

Rebellion and Redemption

Jesus's Life, Teachings, and Death in Light of the Great Controversy

Lesson #7 for February 13, 2016

Scriptures: Matthew 7:1-5,21-27; 11:29; 13:3-8,18-23; John 12:31-32; Romans 4:1-6; Ephesians 1:8-10; 3:9-10; Colossians 1:19-20; James 2:17.

1. What was the purpose of Christ's coming to this earth and living and dying? Did He come only to die to pay the price for our sins? How do Christ's teachings and His statements made while here impact our understanding of the great controversy? Is it a war between good and evil?
2. We have suggested that the great controversy takes place in the minds of men and women on a daily basis. How does that actually work out in our own experiences? Does anything we can or should do impact the great controversy in any way? Are angels involved in some way?
3. It is imperative that we take a larger view of the great controversy. The great controversy involves the entire universe and not just our little planet—as important as that is to us. Our little world is the theater of the universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9) What happens here is observed by God's children all over the universe. How they understand and respond to what God does here is even more important than what happens to us—although it might not seem like it to sinful human beings. (See "The Plan of Salvation in the Setting of the Great Controversy" at www.Theox.org. See under Teacher's Guides and then under General Topics.)

Ephesians 1:8-10 (*GNB*): In all his wisdom and insight ⁹God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the **secret plan** he had already decided to complete by means of Christ. ¹⁰This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is **to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head.**

Ephesians 3:9-10 (*GNB*): God, who is the Creator of all things, **kept his secret hidden** through all the past ages, ¹⁰in order that at the present time, **by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.**

Colossians 1:19-20 (*GNB*): ¹⁹For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰**Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood [death] on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.** [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

4. Is the plan of salvation first and foremost about how Jesus paid the price for our sins, and thus, can save human beings? Or, is there a larger purpose? Could the plan of salvation have anything to do with refuting Satan's charges against God and proving what the true nature and results of sin are? How does the salvation of humankind fit into that? Do we need to understand what the issues were from the beginning of the great controversy in heaven? What accusations has Satan made against God? How has God responded?

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the

law fully demonstrated.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893 par. 12 and December 22, 1914 par. 4; *The Messenger* June 7, 1893 par. 5; *Bible Echoes* July 15, 1893 par. 3; *That I May Know Him* 366.4. [Bold type is added.]

John 12:30-32 (GNB): ³⁰ But Jesus said to them, “It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. ³¹ Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. ³² When I am lifted up from the earth, **I will draw everyone to me.**” [Bold type is added.]

5. **What did Jesus mean when He said He would draw everyone to Himself? Does God need to be proven to be right in what He has said? Does God need to be justified? Is God on trial? In what sense? If God is proven right, would that draw us to Him?**
6. **Romans 3:4 (GNB): God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, “You must be shown to be right when you speak; you must win your case when you are being tried.”**
7. Consider the following from Ellen White.

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. [1 Corinthians 4:9] To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. [Isaiah 59:2] —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2-69.0 (1890); *Reflecting Christ* 50.3 (1985).

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels.... Not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” [1 Peter 1:12] and it will be their study throughout endless ages.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 19.2 (1898); *AG* 45.3; *LDE* 31.1; *OFC* 200.3; *Reflecting Christ* 15.4 (1985).

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, “It is finished,” had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished.... Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 758.3 (1898). [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

Read the entire chapter, “*It Is Finished*,” in *The Desire of Ages*.

8. **The security of the universe was even more important to God than the salvation of man.**

It was in order that the heavenly universe might see the conditions of the covenant of redemption that Christ bore the penalty in behalf of the human race. **The throne of Justice must be eternally and forever made secure, even tho the race be wiped out, and another creation populate the earth.** By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance. Christ alone could restore honor to God's government. [Romans 3:4] The cross of Calvary would be looked upon by the unfallen worlds, by the heavenly universe, by Satanic agencies, by the fallen race, and every mouth would be stopped. [Philippians 2:8-11] ... **Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ's life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes?—The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels.**—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, July 12, 1899 par 2. Compare *LHU* 257.2 where the key words are omitted!

