

Glimpses of Our God
The Bible and History

Lesson #9 for March 3, 2012

Scriptures: Psalms 104:1-9; Revelation 1:1-3; 2 Peter 1:21; Daniel 2; Revelation 12:7-17; Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19.

1. This lesson is about how God has interacted with human beings and, thus, guided human history. Is human history merely the random collection of human activities over a period of time? Is history cyclical and repetitive? Or, is history moving us in a definite, specific direction? Is there any guidance to history? How has Satan affected history?
2. What is the role of the great controversy in human history? Hasn't God already won the great controversy? If God has already won, for what is He waiting? (2 Peter 3:10-12; *Evangelism* 694-697) Jesus said, "It is finished." (John 19:30) What was finished?
3. Is all of history predetermined or predestined? Has God laid out everything in advance so that humans have no input and no free will? (Romans 9:18-21) This question has stirred the minds of thinking Christians for generations. Are we predestined? Are we truly free?
4. For example, John Calvin believed that everything is already predetermined by God. That would include our salvation. If that is so, does it eliminate human freedom?
5. As Christians, we believe that the Bible gives us the most extensive and accurate record of human history. But, is it a distorted report? Clearly, in revealing Himself to biblical prophets and apostles, it was not God's purpose just to give an accurate report of human history. Sometimes, God gave details of human history far in advance. (Daniel 2; 7; Revelation 2-11) Did Eve have a choice?
6. Many people think of history as cyclical. The hands of watches and clocks seem to go around in circles. Years come and go from January to December. Plants and animals are born, live their lives, and die. Doesn't it seem like history is repeating itself? The Bible makes it very clear that in the beginning, God created the entire universe. (Genesis 1:1; Job 38:1-7; Psalms 104:1-9; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-16) The Bible also makes it very clear that God has future plans for His people and this world. (Revelation 1:1-3,19; 21:1-6)
7. Down through history, God has made many predictions. Every one of those predictions has come true—unless the conditions were not met—except for those prophecies dealing with the final events of this earth's history. Is there any reason to doubt those prophecies which have not yet come true? God has given us a lot of information about the future. Does that mean there will be no surprises? Or, does the book of Revelation suggest that there might still be a lot of surprises? Will the story of the great controversy have a surprise ending?
8. Can God accurately predict the future, including our free choices? Or, does God operate like a large computer where all the possibilities are known to God; and whichever route we take, God already knows what the consequences of those choices will be? Is God truly the God of the past, the present, and the future?
9. Have you ever tried to predict the future? How often have you gotten it right? How far in advance have you been able to predict? Does it worry you or does it comfort you that God might know your future? Does God just know all the data, and that is why He knows the future?
10. How does God treat people who rebel against Him? Consider the story of Judas. Jesus knelt down and washed the feet of Judas. And while Judas was initially impressed by this humble act, he hardened his heart and became disgusted by the idea that Someone who was

supposed to be a king could wash dirty feet. (*The Desire of Ages* 645.1) How did God treat the nations of Israel and Judah just before they went into captivity? He sent them many prophets to warn them of their danger: Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others later. Hosea says that God cried over them. (Hosea 11:7,8)

11. God also says that, from time to time, He worked with Israel's enemies! Did God use Babylon and even Medo-Persia in their conquest of the world? Did Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus realize that they were carrying out God's will as they conquered nations? Some of the prophets suggested that while God wanted them to discipline His people, those kings went far beyond God's wishes. (Isaiah 14:24-27; Nahum 1:5-10; Micah 4:12)
12. God not only controls the results of human history—working with humans, both friend and foe it might seem—but He also controls the forces of nature. In fact, He is the One who keeps nature working according to His laws. “Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.” (*The Review and Herald*, December 2, 1890, par. 15)
13. Human beings have come up with many different ideas about how God is related to human history. One suggested relationship is called Deism. Deists believe that God created our world and the universe, set them in motion, and then left them alone as He “went off for a long vacation.” It is assumed that the laws of nature will continue to function without God's assistance.
14. Of course, evolutionists take an atheistic approach to such matters. They do not believe that God was involved in the creation of this world, and they certainly do not believe that God will have anything to do with its demise. Scientists speak about our sun burning out some billions of years from now; and before that happens, probably our earth will either be destroyed by a meteor or will destroy itself by what we humans are doing to it.
15. Speaking on behalf of God, Isaiah said some very interesting things in Isaiah 40-55. In those chapters, he repeatedly suggested that the best evidence that *Yahweh* is God is the fact that He can create out of nothing. It further goes on to say the second best evidence that *Yahweh* is God is His ability to predict the future far in advance.
16. Read Daniel 2. Adventists have been using Daniel 2 as an introduction to Bible studies and evangelistic series for more than 180 years. While those prophecies may have been interesting and challenging and even provocative to the ones who first heard them, they should be very compelling to us who now can look back and see the fulfillment step-by-step in human history. How is it possible that God can predict the future despite the fact that that future is at least partly made up of millions and millions of free choices made by individual human beings? Where does one go to get the information to prove this? The prophecies are in the Bible. The fulfillments are in history.
17. Biblical critics have tried to discount the prophecies of Daniel by suggesting that the book of Daniel was not written by Daniel but rather, was written by someone around the year 165 B.C. after much of the prophecy/history described there was already completed. The prophecy itself disproves this idea. The Roman Empire was just rising in 165 B.C. How would any human being know that it would come to an end by dividing into many smaller kingdoms which would never stick together?
18. It is very interesting to note that even Jerome who translated the Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate version of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek understood the prophecies of Daniel well enough that, basically, he had our understanding of them back in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D.
19. So, what is the relationship between human history and the great controversy? Many people

