

Rebellion and Redemption

Crisis in Heaven

Lesson #1 for January 2, 2016

Scriptures: Isaiah 14:4,12-15; Ezekiel 28:2,12-16; John 12:31; Revelation 12:7-16; Luke 10:1-21.

1. With this lesson we begin our discussion of the great controversy. The great controversy is a major theme in the writings of Ellen G. White, especially in the *Conflict of the Ages* series. It is because of her writings that we as Seventh-day Adventists know and understand this very important theme from Scripture. It can be found in Scripture; but, it was Ellen White who helped us to find it.

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.3.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, **Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.** This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 22.1. [Bold type is added.]

2. In order to understand the great controversy fully, we must remember that everything was peaceful and harmonious throughout our universe before sin entered. At that time, all creatures living in the universe loved and appreciated each other.
3. But, Lucifer, one who stood next to the throne of God and who is described as God's highest creation, became jealous. He envied the position of Jesus and wanted to be thought of as a god himself. Revelation 12:7 tells us that as a result, there was war in heaven. We do not know how that war was actually conducted. What kind of weapons could any creature use to try to fight against God? It may have been a war of words and ideas. What weapons did Satan use? Deception?
4. Unfortunately for us, Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven and down to this earth. By deceiving and tricking Eve who then shared the fruit with Adam, Satan convinced our first parents to join his side in the war. We have been living with the consequences ever since. Was sin an inevitability? Will sin still be possible in the future world? Will we still be free?

5. In this series of lessons, we will attempt to understand: 1) Some of the reasons for that rebellion, 2) What the issues were, and 3) How God has won the great controversy by revealing the truth. What truth needed to be revealed?
6. Read Isaiah 14:4,12-15. In this passage we have what is described as one of the most beautiful poems in the entire Old Testament. Hebrew poetry is different from our modern poetry. In Hebrew, poetic ideas are matched and compared. We will see in this passage and others which we will study how *Helel ben Shahar*, Lucifer, Day Star, bright morning star, became the Devil, Satan, God's opponent. What evidence do you see in these verses in Isaiah that it is not talking simply about a human ruler? Could any human ruler truthfully be described as the bright morning star, fallen from heaven, the one who aspired to place his throne above the highest stars and to sit on the mountain in the north where the gods assemble, and to be like the Almighty? Nebuchadnezzar, the famous king of Neo-Babylonia, wanted people to worship him as we can see from Daniel 3. But, Isaiah who wrote this poem, lived more than 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar began his conquest of the world.
7. It should be clear from reading this passage that it was not Nebuchadnezzar who was being discussed, nor was it any earlier monarch from Babylonia; but rather, it was another powerful being who once lived in heaven and wanted to be like God in power and glory but not like God in character. There is one capacity that we have that Satan does not have and about which he is very upset and jealous even of us! He cannot reproduce. If he could, he would, no doubt, fill the universe with little monsters like himself!
8. There are other examples where two different experiences or people are described in a kind of mixed prophecy. In Matthew 24, Jesus mixed His description of the destruction of Jerusalem with prophecies about the end of the world.
9. Isaiah himself in Isaiah 7-9 talked about a baby boy who was to be born at the time when the kingdom of Judah was being attacked by Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, King of Israel. God told Isaiah that this baby who was to be called Immanuel would be born and grow up; before he could say "mommy" and "daddy," the kings Rezin and Pekah would be gone. But, as we read on through Isaiah 8 and especially in Isaiah 9, we realize that the prophecy had been expanded to talk about a much more important Baby to be born some 700 years later. Thus, the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 which initially applied to Isaiah's baby could be used by Matthew as a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
10. Read Ezekiel 28:2,12-19. That is a description of the being who once lived in heaven, an example of perfection who lived temporarily even in Eden, the garden of God. He had walked on God's holy mountain and among the sparkling gems. His conduct was perfect from the day he was created until evil was found in him. Puffed up with pride, he claimed to be a god. He became proud of his beauty; his fame made him act like a fool, and he was hurled from heaven down to this earth.
11. Is it possible to understand how a perfect being, living in a perfect environment created by a perfect God with no one to tempt him, could fall to the point of causing war in heaven? What should that say to us about the dangers of envy and jealousy?
12. Read John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11. Who is this prince of this world? Why did Jesus recognize him as the ruler of this world? When human beings, following Satan's example and yielding to his temptations became like him, then he claimed to be the ruler of this

world.

