



## The Book of Acts Lesson 8 3Q 2018 The Jerusalem Counsel

by Tim Jennings (announcements at end)

### SABBATH

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The memory verse is Acts 15:11, lets read verses 10 and 11: “Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” Acts 15:10,11 NIV

Here is the New Living Translation: “So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”

What does this mean?

- We can't be saved by law keeping
- Can we be lost by law breaking?
- How do we explain that if law breaking can cause us to be lost that law keeping cannot save us?

Which law lens do we explain this through?

How is it explained through the false human law concept?

- That once the law is broken a penalty for law breaking is required in order to maintain either the integrity of the law or the authority of the sovereign. So, if a murderer committed murder 20 years ago, and hasn't committed murder since, i.e. kept the law, his law keeping still doesn't pay the penalty for his previous law breaking. Someone has to be executed to pay that penalty.
- Now think about that construct for a moment—how many of you think it is reasonable to punish an innocent person for the crimes of the guilty—even under our human law system?
- What would it say about God if He were to construct a system in which innocents were punished for the crimes of the guilty?
- Further—does anyone in the penal/legal camp teach that we can actually obey or keep the law? So, we are always piling up more crimes to be punished in that view, yet how do we ever stop?

How do we explain the reality that we cannot be saved by law keeping with the reality we can be lost by law breaking through the truth of God's design law?

- Breaking the laws of health will cause disease
- Keeping the laws of health once one has a terminal condition will not cure the condition—i.e. smoking will cause cancer—stopping smoking will not cure the cancer.
- Jesus came to provide a remedy to the cancer of sinfulness, the remedy is provided free, by God's grace



- How righteous is it for a healthy person to donate bone marrow to a terminal person with leukemia? So we see how righteous it is for an innocent to sacrifice themselves in the design law model to save those dying in sin.
- Partaking of the remedy will cure—i.e. transform us, our hearts and minds.
- However, taking of the remedy does not prevent future damage one could inflict on themselves by new breaks to God's design law. Smoking causes cancer, a remedy cures the cancer and then the person smokes again—what happens?

Do you see how perfectly and beautifully things fit when we reject the human imposed law lie and return to God's design law reality?

So, here are these verses from *The Remedy*:

So why are you trying to prove you know better than God by putting legal requirements and rituals on them, which will only enslave them like a yoke around their neck, and which neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No way! Don't do it! We believe it is through the gracious Remedy of our Lord Jesus that we are healed, and so are they!"

## SUNDAY

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Read first paragraph, "From the beginning..." What happened in the Antioch church? Why did their harmony, peace, healthy group relations get shattered?

- The members of Antioch were vulnerable because they didn't think for themselves. They esteemed the group from Jerusalem in some way higher than themselves and allowed their understanding to be corrupted by the ideas and concepts of those from Jerusalem. In other words, when someone from the conference office showed up they deferred their thinking to what they perceived to be someone of a higher authority. But were they?
- The group from Jerusalem introduce a false legal and behavioral construct—i.e. they introduced religion—the do's and don'ts

Consider this quote from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

The ministry of Christ was in marked contrast to that of the Jewish elders. **Their regard for tradition and formalism had destroyed all real freedom of thought or action.** They lived in continual dread of defilement. To avoid contact with the "unclean," they kept aloof, not only from the Gentiles, but from the majority of their own people, **seeking neither to benefit them nor to win their friendship.** [notice the specific types of interactions they refused to do—acts of love and service. This is important to recognize when dealing with teens who want to engage in unhealthy activities with those who are not converted to Christ. They might say to a parent that the parent is being a Pharisee by not letting the child go to such and such an activity. However, while we do want to avoid engaging with people in unhealthy endeavors, we should not avoid interacting to bless others. The Pharisees had the motive of selfishness,



thinking about their salvation, their legal standing, and what would happen to them. Some SDAs do the same thing thinking about their legal status if they were to talk to someone on Sabbath who doesn't talk about Bible things.] By dwelling constantly on these matters, **they had dwarfed their minds and narrowed the orbit of their lives.** Their example encouraged egotism and intolerance among all classes of the people. {DA 150.2} [what is another name for egotism? **Selfishness, pride, arrogance, self-centeredness**]

Jesus began the work of reformation by coming into close sympathy with humanity. While He showed the greatest reverence for the law of God, **He rebuked the pretentious piety of the Pharisees, and tried to free the people from the senseless rules that bound them.** He was seeking to **break down the barriers which separated the different classes of society,** that He might bring men together as children of one family... {DA 150.3}

What kind of law were the Pharisees and Judaizers focusing upon?

When Jesus is seeking to build relationships, heal people, break down barriers between groups, what kind of law is He focusing upon?

