is a massive difference between the legal and the real**. Churches the world over are infected with legal theology.

These are a few reasons WHY the church has failed to advance in taking the gospel REMEDY to the world (Isa 1:5,6). Most see there is a problem, but they are looking in the wrong direction for answers!

Beyond “the issue”

What else is preventing mainstream church growth and vitality?

Is it a lack of “cultural relevance”? Is it because members rarely study the Bible? Is it because members aren’t evangelizing enough? Is it because of too few community programs?

According to the prophet Isaiah and the apostles Paul and John, another cause of declining spirituality in the church and the world stems from church indifference and relational insensitivity **LARGELY RESULTING FROM GROSS MISCHARACTERISATIONS OF GOD** (Isa 60:1-2, Rom 1:23, Rev 14:8, 18:1).

This may be why there is an inability for God’s church to connect with, attract, or influence the non-churched in a positive way.

Due to the principle of mimetic desire (the law of imitation or “modeling”), Christians are unconsciously modeling themselves after skewed mischaracterizations of God and then portraying that model to the world. We become like the god we picture and worship. Most of the world sees Christians as judgmental and condemning – the very thing Jesus told us not to be! Could it be that we have misinterpreted the very heart of the character of God, and this has had an insidious effect in all areas of the Christian experience?

An alternative community can be refreshingly distinguishable from the world, and yet attractive to it, by systematically comprehending, internalizing and imitating God’s mercy, goodness and love – a love completely above and beyond human love. **God’s REAL church is an emotionally safe place. Our mental health depends on feeling safe. Safety consists of hurt individuals being seen, feeling accounted for and heard.**

The church should become an academy of emotional intelligence and authentic human connection – Chris Silber

Still, many people have realized this, and how come it doesn’t seem to happen?

Enemy LOVE

The world needs a glimpse of the one TRUE God, it needs to see His face of LOVE, and it needs to connect with an emotionally

intelligent and authentic alternative community. Most of us in one way or another hold a picture of a two-sided god. For example: God is pictured like the Caesars of Rome with a nice side and a nasty side, a good cop/bad cop, a mafia boss favoring some and injuring others, a warrior god providing protection on one hand and exercising violence on the other, a god with of love and acceptance mixed with retributive judgment, punitive justice and sudden vengeance. This split personality “yin and yang” image of God has created LOTS of confusion in the church and even more outside the church.

In this series I challenge these images of God, remove the theological junk that weighs us down, dispel the fog that effects our vision and identify protestant’s ball and chain that erodes our freedom. This series provides the keys to enable us to escape Babylon’s prison of confusion, despair and doubt.

We are always free to dissolve hurtful belief patterns that stand in our way, free to reject false ideas that don’t strengthen us, free to let go of images that fail to nourish, and enhance, our relationship with Father.

Do you like to explore the Bible? When studying any topic that draws me, I like to “dig deep.” Admittedly, in the past sometimes my ocean deep comments would waft right over people’s heads, including sometimes my own! The covenants and character of God are far-reaching topics, therefore the challenge for me in developing this series was to crystalize key points, simply, clearly, in an uncomplicated appealing way.

Purpose of this Series...

Why such an extensive series? I mean seven parts!

Initially, I decided to write what BEGAN as only a few pages, hoping to finish my study of the two covenants in a couple of months or a year at the most. But in time the initial drafts developed into just under 500 pages over 4 years! (Multiple edits of a serious topic - a topic I highly value – can gobble up a lot of time!) And the 500 pages was even after pruning down, adding new fresh stuff in, and pruning it down again. I also made an effort to keep the sentences and paragraphs tight and eliminate all the “fluff.” During what I planned as the final editing process I purposely made each of the studies slightly more or less than 70 pages long. Then later down to less than half that size, and finally to the size you are reading now! I could hack this series down further but I wouldn’t want helpful material to be lost.

The core reasons why I wrote this series are to:

1.) - Explore God’s character of love from new perspectives in relation to the covenants: The close connection between the two covenants and God’s character is affirmed by the teachings of Christ and a dynamic prophecy in Revelation. Revelation 18 depicts the WHOLE earth illuminated with a powerful message magnifying God’s glory/character.¹ This will be accomplished before Jesus returns to bestow the final covenant of love blessings, when He shares the eternal inheritance, promised to Abraham, and millions upon millions (like the prophets I dream of billions) of men and women, young and old, black or white, rich and poor. These are they who have “washed their robes and made them white in the life-blood of the Lamb.”

¹ Revelation 18:1-4; Isa 60:1-4

2.) – Clarify the two covenants: Since the ONE True God community has been morphing into three groups over the covenants issue; I wanted to become more familiar with the topic. The obvious doctrinal differences propelled me to explore further. I wondered if the disunity was merely a “dispensational” issue (a dispensational or consecutive view of the old and new testaments vs. an integrative, progressive, developmental view of the old and new testaments)? Or, were there other underlying factors? I now believe there are other factors. I present the four main views on the covenants in chapters 4 – 6.

3.) – Clarify and summarize the 1888 storyline: I also wrote this series to clarify the heart of the 1888 message. Rightly understood, the 1888 message of God’s righteousness and matchless beauty of Christ is a magnetic message. However, sometimes it appears complicated and overlooks the main issues. Therefore I wanted to distill its main message – not just for others but also in my own mind.

4.) – The fourth reason I wrote this series is to encourage and challenge readers to exercise their God-given reason, think for themselves, and avoid misleading secular OR religious “groupthink.” I wanted to show the VALUE of rethinking traditional doctrines by personal systematic Bible study and by gathering evidence and facts, redefining “truths” that need redefining, testing ALL things and holding fast to that which is good.

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do... **God designed us “to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought.”** (Education p. 17)

Have you ever changed your mind about a topic you thought you knew well?

Recently, a slogan on a new generation website caught my eye challenging folks to “Rethink EVERYTHING you thought you knew.” And this has been true for me. After realizing I was incorrect on a few Bible doctrines more than once, I decided I needed to rethink *everything* I thought I knew and avoid following the pack. Groupthink also known as “social conformity” can prove ruinous. To illustrate consider the following:

Turkish shepherds watched in horror as hundreds of their sheep followed each other over a cliff, say Turkish newspaper reports.

450 sheep leap to their deaths in Turkey

USA Today carried this story in 2005 from Istanbul, Turkey:

“First one sheep jumped to its death. Then stunned Turkish shepherds, who had left the herd to graze while they had breakfast, watched as nearly 1,500 others followed, each leaping off the same cliff, Turkish media reported. In the end, 450 dead animals lay on top of one another in a billowy white pile, the Aksam newspaper said. Those who jumped later were saved as the pile got higher and the fall more cushioned. After one of the sheep tried to jump a ravine, the rest of the flock followed.”

The main point we learn from this is: **Follow the shepherd - not the crowd!**

Sheep are not the brightest creatures, and religious or not, like sheep, many people follow the crowd, sometimes to their detriment - over the cliff to their ruin! Here are a few more thoughts on Groupthink/Social conformity:

Right and wrong is determined by community consensus, for example, when a child says, “But everyone else is doing it.” Right is deemed right by the approval of peers.