13. When Adam and Eve were first created and placed in the Garden of Eden, they were given dominion over all the other creatures. (Genesis 2:8,15) They were to have loving command and caring dominion over all the animals. At that point in time, Adam was referred to as one of the sons of God. (See Luke 3:38, and compare Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7.) But, Adam gave up his dominion of this world by doubting God and accepting Satan's deceptions.
14. There is a fascinating look into the operations of heaven's throne room, the capital of the universe, described in Job 1:6-7 and 2:1-2. Satan returned to heaven, claiming the right to be there as the leader of this world; and recognizing the reality of the situation, God acknowledged him in that role. When these verses described Satan as *walking to and fro roaming around the earth*, he was not just a visiting tourist. The term is a Hebrew expression suggesting dominion and ownership. Compare God's giving the land of Palestine to Abraham. (Genesis 13:7) A similar promise was made to Moses and Joshua. (Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:3) Satan wished to present himself as the God of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:4) While Job successfully weathered that incredible experience described in his book, very few others have been as faithful.
15. Read Revelation 12:7-16. This is the earliest known event in the great controversy. We do not have evidence for any events which happened earlier than this except God's creation of the universe and angels and other beings outside of this earth. At the end of the war in heaven, Satan and his angels were thrown out. They were thrown down to this earth. Heaven should rejoice, and earth should be warned. Satan is furious because he knows that he has only a little time left. As a result, he has pursued the people of God from the beginning. He knows that if he can prevent them from being faithful to God, he can continue living in his claimed position of domination on this earth.
16. Read Revelation 12:10-11. Fortunately for us, John made it clear in Revelation that all is not lost. "Our brothers and sisters won the victory over him [that is, Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die." (GNB) [Content in brackets is added.] We have the promise that those who are faithful to God—although they may even die in the conflict—ultimately, will be victorious.
17. In Revelation 12, we see what appear to be three very uneven contests or struggles:
 - 1) A Dragon *versus* a baby. The Dragon loses because the baby is caught up to heaven.
 - 2) The Dragon *versus* the church. But, God assists the church to escape into the wilderness.
 - 3) The woman—a description of the church—*versus* the Dragon who then sends a flood against the woman; but, the earth swallows up that flood.
18. Read Revelation 12:13-17. These few verses give a very brief overview of the history of our world after Christ's victory at the first coming. The Dragon is described as being furious. He knows that if God's people come together, get to know God personally, and stand up for the truth, Satan's kingdom will be finished.
19. Read Luke 10:1-21. The story of Job seems to suggest that in Old Testament times, Satan still had access to the heavenly council. However, in the New Testament, Christ suggested that Satan had fallen further—like lightning from heaven. What do you think that means? Satan was already here on this earth. But, just as we can make our prayers heard in heaven, Satan can still make his accusations heard as well. So, in what sense has he

fallen? Is it that after his treatment of Jesus and after Jesus's death on the cross, Satan is no longer welcome in heaven?

20. The 70 disciples of Jesus who were sent out to Perea to spread the good news came back rejoicing that they had actually exercised power over the demons. But, Jesus went on to say for them to rejoice more that their names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life than that they had power over demonic forces.
21. Later, as recorded in John 12:31 (GNB), Jesus said: "Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown." What does that mean? And how is that related to John 12:32 (GNB) which says: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me"?
22. But, Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples that the battle was not over. They would suffer; they must be brave; but, He promised them that He had overcome Satan's dominion. Paul described that victory as Satan being crushed beneath the feet of God's followers. (Romans 16:20)
23. Does it seem like God's faithful people have become victorious yet? Aren't we still here?
24. In Hebrews 12:1-2, the author of that book—who does not identify himself but sounds a lot like Paul—encouraged us, suggesting that there is only one way for us to be victorious. We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. But, he reminded us of many Old Testament examples of people who succeeded in their battles against Satan. From Abel down through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Rahab, each of whom won in the battle against Satan in his/her own particular way.
25. So, why did Lucifer rebel? Do we understand why sin arose in Lucifer? "Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exultation."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 35.2. It should never cease to amaze us that such a being with every possible advantage living and working next to the throne of God could allow himself to fall into the trap of selfishness and rebellion. There is no explanation for evil. No reason can be given, nor any excuse for it. If we could find a reason for it, we would potentially make God responsible for it. We do know that Lucifer—like the rest of us—was given free will and free choice. He chose to exercise his freedom in very destructive ways. Ellen White said a lot of interesting things about Lucifer's situation before he was finally thrown out of heaven.
26. Why is freedom—free will, freedom of choice—so important to God? Why was He willing to risk His entire government in order to grant us this freedom?