9. **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. 1132.8,9, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7a, p. 476.3; *Our High Calling* 45.4; *The Home Missionary* May 1, 1897. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

10. **Have we been told exactly why Jesus came?**

Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes....**

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. **Contrast** *ST* December 4, 1893; *Manuscript*

Releases, vol 18, 358.3-359.1; RH August 14, 1900; YI November 21, 1883; RH, November 1, 1892 par. 12. [Bold type is added.] See Romans 5:10.

11. What is implied by the words: “The only way...”? “The whole purpose of His mission...”? “The object of His mission was attained...”? “His work was accomplished...”? “The character of the Father was made manifest”? Do those words sound important? What have we usually said was the mission of Christ? What do most Christians say His mission is/was?
12. If we view the great controversy as being limited to this earth, we will be missing what is probably the most important part of God’s “mystery,” His “secret plan,” to correct the misunderstandings in the heavenly universe. If necessary, God would have wiped out the entire human race in order to accomplish this larger goal. He almost did wipe out the entire human race at the time of the flood! The angels are watching every move that God makes and every move that Satan and his angels make, and they are the ones who really understand the great controversy at this time in history.
13. When we get to heaven, we will be able to see all of the details that we do not presently understand. Notice who really saw what was happening at the cross: 1) God, 2) His angels, 3) The heavenly universe, and 4) Satan and his angels. It is time for us as Seventh-day Adventist Christians to follow the leading of the Bible writers and Ellen White and rise above our egocentric approach to the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation is much more than how God saves **me**—and, of course, you too. If God cannot be proven to be trustworthy—something which Satan has denied—then there can be no basis for our faith, and the plan of salvation has failed. (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-5)
14. Does all of that worry you? In light of all those enormous issues, what was Jesus trying to tell us when He said in Matthew 11:29 (*GNB*): “Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest.” What is the yoke of Christ? A yoke is usually used for the purpose of working. Why does Jesus talk about it in the context of resting? When we take His yoke, is He taking the other side of the yoke and the majority of the load? Consider some of the places where *rest* is mentioned in Scripture: 1) After creation (Genesis 2:2); 2) In the annual feasts in which the Jews were supposed to participate (Leviticus 16:31); 3) The seventh year of rest for the land (Exodus 23:11); and 4) Even the Jubilee year, every 50 years, when slaves were freed and debts forgiven. (Leviticus 25:10)

The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden. So with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life’s burden light. He who walks in the way of God’s commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 331.1.

It is more palatable to human nature to do penance than to renounce sin; it is easier to mortify the flesh by sackcloth and nettles and galling chains than to crucify fleshly lusts. Heavy is the yoke which the carnal heart is willing to bear rather than bow to the yoke of Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 567.3.

15. However, rest is not possible when facing violent enemies. Or, while one is in captivity; or, forced into slavery.
16. Read Revelation 14:9-11, the third angel’s message. There will never be any rest for Satan and his followers. But, Satan threatens death to anyone not joining his side in the great controversy. (Revelation 13:15-17) That is why God has had to respond as He did as recorded

in Revelation 14:9-11. Which threat do you think was/is more serious?

17. What is the ultimate source of peace and rest for God's people? If God Himself were arbitrary, exacting, a severe tyrant, unforgiving, and judgmental, would there ever be a time for rest? Rest comes with the assurance that God has told us the truth about sin, righteousness, and Satan, and that God Himself can be trusted. There is no need to be afraid of Him. God wants us to be His friends! (John 15:15)
18. Everything that Jesus did and said was in light of the larger great controversy issues. Read Matthew 13:3-8,18-23. How does this parable relate to our understanding of the great controversy? While the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the Father are doing everything in their power—without infringing on human freedom—and asking us to witness to those around us, what are Satan and his angels doing?

