

The Teacher's Notes—The Foundation of God's Government, Lesson 9 Adult Bible Study Guide, 2024 2Q, "The Great Controversy"

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The Teacher's Notes



Sabbath School Lesson for May 25-31, 2024

Overview of Lesson 9, The Foundation of God's Government

Memory Text: *"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."* **Revelation 12:17 NKJV**

Woman is a symbol we find in the Bible for the church—either a pure church that loves the truth, or an apostate (fallen) church that has rejected God’s truth (such as the one called Babylon). In the description we find in Revelation 12:17, our memory text, we can definitely know it’s talking about a pure church that has angered the dragon (also known as Satan—Revelation 12:9)

In Revelation 14:12, we find the same identifying description of the saints of God. We associate saints with holy people, those who are trying to be holy, like the God they worship. This is done by keeping His commandments (obviously the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament) and the testimony or faith of Jesus (found in the New Testament, through the life of God’s own Son, the Messiah).

If we are to enjoy the peace and security of God’s Kingdom, we must prepare ourselves by keeping His commandments through faith in the blood of Jesus. This will allow His saints to reflect God’s character of justice and mercy to the world.

We can easily see a connection between the heavenly sanctuary, God’s law which is found and protected there (Revelation 11:19), and the Sabbath which is in the center of that law. After all, who we worship, the Creator or the deceiver, is the key issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

This week, we will explore:

- **Sunday: The Sanctuary and the Law**—the ark of the covenant (which contains the law) is in the heavenly sanctuary (Revelation 11:19)
- **Monday: The Immutability of God’s Law**—the law of God does not change (Matthew 5:18)
- **Tuesday: The Sabbath and the Law**—the Sabbath is in the center of God’s law (Exodus 20:8-11)
- **Wednesday: The Mark of the Beast**—the mark of the beast shows we worship Satan, the dragon (Revelation 13:4)
- **Thursday: The Three Angels’ Messages**—the first of the three angels’ messages tells us to worship the Creator (Revelation 14:6-7)

Sunday: The Sanctuary and the Law

A study of the earthly sanctuary tells us much about what John saw and wrote about in Revelation. We know from Leviticus, for example, that the Most Holy Place was entered only once a year by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, when the sanctuary was cleansed. **Inside this holy room was the ark of the covenant, which contained the Ten Commandment Law,** written on stone tablets and given to Moses (Hebrews 9:4).

We are all judged by these ten, eternal principles even today. **God's Law is the essence of who He is—a perfect, balanced blend of His love and justice**, which we know never changes (Malachi 3:6).

Besides the justice that God's Law guarantees us on Judgment Day, it is through His mercy that we are even given the Ten Commandments, which mark the way of escape from our sorry, sinful selves. Not surprisingly, **the top cover of the ark is called the mercy seat** (Exodus 25:21, 22).

What a comfort it is to see God's ark, containing the Law, in John's vision of the heavenly sanctuary (Revelation 11:19). To be sure, **God is found in His sanctuary and is seen in His Law**.

Bible Verses:

Revelation 11:19, Exodus 25:16, and 31:18

What is the significance of the law being stored in the earthly sanctuary and also being seen in vision in the heavenly sanctuary?

Revelation 12:17 and 14:12

What do you think it means by the testimony or the faith of Jesus? Why are the two words used interchangeably?

Monday: The Immutability of God's Law

The commandments that the saints are said to have kept, or obeyed, are the same ones John saw in vision. Written by God's own finger, the Ten Commandments stand as a **testimony of who God is and what we can do to be more like Him**.

Jesus upheld the Ten Commandments often, by quoting them, preaching them, and most of all, by living them. They were seen as a transcript of His character. He clarified that He would never destroy or minimize what God desired from His children in those Commandments (Matthew 5:17, 18).

Some of the Protestant Reformers, such as John Wesley, also upheld God's moral Ten Commandment Law, while correctly recognizing the temporary nature of the ceremonial, ritual laws that pointed forward to the first coming of the Messiah, the ones that had been fulfilled. Those, as the Bible tells us, have been done away with.

But the unchangeable, immutable, moral Law, found in the Ten Commandments, will be forever binding upon God's faithful people. God's Ten Commandments stand fast forever and ever (Psalm 111:8), and, best of all, are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). If we love God, we, too, will keep them (John 14:15).

Bible Verses:

Matthew 5:17, 18, Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14, and Psalm 111:7, 8

Why do you think God's Law will always need to be obeyed?

1 John 5:3 and John 14, 15

If God's Law seems like it's painful to keep, what might be the problem with our obedience? And what can we do about it?