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. —Ellen G. White, *Education*, 17.2.

27. In light of the risks God took in giving us freedom, what is the role of law? If we did not have the freedom to obey or disobey, what would be the purpose of having a moral law?
28. Why is it that so many people even among highly-educated Christians no longer believe in a literal Devil? Isn't such a view contrary to much of what the Bible itself says? Why would people want to reject the idea of a Devil? If you eliminate the Devil, you no longer have a true great controversy. And isn't that exactly what the Devil would like us to think?
29. What is the basic issue in the great controversy? Read Genesis 2:17 and 3:1-5. From the very beginning, the issue has been over **who is telling us the truth. Who can be trusted?** Was God telling us the truth that sin leads to death? Or, was Satan correct in saying that sin is not deadly and so God is lying to us? Why would God need to go about

proving the correctness of His claims? How would He do that? In what way does the life and death of Jesus answer Satan's accusations and claims?

30. Does God still regard Satan as the ruler of this world? It certainly is true that most of the people who live here on this planet seem to be following his ways!
31. What was Christ trying to warn us about? What does He expect from us as He tells us that we are being sent forth as sheep among wolves? How are sheep supposed to behave when they are among wolves?
32. If God has won the great controversy by the blood of the Lamb, how does that victory become ours? Is it possible to get victory by a "substitution"? Or, do we need to gain it by a gradual transformation through Bible study, prayer, and witnessing about truths that we have learned from the life and death of Jesus and by studying other areas of the Bible? Does studying the life and death of Jesus teach us about the nature of sin and its consequences? Would that help us to make better choices?
33. Are we supposed to think of ourselves as victorious over the Devil now? Or, only after he is destroyed?
34. How does Christ's atoning sacrifice "save us from the assaults of evil in and around us"? How does Christ's blood help us to overcome Satan? Are we supposed to follow the example of the ancient Hebrews and smear it on our doorposts? But, we do not have access to Christ's blood in a physical sense. If the battle is primarily one between Christ and Satan, how is it possible that Christ wins by losing—that is, by dying? How can one win by dying?
35. Every war begins because there is a disagreement over something. It may be over territory, economics, cultural issues, or bigotry. The war in heaven began; the issue was how God runs His universe. Are we going to live in a universe which operates completely and totally on the principle of love? Or, following Satan's example, are we to live in a universe dominated by selfishness? That is the question! Satan uses every conceivable weapon that he can imagine such as deception, misrepresentation, insinuation, coercion, destruction, false claims, etc. God's weapons, the weapons that Jesus used, are only two things: Self-sacrificing love and eternal truth.
36. Satan can only be defeated by the revelation of the truth in love. When we clearly understand the issues in the great controversy and what it is that God wants and what it is that Satan is promoting, every one of us should choose God's side. But, many of us do not.
37. What would you say to someone who claimed: "I am neither on Satan's side nor on Christ's side; I am neutral"? Is that possible? Read Matthew 12:30; Mark 9:40; and Luke 11:23. In these passages Jesus stated clearly that anyone who is not on His side is really against Him.
38. Try to imagine for a moment or two what Satan must be thinking when he remembers his days in heaven or even in the Garden of Eden.
39. How do we go about making sure that we have chosen God's side in this great controversy? Do we clearly understand the issues involved? What are we doing to help defeat Satan?

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