

# ***Rebellion and Redemption***

## ***Peter on the Great Controversy***

Lesson #11 for March 12, 2016

Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:9-10; 4:1-7; Deuteronomy 14:2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:3-14; Daniel 2:34-35.

1. In this lesson we will discuss Peter's thoughts about the great controversy as recorded in his two short letters. What did Peter know about the great controversy? He is the one who told us: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8, *NKJV*) Is that about the great controversy?
2. In this series of lessons in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, the emphasis has been on the struggle on this earth between good and evil. Seventh-day Adventists who take Ellen White seriously know that the great controversy is much larger than that. It involves the entire universe. Remember that the great controversy began in heaven, not on this earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) Did any of the angels who remained loyal to God have questions in their minds about the issues involved? First Corinthians 4:9 reminds us that our little world is the theater of the universe. What does that imply? How has God responded to sin?
3. One of the most important texts in Peter's writings concerning the great controversy is 1 Peter 1:12.

1 Peter 1:12 (*GNB*): God revealed to these prophets that their work was not for their own benefit, but for yours, as they spoke about those things which you have now heard from the messengers who announced the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. **These are things which even the angels would like to understand.** [Bold type is added.]

Are those the angels in heaven?

4. How do you understand that last sentence in 1 Peter 1:12? Compare 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 1:8-10; 3:8-10; and Colossians 1:19-20. What can they learn from us?
5. **Christ died for sinless angels too.**

**That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels.... The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven.... The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889 par. 4; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1132.9, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7a, p. 252; *Our High Calling* 45.4; *The Home Missionary* May 1, 1897. [Bold type is added.]**

6. **Did the angels need the message of the cross? Why?**

For centuries God looked with patience and forbearance upon the cruel treatment given to his ambassadors, at his holy law prostrate, despised,

trampled underfoot. He swept away the inhabitants of the Noachian world with a flood. But when the earth was again peopled, men drew away from God, and renewed their hostility to him, manifesting bold defiance. Those whom God rescued from Egyptian bondage followed in the footsteps of those who had preceded them. Cause was followed by effect; the earth was being corrupted.

**A crisis had arrived in the government of God.... All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction.**

**The heavenly intelligences were prepared for a fearful manifestation of Almighty power. Every move was watched with intense anxiety. The exercise of justice was expected. The angels looked for God to punish the inhabitants of the earth....**

The heavenly universe was amazed at God's patience and love. To save fallen humanity the Son of God took humanity upon himself.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900, par. 4-7.

7. **With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. He had declared that the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible. Had the world been destroyed, he would have claimed that his accusations were proved true. He was ready to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the worlds above. But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 37.2.

8. For centuries God bore with the inhabitants of the old world. But at last guilt reached its limit.... He came out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth, and by a flood cleansed the earth of its iniquity.

Notwithstanding this terrible lesson, men had no sooner begun to multiply once more, than rebellion and vice became widespread. Satan seemed to have taken control of the world. **The time came that a change must be made, or the image of God would be wholly obliterated from the hearts of the beings He had created. All heaven watched the movements of God with intense interest. Would He once more manifest His wrath? Would He destroy the world by fire? The angels thought that the time had come to strike the blow of justice, when, lo, to their wondering vision was unveiled the plan of salvation.**—Ellen G. White, *MS 22*, January 10, 1890 (Diary Entries); *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* 569.2-570.0.

9. After the fall of our first parents, Christ declared that in order to save man from the penalty of sin, He would come to the world to conquer Satan on the enemy's own battlefield. The controversy that began in heaven was to be continued on the earth.

**In this controversy much was to be involved. Vast interests were at stake. Before the inhabitants of the heavenly universe were to be**

answered the questions: “Is God’s law imperfect, in need of amendment or abrogation, or is it immutable? Is God’s government in need of change, or is it stable?”

Before Christ’s first advent, the sin of refusing to conform to God’s law had become widespread. Apparently Satan’s power was growing; his warfare against heaven was becoming more and more determined. A crisis had been reached. With an intense interest God’s movements were watched by the heavenly angels. Would He come forth from His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity? Would He send fire or flood to destroy them? All heaven waited the bidding of their Commander to pour out the vials of wrath upon a rebellious world. One word from Him, one sign, and the world would have been destroyed. The worlds unfallen would have said, “Amen. Thou art righteous, O God, because Thou hast exterminated rebellion.”

But “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God might have sent His Son to condemn, but He sent Him to save. Christ came as a Redeemer. **No words can describe the effect of this movement on the heavenly angels. With wonder and admiration they could only exclaim, “Herein is love!”**—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 27, 1902 par. 1-5; *Reflecting Christ* 58.1-5. [Bold type is added.]