Do we have any problems like this in the world today?

Do we focus on the reality that whether someone is a Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist or atheist—that the laws of God don't differentiate?

- If they all jump off a bridge together gravity treats them the same
- If they all get infected with Ebola they all need the same remedy
- All humanity is infected with fear and selfishness and distrusts God and all humanity needs to the truth about God to restore trust and a renewed heart and mind to love others
- So, if a Buddhist, has discovered the truth of other-centered love and has experienced a renewed heart—how did that happen? Did it happen by the Buddhist's law keeping? Or does it happen by the grace of God applying the achievements of Christ into the heart and mind of the Buddhist?

So today, are we sharing a message that unifies all humanity, or are we like the Judaizers from Jerusalem sharing a message that cause division because we teach people that if they don't do this or do that they can't be part of God's family?

Read second paragraph, "Traditionally called Judaizers..." What does it mean that even the Apostles struggled with this issue?

That all people, including those in a genuine saving relationship with God, those who have been reborn, whose motives are right, who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and even those empowered with Spiritual gifts, such as the gift of prophecy, are still finite, that they don't know everything. It means that they still have things to learn, which means than can be wrong on certain issues. And that means that we are not to surrender our judgment to others, including prophets of God, but to be fully



persuaded in our own minds.

It also demonstrates beautifully how God works. That when we surrender ourselves to Him He does not use His power to overwrite our identity, but enlightens us with truth and love that we must assimilate by our own freewill choices.

This means that our personal transformation, growth, development, maturity AFTER we have accepted Jesus as our Savior is up to us! The rate of our growth is limited by our capacity and/or willingness to assimilate and apply the truths that God reveals to us and often times such moments of growth are real struggles.

Is it a struggle to:

- give up an addiction?
- give up a job on the day of worship?
- give up a certain food you have eaten your entire life?
- give up an belief, idea, theology you have either believed or taught your entire life?
- give up a wish, hope, longing to either punish your enemy or see God punish them?

Read fourth paragraph, “Their point was rather simple...” Were the Jews in OT times God’s agents to spread the gospel, as Christians are today?

Then, what is the difference between becoming part of the Jewish nation in OT times and becoming a Christian today?

Why was circumcision of the body necessary for someone to join the Jewish nation in OT times, but not necessary to become a Christian?

Because the Jewish nation were actors in a drama—their entire system was theatrical to act out a larger reality. There was nothing in any of their rituals that had saving ability—it was all designed to teach people of the true reality.

So, if you wanted to become part of the acting troupe, to get on stage and share the message through theatrical enactment—you could, but you had to follow the script, thus you had to wear the right costumes, bring the right sacrifices and get circumcised. If you wanted to act in the play, but didn’t want to follow the script you could not.

However, in Christianity it was not theatrical it was the reality to which the enactments were pointing. Thus, while one could not become a member of the Jewish nation without circumcision of the body, one could become a member of the bride of Christ—Christian church without bodily circumcision. But, could one become a Christian without circumcision of the heart? Why not? Because it simply is not possible, circumcision of the heart is part of what makes one a true Christian.



Circumcision of the body was merely a physical enactment or symbol of the reality, circumcision of the heart.

What causes division in Christianity today?

- form of baptism?
- day of worship?
- ordination of women?
- the meaning of communion/Eucharist
- foot washing as a ceremony or not
- foods authorized to eat
- smoking tobacco or not smoking tobacco

Why do these things cause division? Is there anything that will save a person if they get it right? Will any of these if a person does them “wrong” that automatically disqualifies for salvation?

If these can neither save, nor cause one to be lost, then why do they divide the body of Christ?

Is it because they are all understood through the legal law lie, which leads people to falsely believe it does matter in some salvation way?

What contributes to unity?

- Love—loving others more than self
- Truth—understand how reality works, the truth about God, His laws, the nature of sin, God’s solution for it
- Freedom—presenting truth in love and leaving others free to make their own choice, and only setting boundaries of division based on design law—i.e. quarantine. Why do we separate people under the laws of health? This is the principle to be used and then the mature, the health-care workers, still go into the quarantine zone to provide care. Mature Christians still go out into the diseased world to take the remedy!

## **MONDAY**

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The entire day is about the question of circumcision—any further questions about it?

Read bottom green section, “What’s the danger of thinking that salvation comes from merely being a member of the right church?”

Can we be saved by being a member of the right church?

Does your church organization/denomination do evangelism?

What is the purpose of evangelism?



Is the purpose of evangelism by your church primarily to bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus or have them join your denomination?

If we can't be saved by denomination, why do we evangelize to get them to join a specific denomination rather than convert to Jesus?