- Individual vengeance is not allowed, but group punishment is considered mandatory
- All the other nations had kings, so it must be right, thus ancient Israel demanded to have kings and they collectively punished /stoned /ostracized

Doesn't Require Thinking

- Look to others to determine what is right
- Many herd animals follow the crowd, even if it is right over the cliff
- Again, not worthy of beings created in the image of God

The Governmental Theory of the atonement most closely matches this type of thinking, which is summarized as follows: In order for everyone to be convinced that God is fair and right in dealing with sin and sinners by inflicting torturous punishment, somebody has to pay the price. That somebody is Jesus, because he's the only one who could pay that price to get mankind off the hook. When we accept that God inflicts punishment on Jesus, then God won't inflict punishment on us.

Many people object to alternate views differing from the consensus view of whatever group they are in. If objections are only addressed superficially or if there is a neglect to weigh in sufficient evidence, then false conclusions regarding important truths can very easily be drawn. Many build theology constructs or conform to a group mindset they later regret. I have!

We need to rethink and test² traditional Biblical doctrines that cause any degree of niggling, troubling, feelings – doctrines that on the surface seem watertight, yet in some ways just don't harmonize with the life and teachings of Jesus.

² 2 Thessalonians 5:21; Isa 1:18

Have you ever been shocked to discover a teaching you've advocated for years, under closer scrutiny is found flawed or even completely untrue! You felt troubled right? Yes! It is humbling! More than once I've had to either relinquish or radically redefine certain beliefs. The real role of the alternative community, the identity, character, and covenants of God are four examples. Prophecy, and even the gospel are two other beliefs I have had to radically edit! I will show in this series that even the prophets of the Bible were subject to this editing process in the developmentally advancing storyline of the Bible.

Does your theology nourish you and others?

Now for some specifics: What spiritually crippling beliefs about God does Christendom by and large hold that I personally object to? **1)** I object to the idea that God is the direct source of externally inflicted suffering, pain or punishment. **2)** I object to the idea that God directly destroys "sinners" (the unhealed or even those diagnosed as incurable.)

Contrary to popular religious theories, my thoughts are:

1) God is the builder and healer (Jer. 30:17; Psalm. 147:2-4)

2) God does not directly destroy what we think He destroys. That's right, God DOES NOT DESTROY in the traditional way that appeasement-based theologies suggest or legal law based worldviews like Catholicism, Protestantism and even Islamism suggest. Even though in a number of Scripture passages on the surface it APPEARS as though God does directly punish, harm or kill, I still maintain a non-violent God position.

In this series I will clearly show that many instances describing violent events or actions are either cultural figures of speech, exaggerated language or written in customary poetical genre – all designed to strengthen our power of reason and stimulate interest and attention. (Please examine and weigh in the evidence FIRST if you are inclined to question or doubt this.)

Of course some will object to the principle of a non-violent God and default to the traditional picture of God as several Bible texts come to mind. But please, give the alternate picture a chance!

Beginning with the fall and rebellion of Lucifer in heaven, his influence upon Adam and Eve in Eden, to the effect of his psychology on Ancient Israel until our day, we will retrace history and from the Bible answer the major objections. This is done in a friendly, non-combative way. I include several key bible principles, illustrations, stories, and life experience examples. We will address the mischaracterization of God issue as it relates to the great controversy. Limited SOP quotations are included to complement and support all of the above.

I invite you to expand your knowledge and discover fresh insights. I believe these alternative perspectives make God's character potentially far more attractive to atheists - many of who know no other picture of the Christian god than a capricious cosmic killer.

CHAPTER 1

Disenchanted

(Origins of sin, legalism and the beginning of violence)

Travel back with me to a controversy predating the dark ages, the cross, the Sinai covenant, the fall of man and even the world's creation - a controversy who knows how many millenniums ago - involving one of God's gifted cherubs (Ezekiel 28:14).

Origins of sin, legalism and passive violence

Sin began in Eden. Violence began with Adam's son Cain. And legalism began with the Israelites at Mount Sinai - right? Actually, NOT SO!

All three attributes (sin, violence and legalism) originated in heaven long before this world with the human race existed.

The first offender, aggressor and legalist was in fact an angel. We don't know how many years before the creation of this world Lucifer initiated his rebellion or at what age he rebelled. It has been suggested that Lucifer rebelled when he was 15 years old because 15-year olds think they know everything. Jokes aside, we do know Lucifer (light bearer), God's "anointed cherub," became an adversary (Satan)³.

Politics without principle: Gandhi said having politics without truth(s) to justly dictate the action creates chaos, which

³ Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; Ezekiel 28:15

ultimately leads to violence. Gandhi called these missteps “passive violence”, which fuels the active violence of crime, rebellion and war. (Seven Social Sins - Wikipedia)

The war in heaven was a political war, a war of passive violence without truth against the truth; a war that led to chaos and active violence.

Satan thought to “exalt his throne above the stars [angels] of God”⁴ and improve the order of Heaven. Initially he became dissatisfied with “the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that they **imposed** an unnecessary restraint.” He alleged, “God was not just in **laying laws and rules** upon the inhabitants of heaven.”⁵ Under this front he hoped God would set aside His divine Law⁶. God would not. When Satan failed to destabilize the government of heaven this way, he switched to Plan B.

With the same objective, he attempted to INDIRECTLY undermine God’s Law. He insisted “that **changes be made in the order and laws of God’s government**”⁷ and that these changes of law and order were “necessary... to preserve harmony in heaven...” He urged God to impose His law on heavenly beings. Now, here is the part where he tried to dim the glorious light of God’s kingdom, to turn sunshine into darkness. He suggested God, as the ruling authority, must punish those who deviate from God’s law in any way.

This is how Satan became the first passive aggressive and the first legalist also.

What is legalism?

Rethinking Legalism: Lucifer was “educated” in the courts of heaven, grew in knowledge and wisdom and developed his skills. In time he thought he had a right to occupy an even closer position to God’s throne. He coveted the position of God’s Son, who I believe then was in the form of an angel by the name of Michael - one of many angels. Lucifer contested, “why should Michael, who is just an angel like me, have preeminence and such a close position to God?”

⁴ Isaiah 14:13

⁵ The Great Controversy p. 498

⁶ Ibid p. 497

⁷ Ibid p. 498

Lucifer was proud of his achievements and sought high rank by performance. Yet Christ's exalted position with His Father was not purchased by outward show; it was not the result of amazing performance but the NATURAL result of His divine identity. Christ is not a created being, as Lucifer, He is the only begotten Son of God!

Legalism consists in more than self-generated performance, religious compliance or rigid rule keeping. Legalism consists of the spirit of BLAME-CASTING, the desire to scrutinize and control. It is an unhealthy view of God and His laws; the desire to have “rule breakers” (other than themselves!) penalized and externally punished rather than have them rehabilitated and internally healed.

Job's Story: Exposing the Cosmic Legalist

Satan's mindset of penalizing law-breakers is evident in the scenario recorded in Job. Job was a “blameless” and upright man. On the surface, it appears as though God's “retributive judgment” or retributive punishment befell poor Job and his unfortunate sons and daughters. Ok, they were likely bad boys and girls who liked to drink and party (Job 1:3,4). (Why else would Job be so concerned for them each morning?) Satan told God to “put forth [His] hand and touch [destroy]” everything of Job's, and strangely, it appears as though God did! But then Satan was the one who sent fire and killed Job's family. Therefore God stretching out His arm meant Satan

given freedom to attack Job and his family. Clearly God *allowed* Satan to destroy. Satan is the destroyer, not God!!⁸

Satan acts in ways he would like God to act. There is not the slightest inclination for God to think or act like the fallen angel. Why would God not behave like that? God cannot be anyone other than Himself. The law of life is a reflection of His character and therefore changeless. God IS love, and His character of love is changeless. The principle of love prevents God from behaving like the adversary. "Satan delights in war," suffering, external punishment, legal accusation and retributive judgment (Psalm 94:20, John 8:44, Rev 12:9-11). The judgments that afflicted Job's household are a pattern of the end time judgment that unless they repent, the incurable will experience during the seven last plagues.⁹ This is when God's angelic hedge of protection is finally withdrawn.

