

Atonement and the Cross of Christ

Cosmic Crisis: The Disruption of God's Established Order

Lesson #2 for October 11, 2008

Scriptures: Job 1:8-11; Psalms 40:8; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-17.

1. If salvation and the atonement are to be understood logically, there must be certain basic premises. Historically, we know the following facts:
 - a. Before this earth was created, there was a time when the entire universe lived in perfect peace, love, and harmony. Sin began in the form of selfishness and pride in the “number one” angel whose responsibilities included “standing” on the left side of God’s throne opposite Jesus Christ who stood on the right. He was given one of the names of God—Lucifer or Light-bearer—to describe his work of representing God to the other angels.
 - b. Because of his desire to be equal with Christ, he started a very subtle campaign to win as many angels to his side as possible. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chap. 1) Finally, approximately one-third of the angels joined him in “war” against Christ and the other two-thirds of the angels. Having lost the war and his bid for supremacy, Satan was “cast down” to this earth with his followers. (Rev. 12:7-12) Michael means “the One who is like God.”
 - c. What did Lucifer/Satan tell the angels that convinced them to take his side against the God who had made them, loved them, provided for them, and continued to be in their very presence for their entire existence? How could he convincingly accuse God while God was living right there and they could see His every action? What kind of convincing was that?
 - d. When God proceeded to create our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, He did so with the full recognition that this earth could and would become the “battlefield” of the great controversy. This is a key to understanding much of the rest of Scripture.
 - e. Eve, and then Adam, chose to disbelieve and distrust God and follow the suggestions of the talking serpent by eating the fruit. Thus, the very special relationship that had existed between the first pair and their heavenly Father was broken. Satan immediately claimed to be the prince of this earth. He also claimed that his accusations against God had been proven true. Thus began the earthly phase of the great controversy.
 - f. Although God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, while “fighting” the great controversy, He can only use truth and love as His weapons. So, how did He “cast” Satan and His followers out of heaven? One possibility is that the Father and the Holy Spirit—who had the power along with the Son, if He chose to use it, to destroy or cast out Satan in an instant (*DA* 759.1)—stepped back and stepped out of the arena while the “battle” for the minds of the angels was going on. Then, when all of the angels had made up their minds, the Father announced that He was resuming His position on the throne. Satan and his angels recognized at that point that sin cannot exist in God’s presence unless He veils it, and so Satan and his angels “got out!” Satan is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent, but he can use weapons that God cannot use—lying, misrepresentation, stealing, deceit, force, even torture and murder on occasion, when God permits.
 - g. Men rapidly became very wicked and this earth was almost completely under the control of Satan until God rescued the family of Noah by sending a flood to destroy all others. What would have happened if God had not stepped in at that point? Within one more generation, it was very likely that no one would be listening to God! He would have lost

touch with the human race! So, God had to act. Think of the accusations Satan made against God as a result of the flood! Could it happen in our day that essentially the whole world might turn against God? (Revelation 13; Matthew 24:37,38; Luke 17:26,27)