10. These several passages from her writings make it clear that the great controversy involves more than just human beings on this earth or even Satan and his angels on this earth. The angels in heaven had serious questions; there were serious issues that needed to be dealt with. Did the other beings in the universe also have questions?
11. One of the most important considerations when thinking about the great controversy is the fact that it will come to an end just after the third coming of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 2:8-11) However, apparently, Peter knew nothing of the millennium or the third coming. It is only through John’s writing in Revelation 20 that we learn about the millennium and the third coming. Meanwhile, Peter looked forward to Christ’s second coming. If Christ is not coming back, there was really no reason for Him to come the first time. So, Peter dealt with those who scoff and mock, actually turning them into one of the signs of the nearness of the second coming! (2 Peter 3:3-7)
12. Obviously, Peter had some problems in his own life. We think especially of his denial of Jesus Christ at the critical moment of Christ’s trial in Jerusalem. When Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter, he suddenly realized how weak he was. Each of us faces moments like that one of Peter’s in our own lives. Satan’s temptations seem incredibly powerful at times.
13. To understand something of the significance of the great controversy, we need to understand our own weaknesses, our own sinfulness, and our need of Jesus Christ.

It is thus that every sinner may come to Christ. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” Titus 3:5. When Satan tells you that you are a sinner, and cannot hope to receive blessing from God, tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners. We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a

necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say,—

“In my hand no price I bring;

Simply to Thy cross I cling.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 317.1.

14. It is absolutely essential that we recognize our need of Christ. Without Him we would be lost for more reasons that we can mention. We need to understand the questions that He answered in the great controversy and the accusations against God that He refuted. We need to look to His life and death every day to realize exactly what they should and can mean to each of us. (DA 83.4)
15. Read 1 Peter 4:1-7. Peter recognized that the Christians to whom he was writing had come out of lives filled with “indecent, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and the disgusting worship of idols.” (1 Peter 4:3, *GNB*) To come out of that environment and live a truly Christian, upright life in cooperation with Jesus Christ would certainly make one seem to be strange. But, we must learn to stand up against the crowd. If we cannot withstand peer pressure, we are essentially lost. (Matthew 24:24) In response, Peter reminded us that like us, those so-called “Gentiles” will appear before the judgment seat of God. (1 Peter 4:5)
16. Peer pressure is especially important to teenagers. But, adults are not free from it at all. So, instead of thinking of ourselves as somehow strange, we need to remember 1 Peter 4:8-9. If we treat even strangers with kindness and love, we will stand out from the crowd not in a way that makes us seem queer or strange but in a wonderful way that will attract others to us. (Matthew 5:13-16; John 13:34-35)
17. How often do you do what you do because you want to be accepted by others in your community as opposed to being a faithful child of God?
18. Think of all that God did to take the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. Why was it that ancient Israel was so influenced by the pagan peoples and religions around them instead of influencing those people for the good? Could that same trend happen among Seventh-day Adventists? Read 2 Peter 1:16-21. How did William Miller get his ideas?
19. Many questions have been raised about biblical authors. How did they get their messages? Can we be certain that their messages actually came from God? What did they see or hear that influenced their writings? Peter left no doubt about the fact that he saw Jesus Christ Himself. He saw Him receive glory from God, the Father, on the mount of transfiguration; so, he was even more certain about the prophecies from the prophets. As an example regarding biblical authorship, Peter himself proclaimed: “For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.” (2 Peter 1:21)
20. Peter was in the court of the home of Annas, the high priest, when Jesus was condemned. He denied Jesus three times. He experienced the great controversy in his own life. So, in 2 Peter 1:5-8, he encouraged us by saying that there is a list of characteristics that are appropriate for Christians: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. These are the fruit from the Holy Spirit. In a true Christian life, these are not independent characteristics; they are all woven together as a single unit. Christians are like that. What a contrast to the “Gentiles” he described earlier.
21. Read 2 Peter 3:3-12. There are always scoffers—people who will make fun of the Bible, the reality of Jesus, and certainly the idea that Jesus will come again—but, like us, they will have to stand before God’s judgment seat. The cosmic conflict is coming to an end.