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.¹⁰

Direct punishment is almost always performed, or instigated, by Satan or sinful unfeeling men. Had God followed Satan's suggestion that "every sin must meet its punishment," Satan would seize advantage, flip everything around and accuse God for being unforgiving, stern and severe! Yet Satan still to this day blames God and charges Him for causing discord in heaven (Psalm 94:20), bringing trouble on the earth and afflicting mankind!¹¹ This is insane! Yet this is what many Christians have been led to believe. Psychologists call this "projection."

⁸ Job 1:4,5, 13-18, 2:3,5,6; (See 1 Cor. 10:10; The Great Controversy p 589)

⁹ The Great Controversy p. 589

¹⁰ The Desire of Ages p. 761

¹¹ The Great Controversy p. 589

Projection is generally understood in the context of attributing one's own dysfunctional characteristics to another. Through this lie, Satan cast reproach upon God in his attempt of "setting aside the divine law." God would have nothing to do with Satan's insensitive legal law idea – and for good reason!

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 ¹².

God knew Satan's methods of coercion, and "counterfeit justice" would cause anarchy and discord and conflict with God's love. He knew, unchecked, this would destroy the order of heaven.

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the **service of love**--homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. **He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will**, that they may render Him voluntary service.

But there was **one that chose to pervert this freedom**. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven¹³

I dream of the day when everybody would realise that the law of love is the foundation of the government of God, and that the happiness of all created beings depend on living in accord with it.

¹² The Desire of Ages p 22

¹³ Ibid p. 493

CHAPTER 2

Artificial Legal Enforcements Versus Intrinsic Enforcements Built into Nature Itself

Satan and those who followed him imposed over the universe their own legalistic understanding of law, harboring a prosecuting accusatory spirit against anyone who saw things differently to them. To enforce his laws, Satan set himself up as the judge and executor of retributive justice/punishment.¹⁴ Though unsuccessful in his attempt to change “the order and laws of God's government,” he succeeded on earth by introducing this rebellious system of justice to humanity. He misrepresents the two great cornerstones of the heavenly kingdom - God Himself and His design law. Thus he causes fear and distrust, anxiety and instability.

What do we mean by Satan having an imposed law of how he would run the universe? It means that every sin is to have its penalty directly administered by God. For example if a man committed adultery, God would decide what penalty would be its consequence – give him a disease? Kill some of his animals? Have his house robbed?

¹⁴ Psalm 94:20

This is a view of God, his law, and punishment that was most strongly held by Christendom during the “Dark Ages.” Men at that time didn’t see things as cause and effect; everything that happened was instead arbitrarily decided by God. Being unable to work out any logic to how God governed (as they had no Bible to analyze to understand God), man lived in fear of a God who dished out punishments seemingly at his own whim. This unscientific, unreasoning way of interpreting the events of life caused short life spans, hard lives, illiteracy, and constant war.

What was it that brought Europe out of the Dark Ages? It was through the common person being able to read the Scriptures and begin to see that God didn’t govern in the way he had thought, but that God had laws, which if followed, inherently blessed; and which if broken, inherently cursed. This led to the study of cause and effect, known as the scientific method. Man began to come out of darkness, but it wouldn’t be easy.

Humankind, both secular and religious, has long adopted a legal system of law. When the family was the central model of organization, order was kept through love of the family and trust in the patriarch. But when the State became the central model, where an elite ruled over a territory in which there was distrust and competition, order had to be kept through force and propaganda. God’s system was that of the family, originally kept through the line of Shem. But it would be Satan’s system of cities and nation-states, empires and corporations that would end up dominating our world.

In human force-based justice systems, if someone breaks a law and is caught and isn’t punished, we perceive there is no justice. Because this is what we are surrounded by every day, it is extremely hard to imagine an alternative law system. Law and order in our social-organizational systems follow Satan’s logic of imposed enforced legal law, and because of that humanity thinks God runs the universe that way.

The condemning power of Satan would lead him to institute a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy. **He claims to be officiating as the voice and power of God,** claims that his decisions are justice, are pure, and without fault. Thus he takes his position on the judgment seat, and declares that his counsels are infallible. **Here his**

merciless justice comes in, a counterfeit of justice, abhorrent to God.

But how shall the universe know that Lucifer is not a safe and just leader? ***To their eyes he appears right. They cannot see, as God sees, beneath the outward covering. They cannot know as God knows.***¹⁵

Satan superimposes his own corrupt dark images onto God. He deceives multitudes into believing the universe needs judicial oversight, that the 10 Commandments are imposed rules, that God governs the universe like human dictators govern empires and governments – with coercion and brute force. But we state that never, NEVER, did Jesus compare “the kingdom of heaven” with the kingdoms of this world. Jesus instead compared the kingdom of heaven with a man sowing seed, a grain of mustard, leaven, treasure hid in a field, ten virgins, a man travelling into a far country, etc. etc.

“Whereunto,” asked Christ, “shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it?” Mark 4:30. He could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. ***In society He found nothing with which to compare it. Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ’s kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished. This kingdom is to uplift and ennoble humanity.*** God’s church is the court of holy life, filled with varied gifts and endowed with the Holy Spirit. **The members are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless.**¹⁶

Love cannot be commanded

Again, it is worth repeating again and again, God is LOVE and attributes of love cannot be commanded into His subjects. The exercise of force and compulsion are contrary to His nature. Under the healing model, God’s justice, judgment and punishment are reformatory, restorative and declarative. Justice is also educational.

¹⁵ Lt 16a, 1892

¹⁶ AA 12.2

Yet under Satan's legal law model, God's justice, judgment and punishment are retributive processes devoid of mercy, provide no hope and perpetuate fear and distrust.

So how does God govern in contrast to Satan?

The Way God governs is through natural enforcements.

We could say God enforced His 10 Relational Laws just as He enforced the law of gravity, respiration, motion, hydration or laws of health. But these are NOT legal enforcements. They are NATURAL ENFORCEMENTS, enforcements built into the natural world and us. God designed His law as a law of LIFE, violations of which have intrinsic natural consequences leading to death. Those who follow those laws have a better, happier more peaceful life.

“Those who rebel against His law of love will exhibit that rebellion in unrighteous acts – sins. This state of sinfulness causes **condemnation in the conscience and has punishment built into it.** When a person persists in rejecting and distrusting God, God honours that free-will choice and in “anger” leaves the sinner [unhealed person] to the consequences (effectively, the penalty) of his choices.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Ray Foucher, The Character of God

The enforcements of nature are principles of life, fixed unchangeable laws containing boundaries and blessings. They regulate our social behaviour and are designed for our happiness, security, and wellbeing.

Even atheists have a sense of morality and justice because Christ works in every man's conscience!