Do we sometimes link salvation with joining a particular church?

Do we link salvation with doing certain rituals or behaviors or some form of law keeping?

I received an email recently from a woman who said she likes the teachings of the SDA church, and was thinking about joining, but the pastor said that before she could that she had to stop wearing earrings and her wedding ring. She doesn't want to do this—is salvation based or lost on wearing earrings and wedding rings?

So, a private club can set rules for membership, such as no jewelry if you want to join—but we shouldn't mistake private clubs for the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus never told someone who wanted to follow him that they had to stop wearing jewelry in order to do so.

What did someone have to do in order for Jesus to accept them as His follower? Put Him first in their lives!

So, some humans come along later, and in their personal journey they realized for them, in their heart, they coveted jewelry and they realized to be a true follower of Jesus, they had to leave their jewelry behind. And after doing so, they then set up their own personal struggle and experiences as a test for others—if you really loved Jesus supreme you would give up your jewelry, to people who have never coveted jewelry and from whom jewelry is nothing more than wearing purple or red. So, when people tell them, if you really love Jesus you will stop wearing jewelry, they hear it like you would if someone told you to be a Christian you cannot wear purple or red. It would sound silly and make God out to be trivial and small.

Many things have been done like this in Christianity.

When we come back to love and practice what Paul taught in Romans 14, “let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind” then we move toward unity based on design law!

## **TUESDAY**

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Read second paragraph, “In his speech, Peter addressed....” What is the point being made?

Is Peter making the point that if God gifted the uncircumcised Gentiles with the Holy Spirit, then we have no right to overrule God and exclude them from the church?



Would that mean if God gifted a woman with the gift of prophecy, or the gift of teaching or the gift of pastoring that we, as a church, should not overrule God and exclude her from leadership in the church?

Read next paragraph, "In His divine providence..." Did the Old Covenant purify in reality? Or did it only purify in symbol?

Was there any cleansing from sin from observing the rituals of the Old Covenant?

What does it mean that some of the Jewish converts believed that there was cleansing from sin from the rituals?

Do we have any problems like this today where people think that some ritual actually cleanses from sin?

Are people cleansed from sin by water baptism, or is water baptism a public statement of the cleansing that has happened when they let Jesus into their lives?

Are people cleansed from sin by partaking communion or the Eucharist? Or are these ceremonies merely symbols of what actually cleanses?

And what actually cleanses?

What do you think of this quotation from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

The Comforter is called "the Spirit of truth." **His work is to define and maintain the truth.** He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. **It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind.** [What does this mean? How does Satan gain power?] **By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character.** [What is a standard? A unit used to measure against—and what would be a false standard, a false measure—and what is the false standard Satan uses? The imposed law construct which focuses on behavior] **Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error,** and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1} [what does the Holy Spirit use to cleanse the mind? Truth!]

In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. **The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.**



[Why? Wasn't the problem legal? Weren't all the sins of all people of all time placed on Jesus and punished in Jesus so we can have legal pardon if we ask? So, why would the sacrifice be of no avail without the Holy Spirit? Because it wasn't ever a legal problem it was a problem of our condition of being. Jesus procured the remedy which will cure us, but it still must be applied within the heart and mind of the sinner, and this is what the Holy Spirit does.] The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead**, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. **It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure.** [This is not legal, it is healing and transformational. This is the true gospel message] **Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature.** Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. {DA 671.2}

So the question, what actually cleanses, is it partaking of piece of symbolic bread or partaking of what the bread and wine represent? And what do they represent?

Jesus is the Word made flesh, thus when we partake of the bread we are symbolically saying we are partaking of the living Word, the truth that dispels lies and restores us to trust and reshapes us internally. Further, when we are restored to trust by partaking of the Word of truth, we then open the heart and the Spirit comes in and takes the wine/blood i.e. the life of Christ and reproduces it us—we become the partakers of the divine nature.

This is the reality and if we don't move past symbols to reality we stay stuck in sin, just like the Judaizers infecting Antioch.

## WEDNESDAY

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The lesson focuses on the conclusions of the Jerusalem counsel for Gentiles, let's read Acts 15:28,29:

The Holy Spirit and we have agreed not to put any other burden on you besides these necessary rules: eat no food that has been offered to idols; eat no blood; eat no animal that has been strangled; and keep yourselves from sexual immorality. You will do well if you take care not to do these things. With our best wishes." GNB

How would you describe their conclusions?

What is the underlying basis or reason for these particular guidelines, instructions, rules?

Is this ritual?

Is it based on imposed law?





Is it based on design law?

What design laws?