- h. Even after the flood, it was not long before God had to choose Abraham as His representative among the human race. For approximately 2000 years, God worked with Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, hoping to use them as His "lights" to carry the good news of the truth about God and His government to the rest of the world.
 - i. On every possible occasion, Satan accused God of being unfair and of bribing His followers to serve Him. (See Job 1&2) Satan claimed that no one would serve God unless He bribed them.
 - j. Finally, God sent His Son to live as a human being, born as a baby, growing up in a wicked village, then ministering mainly to the Jewish people for three and one-half years.
 - k. Unfortunately, the Devil had been so successful in misrepresenting the nature of the Messiah's work to the Jewish people that they could not tolerate the true Messiah. Eventually, He was tried and crucified.
 - l. But while here on this earth, He accomplished several very significant things: Contrary to Satan's claims, He lived a perfect, sinless life as a human being. Satan had said that was impossible. God had said that sin leads to death while Satan had claimed that was a lie and, in fact, that human beings would enter into a higher state of being by sinning. (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-4) Jesus, although never a sinner, demonstrated the death of sinners so that we could have a choice. Thus, He demonstrated that God's original statements as recorded in Genesis 2 were absolutely correct. All of Satan's major claims against God were refuted. And the great controversy was won. (Romans 3:1-4) At the cross we were in the dark, and some slept in the Garden of Gethsemane, but the universe was watching the whole sequence very closely.
 - m. After resting in the grave for portions of three days, when Gabriel called Him, Jesus arose by the power of His own divinity (John 10:18) thus proving that He was essentially different from Satan—that Jesus was a Creator and God Himself. Satan and every angel on his side were determined to keep Jesus in the tomb! But they failed. (DA 779.1; 782.4) When those two angels arrived from God's throne, Satan and his forces scattered! Gabriel called to Jesus, and in His divinity, He came forth. (DA 785.2) But the Bible says several times that God raised Jesus! That type of statement regarding cause is common in the Bible. Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? (Exodus 9:34-10:2) Every "god" that Pharaoh turned to for help was turned into a plague by the true God. It was always a duel between God and "gods." (Exodus 12:12)
2. Our world has been almost universally given over to sin. God claims that every person born on this earth is His child. He loves every one of us and wants each one of us to be saved. What needs to happen for us to be saved?
 3. Do we have to show that we can keep all of the commandments of God? The Jews thought so! (Matthew 19:20) Does our legal standing before God need to be corrected?
 4. Do we need to have every sin confessed? Do we need to live "perfect" lives? Remember that "perfect" means "mature." It is sad that we are too busy with all our responsibilities and activities to have much time for God.
 5. What would be required for a group of former sinners to enter the courts of heaven and live in peace and harmony with the heavenly beings for the rest of eternity? Could we live at peace with

people we do not trust? Could heavenly beings live at peace with people they do not trust? We cannot live at peace even within the church.

6. How many of us are motivated by the same things that motivated Satan—selfishness, the desire to be first, highest, and most powerful?
7. In order to welcome us back into the courts of heaven, God must first convince the angels that it is safe to have us there! How can God do that? The pre-advent judgment? God cannot lie about our condition! The only evidence He can present about us is the record of our lives, our actions, our thoughts, our motives day by day. What kind of evidence are we providing for Him to work with? God must allow sin to “go to seed” here on planet earth so there will never be any doubt the natural consequences of sin and separation from God.
8. In order to accuse us, all Satan has to do is point to our records. To accuse God, he had to somehow deceive and misrepresent God, even while living in His very presence, so convincingly that one-third of the angels believed him!
9. Before peace and harmony can be restored, God must answer all the questions that have been raised about Him and His government. Then, He must answer any questions about His handling of the sin crisis. And finally, He must put together a convincing case that it is safe to admit many of us former rebels into heaven.
10. If you had to prepare a case about yourself to present to the heavenly court, (See Daniel 7:9,10) what would you say? If you lie, “the court” will know it immediately. Your guardian angel has been with you every moment of your life since you were born. What would you say to that angel?
11. Jesus came to earth and lived and died not just to pay some legal penalty for our sins. Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son “concerning sin” or “to deal with sin.” What is required “to deal with sin” and to do it in so fully and convincingly a manner that no one will ever be tempted to want to try it again?
12. God must allow sin to “go to seed” so the whole universe can see the ultimate results of doing things contrary to God’s way of love. Then, everyone will be able to see what happens when God allows selfish beings to exist and multiply.
13. God opens the “books” of heaven in which are recorded everything that has happened since sin began, and everyone who has questions is allowed to ask those questions. When all the questions have been answered satisfactorily and trust has been restored, God can bring this great controversy to an end.
14. Think of all the problems that we are aware of here on planet earth. Does it seem possible to answer all the questions that could be raised so that peace and harmony can be restored?
15. In this series of lessons, we will see that some very different ideas will be raised about what is required for our salvation. What do we need to do? What does God need to do? Is there anything more He must do? What is He still waiting for?

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