Justice and punishment can be a volatile subject among “concrete processors” (inflexible closed-minded Christians). Yet both justice and punishment need careful reflection in view that they are, for better or worse, associated with God. We are called to be His witnesses and we don't want to be false witnesses by advocating methods and principles contrary to His character.

We all, Christian or not, have a sense of justice; a sense of fairness and respect for all. For example, even atheists know it is “not right” for someone to break into their home and steal their valuables. They know it is wrong when their spouse is abused, or their kids are bullied and bashed at school ... When encountering these behaviors they become outraged! They appeal for accountability, some kind of equitable law (“eye for an eye...”) payback, penalty or punishment (Rom 2:15).

It is true that as long as we live in this fallen world, societal law and order is necessary.¹⁸ However, “retributive punishment” in eastern and western culture has not had a good track record! It does not fix that which is broken, make wrongs right or undo hurt.

Surface readers of Scripture have their minds clouded and confused by a payback sense of justice, and project that onto God and how He deals with Israel and the wicked. They think anyone that challenges the traditional understanding of God's “justice” or direct “punishment” is extremely misguided. They think those who suggest alternative viewpoints are setting out to make God to be a marshmallow god with no backbone; they think these people make God weak because they are weak. They see questioning a legal framework of the gospel as undermining order in the universe, and that it means there is no punishment. Yet in reality, **unrighteousness NEVER goes unpunished.** It is just that the

¹⁸ See Romans 13:1-7

primary method of chastisement is vastly different to that held by mainstream conservative Christians.

Under an imposed law lens, sin requires an external ruling authority to inflict punishment. Under a design law lens, no sin goes unpunished; the result is a seared conscience, warped character and damaged emotions. Conversely, natural benefits (love, joy, peace emotional health...) follow living in accord with God's laws of life.

Rejecting a punitive view of God does NOT mean God will prevent the occurrence of natural consequences or that all will be healed if they refuse the remedy and choose to remain incurable. Why? Because sin pays its own wages and the wages are death (Rom 6:23). To remain unhealed is to expect to die.

Challenging traditional ideas of punishment, SDA Psychiatrist, Dr. Tim Jennings asks the following 8 questions relating to life laws, health laws and relational violations implying punishment is self-induced:

- Is there a punishment for jumping off a tall building?
- Is there a punishment for smoking cigarettes?
- Is there a punishment for abusing drugs?
- Is there a punishment for cheating on your spouse—even if the spouse doesn't know?
- Is there a punishment for welding without eye protection?

From where does the punishment come? - from breaking the laws upon which God built life to exist.

Who continues to sustain the operation of those laws?

This means God will not change His universe to meet sinners in sin—WE MUST BE CHANGED to live in harmony with God and His law.

Nature – a natural law enforcer!

The apostle Paul understood that nature itself is a more effective law enforcer than human law. Human beings cannot create life, matter or space. As man is not God, he must make rules and coerce people into compliance. Yet the apostle Paul understood that design protocols and natural intrinsic laws are stronger than legal laws. God leaves us free to live in accordance to them or to walk on the difficult dangerous path of death by trying to deny or ignore them. Paul explained this to the Corinthians:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
(1 Cor. 15:56)

In other words, sin - violation of the law of liberty, living in discord to God's design – brings about painful consequences. The sting of death is the self-generated consequence of fear, selfishness, distrust and relational violation. Death is the penalty, the payment; it is "the wages of sin." However, when the sinner is healed of distrust, fear and selfishness, when he lives according to the abundant blessings of God's design, he has passed from death to life and will not be subject to sin's power. As Jesus said: "Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away..." Mt 5:18 GNB

...we can understand **how God punishes sin—not by actively using His power to inflict punishment, but by sustaining the operations of His universe, His laws, including the law of liberty and in the end leaving unrepentant sinners free to experience what unremedied sin does.**¹⁹

¹⁹ Oneness in Christ Lesson 4 4Q 2018 The Key to Unity

Rewards and punishment

In addition to operating on a punishment basis, Satan operates on a reward basis.

In the Garden of Eden Satan tempted and induced Eve. He said, "Eat the fruit and your eyes will be opened, you'll be rewarded with extraordinary wisdom and knowledge, in fact you'll be like God!" (Gen 3:5). Eve and Adam believed him.

Four thousand years later, Satan tempted Christ, the second Adam, by offering Him the kingdoms of this world as a reward for bowing down and worshipping him (Matt 4:9). Jesus saw through this incentive and firmly resisted. 42 months later Satan used insult, abuse, slander, unreasonable expectations and coercion to gain his goal of the crucifixion of Christ. So the sequence Satan has employed throughout history is: 1) deception, 2) rewards and inducements, and if this fails he employs 3) intimidation, force and coercion.

Most major worldviews, including Catholicism and Protestantism, are characterized by rewards and punishments. People see a God of mercy who doesn't inflict punishment as a feeble God, insisting that God must use His power to inflict torment and death. Billions are misled by reward and punishment philosophy. Rewards are bestowed according to the degree of one's devotion and religious performance: **"If you do something for me, I'll do something for you."**

This was how pagans experienced their religion, and what we continue to think to different extents: "Vengeance is a moral duty. People who do evil must be paid back with an equal amount of pain and suffering. To not return pain and suffering is considered immoral. This was ancient Israel saying at Sinai, when the law was first read, **'All the Lord has said, we will do.'**"²⁰

The better we obey, the happier God is with us; the worse we obey, the angrier God is; rather than seeing that God wants to help us if we ask and is sad if we disobey, because we will hurt ourselves. If

²⁰ *The Seven Levels of Moral Development, Decision-Making, and Theories of the Atonement.* Timothy R. Jennings, MD

we don't listen to our parents and smoke cigarettes, we curse ourselves; sin is self-destructive. God will try to speak to our conscience and allow things to happen to us so that we recognize this. He isn't angry with his children; He worries greatly for them. As Jesus stated in grief and tears:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me. (Matthew 23:37 NLT)

Satan deceives people into thinking God operates on a rewards and punishment system, yet in reality Satan is the one that favours some and damns others.

When he [Satan] was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God that shields His creatures and **hedges them in from the power of the destroyer**. But the Christian world have shown contempt for the law of Jehovah; and the Lord will do just what He has declared that He would— [damn sinners or inflict punishment upon them? No!] **He will withdraw His blessings from the earth and remove His protecting care from those who are rebelling against His law** and teaching and **forcing others** to do the same. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. **He will favor and prosper some** [like a mafia boss] in order to further his own designs, **and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.**²¹

²¹ The Great Controversy p 589, bracketed comments added

CHAPTER 3

Groupthink

(Object lessons from dogs, dolphins
circus-lions, and elephants...)

As we touched on the last chapter, religions based on rewards and punishments incite fear, distrust and rebellion. They hold no transforming power.

Unlike circus animals, we are made in God's image and likeness with reasoning powers given us to exercise (Gen 1:26-28). Operating in a system of rewards and punishments hardly requires a brain. Even elephants, dolphins, and monkeys can be taught to obey if given a treat. It is Satan's goal to reduce mankind to "brute beasts and creatures of instinct."

Many Christians are depressed, distressed, or oppressed, experience anxiety and have little lasting peace or victory. They struggle with legalism, guilt, shame, and fear (including fear of God and God's punishment) and are kept from fully trusting God. False portraits of their heavenly Father damage emotions.