Satan and his angels are in the assemblies where the gospel is preached. While angels of heaven endeavor to impress hearts with the word of God, the enemy is on the alert to make the word of no effect. With an earnestness equaled only by his malice, he tries to thwart the work of the Spirit of God. While Christ is drawing the soul by His love, Satan tries to turn away the attention of the one who is moved to seek the Saviour.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 44.3.
19. Shouldn't the sower of the seed have been a little more careful about where the seed fell? Why would he waste seed on the stony path? Or, among the weeds? Or, in the shallow soil? Can we tell where the "rocks" are in and among human beings? Do we know how and when it is appropriate to pull out the weeds? In Matthew 13:29-30, Jesus specifically told us not to do that! So, we must sow the seed broadly at every possible opportunity and leave the consequences in God's hands.
20. Think about some of the people who may have joined your church in recent years. Can you remember some who seem or seemed to fit the different types of soil in this parable?
21. Read Matthew 7:21-27. These people were claiming a position in God's kingdom. They said that they had prophesied and cast out demons in Jesus's name. How would we judge someone who claimed s/he had cast out demons and prophesied in Jesus's name? If someone came to your church and announced that s/he had cast out demons or had a prophecy from the Lord, how would you respond? Is it possible to cast out demons without having a relationship with God? Did Judas cast out demons when he was sent out with the other 11 disciples? What kind of prophecies were the people that Jesus was speaking about making? Were they false prophets?
22. Are these words frightening to you? What entered the minds of Jesus's first listeners when He told this parable of the two house builders? None of them lived anywhere near the ocean. They lived on the hillsides and in the valleys that were sometimes affected by flash floods. At such times, it was very important to know that one's home was built solidly on rock. And, of course, the "Rock" to which Jesus was referring was Himself.
23. The Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5-7 was a kind of manifesto for the early Christian church. Many of the aspects of the Christian life were touched upon. But, at the same time, Jesus spoke against many of the beliefs and practices common among the Jewish people of His day.
24. In conclusion, in Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus talked about judging.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." Do not think yourself better than other men, and set yourself up as their judge. Since you cannot discern motive, you are incapable of judging another. In criticizing him, you are passing sentence upon

yourself; for you show that you are a participant with Satan, the accuser of the brethren. [Revelation 12:10] The Lord says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." [2 Corinthians 13:5] This is our work.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

25. Jesus was making two very important points in these verses. Often, we are most critical of other's sins and mistakes when they are committing the same sins or mistakes we are making. It is often an attempt to take people's attention off ourselves and place it on others. Jesus went on to suggest that the speck of sawdust in that person's eye should be compared to the log which is in our own eye! Could we actually learn to do as God does and hate the sin while we love the sinner?
26. Matthew began his Gospel by saying that Jesus would be born as "Immanuel" (which means, "God is with us"). (Matthew 1:23, *GNB*) But, this was not just a prophecy about the physical coming of Jesus. In Matthew 28:20, in the last verse of his Gospel, he quoted Jesus as saying: "I will be with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus is always with us.
27. This does not mean that things will always go peacefully and restfully for Christians. At the end of this world's history, the 144,000 will feel like they have been abandoned and are about to be killed, just as Jesus felt abandoned on the cross. Can we claim this promise for ourselves even at the present time? The author of Hebrews told us: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8, *NKJV*) Think of the times when God assured Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others of their descendants that He would be with them. What would have been different if the children of Israel had followed God's plan for entering Canaan? How close are we to following the example of the early Christians who experienced the former rain? What needs to happen for us to experience the latter rain?
28. But, God's people are not just here to sit back and rest with the assurance of God's presence. They are to go on the offensive in spreading the gospel. Many Christians focus on what God has done for them. That is a very egocentric, even selfish, approach to salvation. What are we willing to do to correctly represent God in this difficult time in this world's history?
29. Have you ever experienced the great controversy in your own life? Does that happen often? If we are in the "mother of all wars," should our focus be beyond thinking about the "assurance of salvation"? Are we just observers? Or, are we participants in the great controversy?
30. Many Christians are working hard to try to do everything God has asked them to do. They believe that is the key to their personal salvation. What does that have to do with the great controversy against Satan? Many people in the western world these days feel quite comfortable. If they have any real heartfelt needs, they do not want anyone to know about those needs. So, what can we do or offer to the world that might make the gospel seem attractive?
31. We have been told clearly that our main responsibilities include Bible study, prayer, and sharing/witnessing. If we take those things seriously, we will find ourselves working alongside the Holy Spirit? How would understanding that impact us—if we did?
32. In this lesson, we have raised a number of very significant questions. Can you answer them to your own satisfaction?

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