- The law of worship—by beholding we become changed, so don't give any value or credence to idols. And don't participate in activities that remind you of, or relive in you the pagan life.
- The laws of health—don't drink blood and don't eat meat from strangled animals.
- The law of love, worship and health: don't break God's design for relationships and injure your marriage, don't damage your mind, don't relive pagan practices and warp your character, and don't get diseases and damage your body by sexual immorality.

Read fourth paragraph, "In the context of Leviticus..." Why were all of these things, drinking blood, eating strangled animals, sexual fertility practices, idols and images all part of pagan practices?

Because Satan understands design law and he understands that if he can get us to participate in such practices the acts themselves don't cause us legal problems with God, but actually destroy within us the image of God. Such practices damage the mind, sear the conscience, warp the character, harden the heart. This is why these practices are included in pagan worship and why we should avoid activities that violate God's design laws!

## **THURSDAY**

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The lesson points out again how the Apostles struggled to accept and fellowship with the Gentile converts and then asks in the bottom green section: "Be honest with yourself: how difficult is it for you to have fellowship with believers from other races, cultures, and even social classes? How can you be purged of this decidedly anti-gospel attitude?"

When is it sin to not want to fellowship with others?

Is it ever not sin to not want to fellowship with other Christians?

If a person doesn't like a certain type of music, say contemporary and thus they don't want to go to a contemporary worship service is that sin?

If a person doesn't like a certain style of preaching and thus they don't want to attend a church with that style of preaching is that sin?

So, is it okay to have differences based on our personalities that are not sin?

When is it sin?

When we don't love those who have differences in their style and preference of worship and we judge them as less than us spiritually, or look down on them?



How about, if we believe some Christians are actually doing destructive practices?

In my book, *The Aging Brain* I recount an off-shoot group that refuses to use any medicines and they have the highest infant mortality rate in their state, several parents have been imprisoned for refusing to give their children antibiotics for meningitis and those children died.

Are we to make judgments about what is actually healthy and not healthy?

Does it go beyond laws of health?

What about a person whose child dies in a car wreck when they were on their way to a friend's house for their birthday party—but it happened on Sabbath and other church members told them that because they were going to a birthday party on Sabbath either God was punishing them or the angels were not allowed to protect the child?

Can we make judgments about this?

## **FRIDAY**

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read and discuss questions 1 and 2



#### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**NEW TV PROGRAM:** Each Tuesday watch our new TV Program—**The Dr. Tim Jennings Show on WBTN.TV Network.** God to TimJenningsMD.com for more info.

**New Video Blogs**—If you don't follow us on Facebook, then be sure to visit our website we are posting new blogs again, the go up every Thursday.

**September 14,15, 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be Keynote Speaker at Crossroads Community Church in Georgetown, Delaware.

**September 27-29, 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Mega National Conference of the American Association of Christian Counselors in Dallas, TX

**September 30-Oct 2, 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at NAD of SDA Mental Health Education retreat for pastors at Kettering, OH.

**October 19, 20, 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be doing a seminar at Camelback SDA church, in Phoenix, AZ.

**November 9,10 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be doing two presentations at Houston, TX, in conjunction with the AACC

**December 1, 2018:** Dr. Jennings will be doing an Aging Brain seminar in Dallas, TX. Organized by the Arlington SDA church.

**January 4-6, 2019:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking for the Florida Conference of SDA Women's Convention in Orlando, FL.

**February 2-3, 2019:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking Christ's Church of Oronogo, MO.

*In partnership with Come and Reason Ministries and Hixson United Methodist Church  
**Mental Health Matters** Community Gatherings for Help, Hope and Healing*

#### **Fix for Failing Families Thursday, September 13, 2018**

Families are under attack, more than 50% of marriages end in divorce, in the U.S. almost 900,000 children are victims of abuse each year, and 77% of childhood deaths are caused by one or both parents. Discover principles and practice to bring healing to your family.

#### **The Science of Belief Thursday, October 12, 2018**

In this seminar we will examine the science of belief and demonstrate how modern quantum understanding provides a scientific basis for the impact belief, including prayer, has on our physical health and can even impact the physical world around us.

#### **Guilt Resolution Thursday, November 8, 2018**

Do you struggle with guilt? Discover the difference between legitimate and illegitimate guilt and how to resolve each and how to prevent people from manipulating you with guilt.

#### **The God-Shaped Brain Thursday, December 13, 2018**

Our brains are in a constant state of flux. Moment by moment new connections are forming, idle tracks are being pruned back and brain circuits are changing. Discover how our beliefs change our brain wiring, our physical health, and even which genes are turned on or turned off. Do your beliefs matter – more than you ever knew!