Billions do not understand the real purpose of God's laws of life, salvation, the atonement and the cross - God's gracious methods of dealing with sin. Will God damn them for this? Do they need punishment? No! They need healing!

I want to come back to the second reason for writing this series. And that is to make sense of the differing opinions on the nature of the two covenants, the gospel remedy, and character of God amidst the ONE true God community.

Think twice before washing down a bacon and egg breakfast with Zarraffa's coffee or Coca Cola!

Groupthink. Not only am I an INFP (“Mediator”) personality type, I tend to be a follower. Yet over the years I have learned how often I was being swayed by social conformity. In the introduction you read the sad and shocking story of how hundreds of sheep followed each other over a cliff and died! Nowadays I try and avoid this natural impulse to follow the pack and go with the flow. In reality, the majority position is rarely right.

Here are some classic examples of how groupthink can prove to be wrong. IF these examples don't interest you just skim or skip over them.:

- **Sunday is God's holy day:** Most Christians believe Sunday is the Sabbath. We know it is not.
- **Bloodletting cures disease:** From the 1700's to the 1800's doctors practiced bloodletting under the term “humoural physiology.” Withdrawing blood from a patient was commonly practiced as an attempt to reduce inflammation – which was THOUGHT to be caused by an imbalance of body fluids (humours) in seriously ill patients. People who revered and looked up to these doctors as experts were led to believe bloodletting was an effective remedy. It was not. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the historical use of bloodletting was harmful to patients. US President George Washington is a classic example, even though people ever since argue over what actually caused his death. Following a day on horseback in freezing rain and snow, he woke up at 2 a.m. suffering a sore throat and struggling to breathe. After a series of medical procedures, including the draining of nearly 40 percent of his blood, he died that evening. This was on Dec 14, 1799.
- **Foods prohibited in the Old Testament are now ok to eat:** Most Christians believe the Leviticus 11 dietary restrictions were only for the Jews prior to the cross, and it's perfectly ok now to eat “unclean” foods like pork, lobster and oysters and shellfish. We know it is not (Lev 11:1-31, Isa 66:17). Many assume these are arbitrary rules to test the loyalty of the Jews with no intrinsic value

(like if God had told Jews to wear yellow on Wednesdays). As popular as they are, these creatures are living vacuum cleaners, scavengers that feed on filth or clean up ocean floor garbage. Better to stick to scrambled eggs, tomatoes and onions fried in butter or olive oil and skip bacon, pork chops and garlic prawns. (Sick people are all around us and it is our duty to preserve the best of health. It is also a **covenantal moral responsibility**. Being intelligently informed and imparting the right knowledge can help people have a better quality of life, prevent disease and save them thousands of dollars in medical costs.)

- **Fat is bad for you:** For decades people believed high saturated fat foods cause heart disease. A growing number of medical doctors know they do not - and have proven so. Since low-fat diets have not improved anyone's health but made things worse, people's outlook is slowly changing. There is no clear evidence showing foods high in saturated fat cause heart disease. Mounting evidence shows excess SUGAR is the real problem. Adding to this are the easily oxidized common seed oils that have known to cause free radical damage and cellular inflammation in the body. Excess carbohydrates in any form can elevate triglycerides. In time, at some "tipping point", excess sugar will cause "metabolic syndrome" (hormonal disorders of energy conversion) like diabetes, CFS, obesity and other inflammatory disorders like heart disease and gastrointestinal diseases. (Like millions of others, I suffered metabolic syndrome for years, although in time I began to slowly recover and regain health and strength. This is a story in itself!)
- **Health and disease is all related to the physical:** The human body is seen merely as a bag of chemicals. Health is biochemical balance and disease is chemical imbalance. That's why for years traditional or even alternative medicine treats people with chemical drugs (the worst), various foods, fresh raw juice (better), or food supplements (hit or miss), often with no lasting benefit. Truth be told, the body is much more than a chemical factory dependent on the right raw materials (nutrients...) coming in. It is a sophisticated INFORMATION system housing the mind, and good health is dependent on the right energetic flow throughout

the body. Life is more than physical matter – it is governed by our thoughts and feelings; it is about life energy and energy carries information. The body has a specific electrical biofield and that biofield needs to be free of blockages for health to flourish. Mental, psychological and spiritual health affect physical health.

- **Amalgam is non-toxic:** For many years dental amalgam (greyish silver fillings) was not questioned but considered the standard safe restorative material to fill tooth cavities. It was assumed to be stable and non-corrosive. However, independent scientific studies involving both monkeys and sheep have indicated it is not. The mixture of different metals in amalgam produces a “battery” effect in some people’s mouths. The positive and negative “charge” increases the leakage of poisonous mercury vapor out of dental fillings and negatively impacts the electrical impulses of the brain, neurology, nervous system and vital organs. Bottom line: mercury is poison and some people are affected far worse than others.

Other political examples of how social conformity can be dangerous or misleading could be given (the most famous is the social drift into fascism in Nazi Germany) but I think the point is clear! Groupthink is not always the best path to follow. Therefore I think it is wise to objectively try to understand and weigh what others say, including their objections, about points of interest we differ on. Because the reality is he, she, or I might be right – and it’s possible you may be wrong, or vice versa!

Unity and Universal Restoration

Unity is vital for Christians. It is necessary for the completion of God’s eternal purpose and the “restoration of ALL things.” It is necessary in view of the “mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now made manifest.”

From a Bible perspective there are 5 dynamics to this mystery God is bringing to light. This mystery involves:

- 1) Nations
- 2) Creation
- 3) Unity in Christ

- 4) Personal transformation
- 5) Cleansing the universe of sin and death

Further amplification of these 5 dynamics

- 1) Preaching the Gospel that all nations have an understanding of our sinful human condition and God's remedy for us, that they may make a decision whether to align themselves with God's governance or not (Romans 16:25-27).
- 2) The promise of **restoring creation** back to perfection and thus bringing US back into **unity with the rest of the unfallen universe** (1Cor 15:51-52).
- 3) Bringing **all people who choose to be in God's family back into unity or oneness with Christ** as Jesus prayed in John 17—the same mystery! (Ephesians 5:25-33)
- 4) Christ coming to dwell in our hearts as the one most loved, trusted, adored, and whom we long to be like, and of whose character we partake!

“the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:26-27)

5) Like when corrupted code is deleted from computer software, God's plan is to remove the corrupting power of sin, selfishness, and lies from the character. He will restore His character of love, methods of truth and freedom into the hearts and minds of all who trust Him. Thus He will bring us into genuine unity with Him, angels and other peace loving beings in His universe. Unity is vital as we continue to proclaim the final message to illuminate the world. We can be unified in Christ and still differ on:

- The nature of Christ's priesthood.
- Our understanding of Revelation [or every aspect of the Two Covenants].

- But we cannot be united in Christ if we are selfish in character and driven by fear and disagree on the character of God and major gospel themes.

What incites fear and selfishness? Believing lies about God! Thus, the theologies that cause us to mistrust God, to live in fear of God, to utilize the methods of this selfish world to punish and coerce others into conformity cause division, fragmentation, and undermine God's plan.

God's people must reject the imperial dictator views of God in order to experience unity for the ultimate purpose of proclaiming the everlasting gospel – the good news of God's character to the world!

This means we must reject the imperial human law construct with penal substitution and the false legal interpretations that cause division and prevent the mystery of God from being realized in our lives today.

