

Growing in Christ

When All Things Become New

Lesson #13 for December 29, 2012

Scriptures: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 20; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 8:20-22; Revelation 21:11-22:5; Revelation 21:3.

1. God's original plan for the human race was that we should live in peace and harmony with Him and with the rest of the universe, living in the Garden of Eden forever. Sin has changed all of that. What needs to happen to restore the peace and harmony that was God's original intention? Why does Jesus need to come the second time to take the saints to heaven for 1000 years, leaving the wicked dead here on this earth while Satan and his angels are confined to this earth? When the New Jerusalem with God, the angels, and all the saints come down to this earth again at the third coming, why will it be necessary for God to allow Satan once again to take control of all the wicked? With just a few exceptions, every person who has ever lived will be alive on this earth at the same time, the wicked outside the City and the righteous inside the City.
2. As the wicked approach the Holy City after preparing for their attack on that City, they are stopped in their tracks by a glorious panorama appearing in the heavens. (GC 666.3) The most important events in the history of the great controversy will be presented just as they happened. The evidence of the truth will be so compelling that even Satan himself will be down on his knees acknowledging that what God has done was right. (Philippians 2:10,11) Then, the wicked will turn on Satan and his angels and others who have led them astray. Finally, admitting that there is no reason for them to continue to exist, the wicked will accept their fate and will be consumed by God's glory. After being destroyed by fire, the entire surface of the earth will be remade like a glorious new Garden of Eden for God and His people to dwell in forever.
3. A number of questions have been raised about this sequence. Why does God need to take so long to accomplish these final few steps in the great controversy? Is it because of human freedom? Why does He need to come back to this earth twice with 1000 years in between? If Satan can be successfully bound at the second coming, why should he be released again to tempt people at the third coming? If all the wicked are dead, what is the purpose of raising them to life again? How will the wicked finally be destroyed? If Christ died the death of sinners, what is the relationship between His death on the cross and the final destruction of sinners? Does God really need to stretch out these final events in the history of the great controversy until everyone—even Satan himself—admits that God was right? How does all of this guarantee that sin and rebellion will never rise again? (ST Dec. 30, 1889 par. 4; 5BC 1132.9; Revelation 20)
4. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and Revelation 20:1-6. Before the second coming of Christ can take place and before the final events in the history of the great controversy, Satan must be given the opportunity to show what would happen if he were actually allowed to be in control. Revelation 15 and 16 give us a brief glimpse into what the results would be. Satan will do everything possible to try to destroy God's chosen people, the 144,000. In the process he will almost destroy this earth, killing millions of his own people; but, he will not be allowed to kill any of God's true people. The truth about Satan will finally be clear to everyone.
5. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8. As we learned last quarter, Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to clarify some of the things which must happen before Christ can return the second time. At the second coming, there will be a special resurrection of those who particularly persecuted Christians down through the generations including those who were involved in the trial and crucifixion of Christ. Thus, they will be present to see His glorious coming. The entire sky will be filled with shining angels. The wicked will be slain by the brightness of His coming; and at the same time, the righteous dead will be resurrected to life to join their living companions to ascend with Jesus to heaven. Thus, Satan and his angels are left on this earth with no humans to harass or tempt.

6. Turning to some details given to us by Ellen White, we learn that the journey to heaven will take seven days. (*EW* 16:2; *CET* 59.2; *Hvn* 47.2; *LDE* 280.2; *LS* 66.2; *Mar* 305.3; *1T* 60.3) When the saints arrive in heaven, they will be welcomed by the angels.
 (1) Clothed in glorious white robes, all the saints will be standing on the sea of glass outside the City. (2) They will be standing in a hollow square, with Jesus in the center. (3) The angels will bring crowns from the City, and Jesus personally places a crown on the head of each saint. (4) Each one is satisfied with his/her crown. (5) The angels will bring harps from the City, and Jesus personally hands one to each of the redeemed. (6) Then, the commanding angel and other leading angels with Him strike the first note, and all sweep the strings and sing praises to Christ.
7. Revelation 20 suggests that the saints will then be given the opportunity to review in detail everything that has taken place in the great controversy. It will become clear to them why some have been saved and others are lost. They will be given as much time as they need to review the records, to ask questions, and to be convinced that God did everything He possibly could to save everyone—within the boundary of each of us having free choice.
8. God's final judgment is actually divided into five phases:
 - 1) The pre-advent judgment: Angels and the universe will see that God's judgment is fair.
 - 2) The 2nd coming: The righteous will receive their reward and are taken to heaven and the wicked are slain. This is the first "executive" judgment - God acts on His decisions.
 - 3) The Millennium: The saints sit in judgment with Christ and agree that God's judgment was fair. They will find out why certain people are not in heaven and why others are.
 - 4) The 3rd coming: Satan, his angels, and the wicked see the panorama, realize that everything that could be done for them was done and that God's judgment is fair, and admit their sins and errors.
 - 5) Final executive judgment: Sin and sinners will be destroyed/separated permanently from God the source of life when they admit there is no further reason for them to exist.
9. Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; Revelation 20:12,13; and 1 Corinthians 4:5 tell us that there will be no hidden secrets. Every detail of each life will be open to view, even the secret motives.
10. Finally, when the thousand years end, it will be time for God to relocate from heaven to establish His headquarters here on planet earth which will be a permanent memorial to all that God has accomplished in the great controversy. As the New Jerusalem descends, the wicked are resurrected. Everyone who has ever lived will be alive to see the final events of the great controversy. (There will be a few exceptions—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 193.1 (1858); *Early Writings* 276.1 (revised 1882)).
11. In a frenzy of excitement, Satan and his angels will recognize their last possible opportunity to win the great controversy. They will gather the wicked and organize them for an attack on the New Jerusalem. We do not know how long this time of preparation will take. When Satan and his forces are ready, they will march toward the New Jerusalem. Apparently, during this time of preparation, the gates of the New Jerusalem will be open. Could it be that the righteous might go out to mingle with the wicked? Is it possible that some of the wicked might actually enter the City to look around?
12. Jesus and the redeemed will leave the New Jerusalem. They will watch as He raises the wicked dead. Then, they return into the City. When Satan and his armies are fully prepared to attack the City, (*GC* 662:1-664:2) Jesus will give the order to close the gates. (*GC* 664:3) As the wicked are about to attack the City, Christ suddenly will appear far above the City upon a foundation of burnished gold seated on a throne surrounded by the righteous singing praises to Him. When the wicked begin their march on the City, the gates of the New Jerusalem will be closed. (*1SG* 215.2 (1858); *Early Writings* 293:1; *Story of Redemption* 419.2)
13. Thus will begin the final scenes of God's judgment of the wicked.