Tuesday: The Sabbath and the Law

There are many reasons God's Sabbath is found in the center of the Ten Commandments. **The fourth Commandment reminds us of God's creatorship in the Garden of Eden, but also points forward to the time in the future when we will once again enjoy a new earth in all its original beauty. At the same time, we are reminded of our Redeemer. Sabbath rest includes rest from our works, and relying on His grace to save us.**

The **Sabbath is central to our worship of the Creator and Redeemer. It's a sign of our loyalty to the true God.** Satan tries to divert our attention to himself, using various other theories and philosophies to explain our origin. But **by keeping the Sabbath** and pausing one day of the week to get closer to God, recognizing His mighty creative and redemptive qualities, **we can avoid the confusion Satan promotes.**

Just as a comma is used to pause in a sentence, the Sabbath pause helps us make sense of our world. If that comma is missing, or in the wrong place, the reader will not be able to understand correctly what he is reading. In a similar way, **life just makes more sense when we pause from our regular work on the day God blessed for that purpose.**

Bible Verses:

Revelation 14:6, 7, 4:11, Genesis 2:1-3, and Exodus 20:8-11

How are Creation, the Sabbath, and God's Law related?

What do they tell us about who and why we worship?

Ezekiel 20:12, 20

For what purpose are we given the Sabbath?

Wednesday: The Mark of the Beast

As we see in Ezekiel 12:20, **the Sabbath is a sign that we worship God**, who created everyone and everything. **Satan, in trying to be like God** (Isaiah 14:14), **has substituted another day to worship**. Sunday worship is a practice which is not found anywhere in Scripture. Just as Daniel predicted, **Satan has tried to “change times and laws”** (Daniel 7:25). The fourth Commandment about worship is the logical one to attack. It deals with time and is in the center of God’s Law.

Revelation 12 gives us a general outline of the great controversy between Christ (the Child) and Satan (the dragon). Revelation 13 is more specific in how the controversy is carried out—with the dragon’s two allies (the beast from the sea and the beast from the land) joining forces to make war on God’s people. Then, of course, chapter 14 of Revelation reveals God’s last day messages to the world, which include a warning about getting the mark of the beast.

Just as God’s His holy Sabbath day is a sign of our allegiance to Him, Satan also has a sign, or mark, of his worship. **At some point, near Christ’s Second Coming, all will know and understand the issues of the Sabbath, and those who have chosen to worship Satan will receive the mark of the beast**, with all the consequences found in God’s final warning message of the third angel. Their fates are sealed and their punishment will be final for all eternity.

Bible Verses:

Revelation 12:12, 17, and 13:7

Why is the dragon so angry with the saints?

Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, and 15

What is the key thought in these verses?

Revelation 12:17 and 14:12

Why is important for God’s people to pay attention to His Commandments?

Thursday: The Three Angels’ Messages

Since 1844 and the close of the 2,300-year prophecy found in Daniel 8:14, we are seeing the beginning of the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven. The judgment has begun in the heavenly sanctuary, and we are called to solemnly prepare ourselves spiritually for Christ’s return to earth. **No one knows the day or the hour of His Coming** (Matthew 24:36), **but we are given three angelic messages to share with the world while we wait** (Revelation 14:6-12).

The first angel's message emphasizes the wonderful goodness of our Creator God and calls us to worship Him. The language used is very similar to what we find in the fourth Commandment about Sabbath. A widespread **call to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath did begin shortly after 1844.**

The second angel then alerts us to the false worship promoted by an apostate church, called Babylon. It calls His people to come out of that false worship system that Satan has used over the centuries to establish Sunday worship. **The Seventh-day Adventist Church was then established as the result of that departure.**

And finally, **the message of the third angel encourages us once again to make the choice between God and Satan.** Depending on our choice, **we will either be eternally saved or eternally lost.**

In conclusion, **God's saints have decided to be obedient, grace-filled Christians,** who patiently wait for Jesus to come (Revelation 14:12).

Bible Verses:

Revelation 14:6, 7 and Exodus 20:11

How is the language similar in these verses, and why are the similarities significant?

Revelation 14:12

Why are faith and obedience always important, but especially in these last days?

Friday: Final Thoughts

The foundation of God's government is seen in the sanctuary worship services, in His Law which includes Sabbath worship, and in His obedient saints who have chosen to worship their Creator on the day He has blessed. Even so, God has created us with the freewill to worship whomever and however we choose. Choices based on anything but love for God will not be enough to satisfy Him. He longs for a willing, trusting relationship with His followers.

Man's government, on the other hand, is often based on force. Down through history, human leaders have tried to enforce their particular, religious ideas on people, regardless of individual preferences. The most successful governments are the ones who have kept the church and human government separate, allowing people to choose for themselves whom they will serve. Anything less has always led to persecution of someone, often God's most devout followers.

Some think that Satan's efforts to control governments, using the influence of the church, is really an effort to be like Christ, who alone is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Only Jesus' sacrifice gives Him the right to rule the universe fully in that way. Satan is just a pretender

when it comes to governance. It's always safest to follow our Creator and Redeemer. His laws are never a burden (1 John 5:3). In fact, they are a joy to keep (Proverbs 29:18).

Next Week: Spiritualism Exposed (based on ch. 31-34 of "The Great Controversy")

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