What is another word for bringing us into unity? Atonement — • And what time in history are we living? The antitypical day of atonement — • And what is another symbolic way of teaching this mystery of bringing us all into unity? The sanctuary message— being united in heart, mind, attitude, love, desire, method, motive. We are in oneness with Him, as Jesus prayed in John 17. Thus as individuals we are restored to God's family.²²

This idea of imperial human law being imposed on God will be explored in more depth in the next chapter.

²² Tim Jennings, Oneness in Christ Lesson 4 4Q 2018 The Key to Unity

CHAPTER 4

Dark Sunshine

“Woe to you lawyers.” Evidently, Pharisees and lawyers didn’t have the best reputation in Jesus’ day!²³ According to Jesus, they hadn’t experienced the healing gospel and “hindered” people from gaining a true “knowledge of God.”

The medieval church built by Roman lawyers (Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great) INFECTED Protestantism with legal law retributive theology. Even the early Adventist movement was not fully immune to this infection of thought.

Fortunately, not all Adventists failed to advance in light and truth. This was despite in the early 1800’s, Adventists of varied protestant backgrounds emerged out of centuries of midnight-black, spiritual darkness, as did reformers like Calvin and Luther. Their knowledge of Scripture rapidly progressed. However, it contained certain biases, blind spots and legal flaws. This unconscious influence affected the way God and His methods and kingdom principles were conceived.

For context you will need to use your imagination. Hop in the plane and secure your seat. Belt up as we fly further back in history and take an aerial view of the Christian landscape after the cross. Imagine we have landed on a mountain looking down on the center stage of the third century.

The Third Century

²³ Luke 11: 46, 52

The mother of harlots: Three hundred years after the death of Christ, Eusebius, senior religious advisor to Emperor Constantine, becomes a leading figure of Christianity, who greatly shaped the progress of the religion being known as the “Father of Church History.” How reliable he is debated; the famous historian Gibbon considered him to be much more concerned with the political issues of his time than being a reliable historian. Eusebius was the first church historian to write how the Roman Empire projected its own image of a stern punitive God, onto God’s heavenly government: “With the Roman Empire, monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven.” He was fundamental in justifying the bringing together of Church and State.

Augustine, the Archbishop of Hippo and maybe the most influential of the “Church Fathers”, in the 5th century **influenced Anselm** (monk, philosopher and theologian) of the 11th century. And **Anselm’s** writings in regard to the atonement **influenced** Protestant reformers of the 15th century **like Luther (educated in law) and Calvin (a lawyer)...** **Roman lawyers viewed God as an Imperial Dictator** assuming He rules the universe like human governors rule over people.

LAWYERS CHANGED THE CHURCH

The great men who built the Western Church were almost all trained Roman lawyers. Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the great ... were all men whose early training had been that of a Roman lawyer, - **a training which molded and shaped all their thinking**, whether theological or ecclesiastical. They instinctively regarded all questions as a great Roman lawyer would... They had the lawyer’s craving for exact definitions. They had the lawyer’s idea that **the primary duty laid upon them was to enforce obedience to authority**, whether that authority expressed itself in external institutions or in precise definitions of the correct ways of thinking about spiritual truths. **No branch of western Christendom has been able to free itself from the spell cast upon**

it by these Roman lawyers of the early centuries of the Christian church.²⁴

Did you get that?! The Christian church, and its theology, has been greatly influenced by a bunch of lawyers. God intended His church to be the light of the world, a city on a hill. However, with the inroads of Roman law blended in theology, the light of the world dimmed, the sunshine darkened and the imperial papal Rome infection of thought prevailed. Regarding the ramifications from the spell cast upon mainstream Christendom, Tim Jennings points out:

“Legal solutions to the sin problem have no power to change lives”

Jennings refers to the natural law as design Law (10 Commandments), as opposed to the “artificially” imposed legal law reflected in today’s legal systems. A system where law must be imposed assumes that men have life and power in themselves, and that force is necessary to bring them into line. But this isn’t the case, for it is God who gives life and breath to every man, and disobeying God means cutting yourself off from God – He doesn’t need to use any force, because all power is His anyways. God’s rule over His creation is very different to the rule of the Roman Emperor over Rome.

“...human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.” (Acts 17:25)

God has spoken plainly,
and I have heard it many times:
Power, O God, belongs to you;
unfailing love, O Lord, is yours.
Surely you repay all people
according to what they have done.
(Psalm 62:11-12 NLT)

Although they differ on other aspects of redemption, in this instance, David Clayton’s perspective on the nature of God’s law, kingdom

²⁴ Thomas Lindsay, A History of the Reformation page 168

and judgment is quite similar to Jennings. Clayton contrasts what he describes as the natural law - the law of love - with the legal law. He is totally correct in stating, “the difficulties arising from the legal paradigm” result in “a system of penalties, guilt and retributive judgment...” Furthermore:

The problem with Christendom in general is that they have adopted the same legal system outlined in the law and simply blown it up and transposed it onto the true system [natural law or design law] which governs the universe . . .

PROBLEMS WITH THE LEGAL LAW

There is no legal system which can succeed, or which even exists unless there are penalties attached to that system. By its very nature a system based on legal law must have at its foundation, penalties as an integral part of the system. Without these penalties the law becomes impotent and pointless. There has been an attempt to make the legal law and the natural law (sometimes referred to as “design law”), one and the same. However in doing this we step away from the biblical pattern and we confuse the message . . . **when we look at the controversy and the plan of salvation through the legal lenses,** we are led to the conclusion that this is how God operates!²⁵

There is a big problem with looking at the atonement through “legal lenses”. When reading Scripture, especially passages that seem to contradict God’s character of love and righteous actions, Jennings believes the difference comes down to “what law-lens one looks through.” Do we read Scripture through an imposed legal law lens or a design law lens?

From Legal Fiction to the Real

²⁶ David Clayton, My Position On the Law, Open Face, June 2018

In the dark ages, when the Roman Catholic medieval church ruled, people had little access to Scripture... When the printed page and press was invented, the Bible was translated into several languages. Truth spread like wildfire! Souls were educated and cleansed by the fire of love and truth. People discovered realities new to them and relinquished Catholic falsehoods such as purgatory, the mass and salvation by faith plus meritorious works. They delighted in the discovery of salvation by grace through faith. Nevertheless, they still held dispensational errors.

Core Problem with Most Dispensational Views

Not all dispensational teachings are false. Later we will discuss differing dispensational teachings. However, most religious dispensational teachings have one thing in common. They are anchored in dualism.

In the Old Testament, God is the good cop bad cop – on one hand He blesses, protects and defends Israel; and on the other He judges, punishes, and summons Israel to war. Come New Testament, God slows down from His bad cop days. Now He is the good cop manifested in His Son - He forgives, He heals, He restores. However...

CONTINUED: a few verses can still be found in the New Testament that cleverly MIRROR OUR twisted bad cop image of God. In the final judgments (seven last plagues, post millennium events etc.) it APPEARS God again reverts to the bad cop mafia boss role to punish and annihilate the wicked. Either that, or we have failed to decode Revelation's poetical language, figures of speech and violent metaphors, or clearly understand the meaning behind its clashing imagery.