22. We believe that the great controversy, the cosmic conflict, is coming to an end. The Devil is scared to death; so, he goes about as a hungry, roaring lion, looking for its next meal. (1 Peter 5:8) Peter made it clear that the mockers, the scoffers, and even the Devil himself are doing what they are doing because they want things to continue as they have always been. They even present what they believe are unanswerable arguments in favor of their views. But, we know that is just one more sign that the second coming is drawing very near. Such people, of course, deny that God destroyed the world by a flood because they certainly do not want to believe that God might do something similar again.
23. Throughout the Bible, beginning as early as Joel 2, we read that the Day of the Lord is coming soon. It is a recurrent theme in the New Testament. Read 2 Peter 3:8-14 and compare Daniel 2:34-35,44. How does your understanding of these classic time prophecies impact your daily life? Do you really act as if Jesus is coming again soon? Do your neighbors and work associates recognize that you are different—in a good way?
24. But, God is still waiting for a group of people who will correctly represent Him before the world despite everything the Devil can throw at them. They need to be “blameless” as Job was. (Job 1:1) Jesus promised that He will present them in that way before the Father. (1 Corinthians 1:8; Colossians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23) The ancient sacrifices in the temple were supposed to be faultless as well. What did the Bible writers mean by using expressions like “holy,” “blameless,” “faultless,” etc.? This is not talking about a “works” religion; it is talking about a growing relationship with Jesus Christ that is called faith. God’s goal for each one of us is to learn to be more like His Son.
25. Read 2 Peter 3:4. As modern believers in evolution suggest and just as the ancient scoffers said before the flood, nothing is new—nothing will change.
- As time passed on, with no apparent change in nature, men whose hearts had at times trembled with fear, began to be reassured. They reasoned, as many reason now, that nature is above the God of nature, and that her laws are so firmly established that God Himself could not change them. Reasoning that if the message of Noah were correct, nature would be turned out of her course, they made that message, in the minds of the world, a delusion—a grand deception. They manifested their contempt for the warning of God by doing just as they had done before the warning was given.... They asserted that if there were any truth in what Noah had said, the men of renown—the wise, the prudent, the great men—would understand the matter.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 97.1.
26. The scholars and the “great men” in ancient times were wrong, and they will be wrong again.
27. For a period of 3½ years, Peter had spent much of his time with Jesus. In light of all that, why did he quote prophecies from the Old Testament regarding such an important issue for us? Does the fact that so many of the prophecies have proved to be exactly correct give us greater hope for the second coming?
28. By looking at the writings of Peter and the overall messages of the New Testament, does it look to you like the life of a Christian is going to become easier and easier as we approach the end? Or, will Satan’s final efforts to deceive and destroy reach a crescendo? How will you respond if you are imprisoned or tortured or threatened or questioned about your faith?
29. In the book of Revelation, the saints follow the Lamb wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4) Where did the Lamb go? The sacrificial lambs in ancient Israel were killed. Jesus our faithful Lamb went through that incredible torture all the way to crucifixion. Can we expect to cruise into the second coming?

30. Which do you think will be more difficult for you to face: Physical torture? Slander? Ridicule? Or, disdain? How do you feel about being “different”? In your experience do you try to hide your distinctive beliefs? Or, do you feel comfortable speaking proudly about the truths of Scripture that make you unique?
31. In what way, as Peter suggested, are we to demonstrate to the onlooking universe that we are a “holy nation, God’s own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God”? (1 Peter 2:9)
32. Read 1 Peter 2:9 in the *King James Version*. Are you excited about being “peculiar”? The meaning of the word *peculiar* has changed over the years. Read Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2,21; and 26:18-19; and Exodus 19:6. Peter took these verses addressed to the ancient Israelites and applied them to Christians. None of us wants to be seen as peculiar, strange, unusual, or queer. What does it mean to suggest we are a kingdom of priests? A holy nation? A special treasure of God? A chosen people? What Peter was trying to emphasize, as Moses said in Deuteronomy, was that we are a “special, treasured possession” of God. Does that sound better than being peculiar? We belong to Him.
33. Does keeping God’s commandments “identify” you? Do you hide the fact you are a Seventh-day Adventist when people ask you who you are and what you believe? Our religion is not just a set of beliefs; it is a way in which we identify ourselves. If we really acted like Jesus, would the world notice? Would they be attracted? Or, repulsed? (Matthew 5:13-16) As Christians, we avoid riotous living, lawlessness, idolatry, etc. (1 Peter 4:3) because we want to be holy as God is holy. (1 Peter 1:16)
34. Are you prepared to meet not only peer pressure but also whatever pressure the Devil can bring against you as we approach the end of this world’s history? That will be necessary if we want to live through the final days of this earth’s history.
35. We need to be honest about some challenges that have been presented about the material in this lesson.
36. Martin Luther thought that some of the books in the New Testament were not as important or do not as clearly represent the “Christomonistic Principle” or Christ-alone principle as do others. On that basis, he placed five books of our New Testament at the end of his New Testament in a kind of lesser category than the others. Those books included Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation. Many modern “scholars” are inclined to agree, at least partially, with Luther. Very few of them accept 2 Peter as having been written by Peter. They consider much of the material in that book as being of questionable inspiration. Why do you think that is? By contrast, 1 Peter is considered to be one of the best books. Is it related to 2 Peter’s prophecies about the end of the world? Many of those same “scholars” do not believe that even God can predict the future.
37. How do you think Peter would describe your lifestyle? Compare 2 Peter 1:5-8 with 1 Peter 4:8-9 and 4:3.
38. Does what you believe impact how you live on a day-by-day basis? Could you give some examples of how your beliefs have impacted your life? Are you proud of the way in which you represent God? We do not need to be proud of our own behavior; but, we certainly can be proud of God. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

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