As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, **just how far pride and rebellion** have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The **seductive temptations** which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the **blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected**, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear as if written in letters of fire.—*4SP* 481.1; *Great Controversy*, 666:2; *FLB* 356.2; *Hvn* 126.3; *Mar* 339.6; *SR* 422.3; *TA* 291.5.

When the Judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, **there will be many astonishing disclosures.** Men will not then appear as they appear to the human eyes and finite judgments. **Secret sins will then be laid open to the view of all. Motives and intentions which have been hidden in the dark chambers of the heart will be revealed.**—*RH*, January 1, 1884 par. 13; *ST*, May 26, 1887 par. 10; *Maranatha*, 340:4.

In that solemn and awful hour the **unfaithfulness of the husband** will be opened to the wife, and the **unfaithfulness of the wife**, to the husband. Parents will then learn, for the first time, what was **the real character of their children**, and **children will see the errors and mistakes that marked the lives of their parents.** The man who robbed his neighbor through false representations, is not to escape with his ill-gotten gains. **God has an exact record in His books, of every unjust account and every unfair dealing.**—*RH*, March 27, 1888 par. 13; *Maranatha*, 340:6.

14. In panoramic view, the entire sequence of the great controversy will be presented for all to see. (*4 Spirit of Prophecy* 481.1-482.2 (1884); *Great Controversy*, 666:3-667:2; *Mar* 343.2-4; *SR* 423.1-424.1; *TA* 291.6-292.2)
15. There will be no place to hide. The wicked will see the truth of everything that has happened. It will then be evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life as Satan has said, but rather slavery, ruin, and death. (*4SP* 483.3) The wicked will admit that they were wrong and that God and His law have always been right.

Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; **the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced.** The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. **And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.**—*4Spirit of Prophecy* 486.1 (1884); *Great Controversy*, 670:2; *DD* 58.1; *FLB* 356.5; *Hvn* 127.2; *Mar* 345.6; *SR* 427.2; *TA* 293.4; *Philippians* 2:5-11. [What does that take?]

Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' [Revelation 20:12,13] The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. **After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on.** In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. **The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.**—*4Spirit of Prophecy* 488.1 (1884); *GC* 673:1; *DD* 59.4; *FLB* 358.2; *Hvn* 129.1; *Mar* 348.2; *OFC* 340.4; *SR* 429.1; *TA* 294.2.

16. All of this is necessary to complete the answers to Satan's accusations in the great controversy. No question must be left in the minds of anyone—not even of the wicked—about the truthfulness and fairness of God's government. There is no reason for Satan to be released at the third coming except to clarify in the minds of everyone that God has always told the truth and that Satan is the father of lies. There must be no lingering doubt about God.
17. We often think of sin as being confined to this earth. Remember that sin began in heaven beside the throne of God. The angels and the beings in other worlds have taken an intense interest in what is happening on this earth. (Job 1&2; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:12) Everyone must be satisfied with the answers given in the great controversy. Even Satan will finally admit the truth. (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10,11)
18. Then, God can move on with His original plan to create a beautiful place for humans to live in forever. But, this time it will be even better because God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the angels will make their home with us. Sin, suffering, disease, death, decay, and rebellion will be eliminated forever.
19. In Revelation 21, a picture—albeit very brief—is given to us of the New Jerusalem. Actual measurements are given as evidence that it is a real place and not just an imaginary location. Not only will God dwell with us, but also the lion will lie down with the lamb. (Isaiah 65:25)

A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father's house. Those who accept the teachings of God's word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. . . . Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God."—*Great Controversy* 674, 675.

20. Three different views of the millennium have generally been proclaimed by different individuals over the last several hundred years. 1) That it is describing the period of time between the first and second advents of Christ. 2) That it is a long period of peace and righteousness on this earth before Christ appears or possibly with Christ reigning here on this earth. This period of peace and harmony would be brought about by preaching the gospel and by social reforms. And 3) The millennium—a period of 1000 years—will take place after Christ's second coming, and the major events will happen in heaven itself. It will be followed then by a third coming.
21. When God re-creates our world in its perfection, nothing defiling will enter. Just as Satan and his angels fled from heaven because they could not tolerate the presence of God and His glory, nothing defiling will come into the New Jerusalem.
22. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were completely comfortable walking with God in the Garden of Eden. Lucifer lived with God all of his life until his rebellion. Then, why will God's glory destroy all who will be out of harmony with Him?

By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. (DA 764.1)

23. On which side will each of us be when the great controversy is ended? Will we be on God's side, having experienced the marvelous salvation He has provided? Or, will we be out there among the wicked, angry and furious about what is happening and realizing the truth of all the sins that have caused us to be there and having our sins open for all to see?

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