So with the reformation many thought salvation by grace was secured regardless of un-remedied character defects. **Sin was seen as a legal problem, and not rightly understood as a matter of character and being.** It was thought that confession magically expunges **recorded** sin from heaven's record books. Similarly, "the robe of Christ's righteousness" is thought to magically cover the sinner - as long as he confesses his sin to Jesus.

Seen in this legal manner, sin and selfishness is not comprehended as a matter of character nor even as a matter of social interest.

Sin is: The triumph of individual interests over community interests, the elevation of the me over the us, the preeminence of the almighty I over the minuscule you, self-centeredness over other-centeredness – Ty Gibson

In Part 7 of this series (for those that get that far) I document that despite how instrumental Luther was in God's cause, and despite his key role in the reformation, he too believed God pretends/declares sinners righteous (saying the sick are healthy when they are still sick) by a legal process without any transformation of life, or change in character. Like thousands today, he believed Jesus' death credits righteousness to the sinner's account to clear his legal debt: God's judgment was a courtroom process involving judicial oversight by the cosmic Ruling Authority. It involves the scrutiny of record books, with either rewards for the faithful, or determined external punishments inflicted on the wicked.

I don't say these things to criticize this marvelous great man! I point out these things to reveal some of the undercurrents of the Penal Substitution doctrine influencing Protestantism – including SDA's.

Connected to this is God's judgment, which we will consider next.

CHAPTER 5

The Healing Judgment

In this chapter we will zoom forward again for a few moments in our storyline to visit the New Testament and consider Jesus' view of judgment and the method He used.

Firstly, God's judgment is primarily "His judgment" in the sense He allows Himself to be judged. "The hour of His judgment has come" (Rev 14:6). According to the chorus of the Revelation song the great multitudes will sing, eventually God will be found by all as true and righteous in His dealing with humankind.²⁶ God is being judged now! Today, this hour, this very minute people world over are measuring, assessing, and judging God (Isa 5:3; Rev 11:1)! The question is how?

Firstly, the judgment of God is not entirely new. People judged God in Elijah's day too. During the religious crisis back then, Elijah stated, "If the Lord is God [merciful, gracious, abundant in goodness and truth...] then follow Him; but if Baal is god follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The Elijah message is to be repeated in today's religious crisis of modern Baal worship (An imperial view of God). It poses the same question. "If our non-coercive, non-violent, enemy-embracing, self-sacrificial Lord is God then follow Him; but if Christendom's Baal-like sacrifice-requiring, enemy-destroying, appeasement-demanding Lord is god then follow him! It is foolish to "waver between [the] two opinions."

When the common folk 2,000 years ago witnessed Jesus' life believing He was the "express image" (exact divine representation) of the Father, they were judging God as "just and true." When

²⁶ Rev 15:3,4. See also Rom 3:4; Phil 2:5-11; Rom 15:9

Christians today read of Jesus' life, and believe He is a complete representation of the Father, they are also judging God as "just and true."

The "unfaithful servant" in Jesus' parable of the ten talents imagined his master was a "hard man." So he buried his one bag of gold. When we imagine God as violent, restrictive, coercive, or see a difference between Jesus in the NT and God in the OT, we too are judging God as a "hard man"²⁷ "altogether such a one as us."²⁸ And this picture imperceptibly damages character.²⁹

"The judgment was set and the books were open." Whenever we open books of the Bible, we bring God into question – we are reading about Him and judging His teaching and interactions with man. Is God justly dealing with humans? God's judgment can be illustrated in 3 ways:

- 1) The legal model.
- 2) The diagnostic and healing model.
- 3) The family model.

Models 2 and 3, the healing and family models, reflect God's character of love most. A strict view of the legal model causes emotionally damaging fear and anxiety. It is based on a distorted view of God's system of government and methods of saving humanity.

Some verses in the Bible say God and Jesus do not judge (John 5:22; 8:15). Other verses say they do! What are we to believe?!! This needs unpacking and clarification otherwise we have a contradiction. Confusion disappears when we realize the Bible speaks of **two very different kinds of judgment**.

One kind of Judgment is restorative – a judgment according to God's standards; and the other is retributive – a judgment according to human standards. One is a divine royal judgment. The other is a common courtroom judgment. One is in accord with God's relational system aligning with God's kingdom principles. The other is

²⁷ Matt 25:24

²⁸ Psalm 50:21

²⁹ Dan 6:7,8; 7:25, John 16:1-4; Rev 13:1-17

according to the world's legal system aligning with Satan's kingdom principles.

When the Bible states Jesus does not judge, it means He does not judge according to external appearance or retributively. Jesus NEVER seeks retribution! (Examples: John 12:47, 8:15, 5:22).

For **God did NOT send the Son into the world TO JUDGE** the world, but that the world might be **SAVED** through Him. – John 3:17 NAS

The KJV renders “judge” as *condemn* in this verse. Jesus has no part in a condemnatory judgment (John 8:15). When the Bible says Jesus judges it means He judges in a restorative healing way (John 5:22, 27, Acts 10:42, 2 Cor. 5:10).

And Jesus said, **FOR JUDGMENT I AM COME into this world, THAT they which see not might see**; and they which see might be made blind. (John 9:39)

This verse clearly shows God's judgment is NOT retributive. It does NOT threaten with death, externally punish or condemn. It involves HEALING and RESTORATION of sight to the blind!!!

Let it be made clear here, as we have stated before, God's allowing us to reap the consequences of our actions is His punishment! This is intrinsic and based on our decisions, which have the effect of pushing God away, causing rebellion in nature (since we have dominion over it), or allowing Satan more access to us. This is not an external punishment coming directly from God; this is a punishment contingent on our actions in a cause-effect relationship that is not arbitrary and random! This is God allowing us to judge ourselves based on our own decisions, because we have rejected His gift of repentance, mercy, and healing.

⁷ Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. (Galatians 6:7-8 NLT)

Jesus said: “You judge by human standards [by outward appearance and in a retributive way]; **I pass [human retributive]**

judgment on no one. But if I do judge [in a diagnostic or restorative way], my decisions are true because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.” (John 8:15,16) Let us accept Jesus’ judgment of us, which is to let Him heal us!

The modern conception of judgment, in the church and in the world, is about retribution. It is administered according to human standards. This is judging “according to the flesh” (KJV). Break the law, go to court, and the judge will fine you or sentence you to prison. When we read verses in the Bible about judgment we superimpose our western legal ideas of judgment on these texts. We assume God’s judgment works the same way as the western model. It does not.

There is a big contrast between the religious world’s retributive, fear-based judgment with God’s healing love-based judgment. The apostle John had a correct view of God’s final judgment. And he contrasted the two kinds of judgment we have been discussing here. One kind of judgment produces confidence and peace. “In this way God’s love is perfected in us, so that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment” (1 John 4:17,18). This judgment is based on love and maturity. The other judgment causes feelings of insecurity and fear. Yet, “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all*

fear, but fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears is not made perfect in love.” The love-based view manifests in boldness. Growing in the mind of Christ into a mature understanding of God’s love, God’s love is perfected in them.

Fear-based judgment: Many Christians view God as the **policeman in the sky** who looks for rule breakers, issues fines and inflicts punishment. Yet throughout the Bible, judgment is linked with salvation. And salvation means healing. After all, the Greek word “sozo” for save literally means to heal.