believe that the great controversy is simply the battle between good and evil. It is true that good and evil are at war. But, the great controversy is much more than that. One author back in Ellen White's day suggested that the great controversy was between God and man. That also is not correct. In her five volume masterpiece, Ellen White made it very clear that the great controversy is between God and Satan and that the issues are about how God runs His universe and whether or not that is the best way to do it. Satan has made scores of accusations against God. His original accusation spoken from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was that God lied to us about the consequences of sin. Satan's claim, "You will not die" (Genesis 3:1-4) is a direct contradiction of God's statement in Genesis 2:17.

20. The Bible—and Seventh-day Adventists should add the writings of Ellen White—makes it very clear that God has fully and adequately answered Satan's accusations and questions. How He has done that is one of the main themes of the Bible.
21. The great controversy makes it very clear that ultimately, God will win. In fact, He has already won the great controversy. (Revelation 12:7-17; Job 2:1,2; Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:15; Ephesians 6:12; Romans 16:20; Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 3:7-10)
22. The great controversy and sin began in the very presence of God in the sanctuary in heaven. Satan and his followers were defeated in heaven and thrown down to this earth. (Revelation 12:1-12) Thousands of years later, Jesus came and lived His exemplary life and died that cruel death to show that God has told us the truth: sin does lead to death.
23. Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. **The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve.**—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.2,3.

At the cross, Satan was in a "catch 22." He wanted to get Jesus to sin. He could not. So, he did everything he could to get Jesus to give up His mission to earth and go back to heaven. He failed in that as well. And the heavenly universe watched it all. When Jesus finally died and was buried, Satan and his angels hoped that they could keep Jesus in the grave! When Jesus arose using His own power, they knew that they were defeated; they were furious. The Roman guards fell like dead men, but Satan and his angels fled. (John 10:18; *DA* 789; *EW* 182.1)

24. The great controversy was for the benefit of the angels as well as for us. (Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10; Colossians 1:19, 20; *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2-69.0; *DA* 79)
25. This earth is not an isolated island. We may be the only place in the universe where sin exists; but, the entire universe is focusing their attention on us and how the sin problem will be resolved. (1 Corinthians 4:9)

26. Why do you suppose it is that a humble Carpenter from an obscure village who left His carpenter's bench and preached and healed for 3½ years and then died a cruel death became the dividing point in human history? Why are our calendars based on His birth date? Why is His life so important? In the form of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, God stepped into human history. There is no other explanation for the impact that He has had on human beings. And if we study His life and His death and have at least a rudimentary understanding of the implications of that life and death for our lives, that makes all the difference in the world to us. Our salvation is based on a trusting relationship with the God that we came to know through the man Jesus.
27. "The whole doctrine of salvation can be expressed in this one sentence: God cancels our hopelessly stranded history and in its place puts His history." (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, March 1) Is our salvation based on the fact that the history of Jesus can somehow be substituted for our history? Is history full of blank places where the events connected with sinners have been removed and then the history of Jesus put in its place? Or, is salvation based on the fact that we have a right relationship with Jesus Christ that we call faith or trust? What assurance do we have that our future can be different from our past? (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) If our future is not different, would God dare to take us to heaven?
28. "Our sins have been laid upon the shoulders of a Lord who willingly died beneath a load of human guilt and who, in its place, gave us salvation." (*Study Guide* for Thursday, March 1)
29. How does this substitution work? If God can somehow substitute the history of Jesus for our histories, why couldn't He do that for everyone? And if our history is wiped out, what about the histories of many of the saints in the Bible whose sins are clearly recorded? Does it mean we will have to have a giant Bible burning at the gates of heaven?
30. None of us should question the fact that without the intercession of Jesus Christ, we would all die sinners. (Romans 3:23; 6:23) But, this substitution that Jesus offers us is not some kind of legal transaction whereby His history is placed on the record in the place of ours. He died the death that results from sin after living a perfect life so that we can look at His life and death and realize that we have a choice. We can either live as He lived, or we will die as He died.
31. Jesus is the only Person in the history of our world who has died the second death—the death that is the direct result of sin. How many of us understand this point? How many of us understand what the great controversy is all about? Satan has done everything possible to hide or distort the facts in the great controversy. He convinced the Sanhedrin to bribe the Roman soldiers to lie about what happened at the resurrection. Do you think those soldiers continued to lie about it for the rest of their lives? When they got home to their wives—perhaps after some period of time—did they tell the truth?
32. People who write history almost never write it in a way that reflects badly upon themselves. What about us? More than 167 years after the great disappointment in 1844, we are still here. What questions are the angels asking God about our progress? When we eventually get to heaven, what will we say to them about the reason for the delay? Shouldn't we be working our hardest to hasten the second coming? (2 Peter 3:10-12)

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