Love-based Judgment: Tim Jennings MD emphasizes the Biblical medical model of God’s judgment. Like others are discovering, he believes “the hour of His judgment” includes our judgment of God, and secondarily, God’s judgment of us involving His diagnosis and subsequent therapeutic interventions (welcomed or rejected) and “final” diagnosis (cured/healthy or incurable). I would add that we are judged AS we judge (Matt 7:1).

The judgment does not change anything. God’s judgment indicates whether or not we have been willing to be healed of self-hatred, self-blame, fear and selfishness, and survival driven relational violations (John 3:17-19). The judgment shows whether we have received the gift of life through the second Adam. It shows whether we have chosen to experience inner transformation, or chosen to harden our heart against God’s love and experienced the NATURAL result of deviation from God’s law of life and remained incurable. God invites. It’s all up to us. He says, “Let anyone who hears this say, ‘Come.’ Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.” (Rev 22:17)

David Clayton emphasizes the family model view of God’s judgment. This is reflective of his take on God’s identity – Father and Son. This pattern of life, the Father and Son governing a FAMILY kingdom, dissolves needless fear, offers far more hope, and is more attractive than the false imperial idea of God governing a legal system.

There is no question that the Bible teaches that God will judge the world on the basis of their behaviour, they will be measured by the law. But the judgement is only a demonstration which reveals who is a **member of God’s family** and who is not. It was never about how well we

kept the law, that was never our focus nor our emphasis! For us it was always Christ. Our eyes were not on the law, the law was not our concern, being in harmony with the law was the incidental fruit of the fact that Christ lived in us. The natural law living in us, ensured that when the legal law is called into action in the final judgement it can find no place where it finds fault in us³⁰.

I am not sure what he means by, “it was never about how well we kept the law.” If I understand God’s law as a design law then it would be like saying, “it was never about how well we have kept the natural law of breathing and hydration.” And that just doesn’t make sense at all! If we do not breathe very well or stop replacing fluids we will die. If we stop being kind and loving in accord to God’s law, spiritually we will die.

REALITY VS. FICTION

The counterfeit (legal fiction) version of the healing model: Going back to the healing model, as mentioned, sin is described in the Bible as dis-ease.³¹ When you are sick whom do you go to? Do you turn to a lawyer or a physician? You go to a physician!

Under the legalistic medical view, Jesus is seen as a Doctor pronouncing his patients perfectly whole when in reality they are dying of terminal disease! Crazy. What would we think of a doctor who skims over a patient’s medical records that diagnoses serious disease and replaces them with blank sheets of paper and says, “don’t worry, you are fine I see no record of disease”? What would we think of a physician that says to a patient suffering a chronic disease: “You know what, my son has perfect health. So I will replace your record with my son’s record”? Would that change reality? We would be disgusted by his denial of reality. We wouldn’t buy this medical fiction! Yet this is the way many perceive the

³⁰ David Clayton, My Position On the Law, Open Face, June 2018

³⁰ Isa 1:5; Mark 2:9; Psalm 32:1-5; 51:1-7

judgment. They believe Christ's record of a healthy righteous life "stands in place" of their unrighteous life. They believe the robe of Christ's righteousness magically covers their fear, distrust and survival driven relational violations. They believe Christ legally "declares" them righteous regardless of numerous character defects. This widely held belief is fraudulent and tricks the professed followers of God into false security with powerless lives where they need to wear a mask all the time. Hiding behind a mask is draining!

At the end of the day, aside from "switching off" from the problems of the day by putting the feet up, reading a fictional novel or watching a fictional movie, in the real world, when it comes to politics, education, business etc. people with common sense are ONLY convinced by realities. They have little tolerance, or time, for religious facade or fiction. The non-churched only open up to realities like a flower opens up to the sun. You can't artificially open up flowers with pliers. You can't artificially open people's minds to reality with force. Only by a gentle process will a flower open up and turn to the sun. And only by the gentle process of love, thoughtful actions and loving-kindness will the world's wounded open up their heart and turn to the sunshine of God's love.

Wrong diagnosis, wrong treatment

Salvation, even to this day, is merely understood in legal terms – among "liberals" and "conservatives." This is because **the diagnosis for sin is wrong and therefore the treatment is wrong!** It is that simple – **wrong diagnosis, wrong treatment!**

Sin is seen as breaking rules and offending God, requiring Him to actively punish. The focus is on external interventions and legal solutions.

Sin needs to be understood as inner characterological damage resulting from a drive for survival. This depraved self-centered drive, causes fear and distrust, negatively impacts our physical health, emotional state and fractures our relationship with God.

Conversely, salvation is about restoring love and trust, character transformation and inner healing.

Conclusion

So how are we healed? We are healed by completely believing that God's will for us is better than our own will for us – something extraordinarily hard to do, because our flesh thinks that we know what's best for us. We must truly know God and His plans; not think we know God's plans when in actuality we have got it wrong. There is a precedent for this – the Jews in the time of Jesus. Paul explains this point:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [culmination, conclusion] of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. (Romans 10:1-4)

This prayer remains relevant to all who “have a zeal for God,” believing in a Creator, but that zeal is “not according to knowledge.” We, by nature, serve God thinking we are in His will when we are not because we lack knowledge, misunderstand His character and ways, and have a tendency to project our own ideals onto God; when in actuality His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when “a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the fire:” and after the fire, God spoke to the prophet by “a still small voice.” (1 Kings 19:11-12) So Jesus was to do His work, not with the clash of arms and the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

The principle of the Baptist's own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah's kingdom. John well knew how foreign all this was to the principles and hopes of the leaders in Israel. That which was to him convincing evidence of Christ's divinity would be no evidence to them. They were looking for a Messiah who had not been promised. John saw that the Saviour's mission could win from them only hatred and condemnation. (DA 217-218)

Jesus was sent to show us what God is really like (John 17:4). He would break through our legal views of God and show God as a loving Father and Healer. He would, if we accepted Him, free us from our deep-rooted need to blame others to feel relieved of our own guilt that has been with humanity since Adam and Eve refused to ask for forgiveness and instead blamed each other. We all have done bad things, and deep down our consciences ache because of it. Will we deal with our guilt and trauma in a human manner, through scapegoating and repression, which allows us temporarily to remain in our own will (until that terrible day when all that we have hidden from ourselves is revealed to us, burning like "letters of fire" as stated in GC 666)? Or will we give it over to Jesus and accept that He has borne it all for us, believing that the only way we can be free is by totally handing our will over to Him?

We are proud of our own ability to judge. We think we know how God should deal with the human race, we place ourselves in the position of God and it is difficult for us to let go of our preconceptions. But we must always distrust our assumptions, remembering that by nature we have the mind of Satan (John 8:44) and a heart which is "deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). Satan too thought He knew how to judge better than God.

God is trying to bring us over from the mind of Satan to having the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Jesus is the means through which we understand the only True God (John 17:3), His Father. The whole process of serving God, of studying His Word, of praying, of sharing the gospel, of reading His law – all this is the means by which God shows us our need and purifies us, that we would consent to being made whole. Let us allow Him to do His great healing work in our lives.

Discover the difference between the legal and the real, the false gospel and the true gospel, artificially imposed laws and intrinsic design laws, an imperial universe and a natural universe... Why human laws, external penalties and punishments, when placed onto God as how he operates, cause fear, resentment and rebellion to flourish. And how living in accord with God's natural universe and laws of life... cause love, peace and healthy relationships to flourish. Seeing God's methods, principles and how He deals with sin in a whole new way.