

# **The Book of Job**

## **The Great Controversy**

Lesson #2 for October 8, 2016

Scriptures: Job 1:1-12; Zechariah 3:2; Matthew 4:1; Ezekiel 28:12-16; Romans 3:25-26; Hebrews 2:14.

1. In order to understand the Scriptures—especially some of the more important sections—it is essential to have a knowledge of the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God. Seventh-day Adventists have been helped to understand the great-controversy theme woven through all of Scripture by the writings of Ellen White. See the handout: *The Great Controversy Described in Scripture* on [www.Theox.org](http://www.Theox.org) under Teacher's Guides, General Topics: (Paste the line below into your internet browser.)

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2. The story of Job cannot be correctly understood without a clear understanding of the great controversy. We need to understand that Job went through the experiences that he did because of a controversy which began in heaven. (Job 1&2) Satan has done his best to malign and misrepresent the character of God; when he cannot malign God's character directly, he seeks to malign and misrepresent the characters of God's followers.
3. In the previous lesson, we suggested that there are interesting parallels among the experiences of Job, the final events in the life of Christ, and what will happen to the 144,000 during the final days of this earth's history. Does it seem possible to you that something on the order of a Job-like experience could actually happen in our day?
4. Do you see evidence that the great controversy is still going on in your life personally? Or, in the lives of those around you?
5. Read Job 1:1-4. This idyllic picture suggests that things were going very well for Job. How did Job develop such a wonderful character before there was any Bible, church, synagogue, pastor, or prophet? There is no doubt that he somehow communicated with God. How did he do that? Or better, how did God communicate with him? (Job 29:1-5) Did God visit Job?
6. Somehow, in those ancient times, Job managed to develop a "blameless" and "upright" or "righteous" character. In our world of sin, such a thing does not happen by accident.
7. Read Job 1:5-6. Job clearly realized that there was sin in our world. He also realized that it would be very easy for one or more of his children to be drawn into the evil practices of those around them. Try to imagine yourself watching Job as he offered sacrifices for his children.

Amid the festivities of his sons and daughters, he trembled lest his children should displease God. As a faithful priest of the household, he offered sacrifices for them individually. He knew the offensive character of sin, and the thought that his children might forget the divine claims, led him to God as an intercessor in their behalf.—Ellen G. White, *RH*, August 30, 1881, par. 12, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, 1140.4; SD 257.3.

8. Given the idyllic description of Job's early years, is it possible that Satan's accusations against God were partially true, that is, that God was blessing Job and protecting him from Satan's attacks? Did Satan know about "faithful" Job? Of course! He wanted more access to Job.
9. Many of our Christian friends believe that because of the sovereignty of God, virtually nothing that we can do here on planet earth can affect Him in any way. The story of Job is a direct

refutation of that idea. Read Job 1:6-12. How often do you think the council of heaven, including the sons of God, came/comes from other parts of the universe to meet with God and take time to discuss single individuals here on this earth? Didn't both God and Satan know about Job? Does Satan still attend the councils in heaven? How do the sons of God feel about Satan mocking God? Who were/are the sons of God? (Job 38:7; Job 1:6; 2:1; Luke 3:38)

10. Are there any other places in Scripture where it suggests there is concern or even worry in the inner councils in heaven? See Revelation 5. That seems to describe considerable concern about being able to find someone qualified to open the scrolls by taking off the seals. Why was that?
11. So, why does God call councils of the sons of God in heaven? And why would He allow Satan to attend? The sons of God are leaders of the other worlds throughout the universe. (*DA* 834.1; *ST*, February 5, 1894, par. 8) When Adam who was supposed to be the leader of our world ate the fruit and surrendered his leadership to Satan, Satan claimed his place among the heavenly council as the leader of this earth.
12. Does God need a council in heaven to advise Him? Or, does He call them together to discuss with them what His plans are? Do you think God specifically called these two councils described in Job 1&2 in order to discuss the case of Job?
13. Read Genesis 3:1-4; Zechariah 3:2; Matthew 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8; and Revelation 12:7-12. Is it possible to understand these verses without believing that there is a personal Devil? Why do so many of our Christian friends seriously doubt the existence of a personal Devil?

The opening scenes of the book of Job show us a few crucial points. First, as we have stated, they reveal the reality of another dimension beyond what, of ourselves, we can now know—a heavenly dimension with heavenly beings other than God. Second, they also show just how interconnected our earthly life here is with the heavenly realm. What happens here on the earth is not disconnected from the heavenly beings in this realm. Third, they reveal a moral conflict in heaven that is indeed connected to what happens here on earth.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, October 5.

14. In these first two chapters of Job, we see the core issues in the great controversy brought out into the open. How did that controversy begin? Read Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-16; and 1 Timothy 3:6. Satan, one of the covering cherubs, became jealous and envious of Jesus!
15. Now that Jesus has come and lived His life on this earth and died that cruel death as an answer to many of Satan's accusations, why is the great controversy still going on? Why can't God just wrap things up?

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.” Malachi 4:2.—Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* 22.1. [Bold type is added.]

There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven.—Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* 493.3 (1888); *Patriarchs and Prophets* 35.1. Compare *4SP* 316.2-3 (1884).

16. As we have stated repeatedly in the past, God’s government is based on love. No force is ever exercised by God. God will accept only voluntary service. By contrast, Satan will use any kind of force he can possibly get away with. Whatever God allows him to do, he will do.
17. Unfortunately, most of us as human beings have little understanding of the great controversy. We still “see through a glass, darkly.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) To get a much better idea of how sin began, read *Patriarchs and Prophets* 33-43 and *The Great Controversy* 492-504.
18. A careful reading of the Scriptures will reveal that Satan prefers to keep himself hidden behind the scenes as much as possible. He has used people and organizations down through the generations to do his dirty work. Even in the book of Job, it might appear superficially that Satan’s only appearances were in Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7. That is not true. Read Job 4:12-21 where we see Eliphaz repeating a message he got directly from Satan himself—or possibly from one of Satan’s evil angels. That message is specifically repeated in Job 9:2 and 25:4. But, it is also repeated many times by implication throughout the book. In such an important battle in the great controversy, Satan was not going to go away and leave the field of battle.
19. The book of Job does not go on to explain how Satan is ultimately defeated and finally destroyed. We need the rest of the Bible for that. What does the death of Jesus have to do with the defeat of Satan? Undoubtedly, that is the key question in the great controversy. See John 12:31-32; Revelation 12:7-12; Romans 3:25-26; and Hebrews 2:14-15. By his temptations of Jesus and by his schemes to destroy Jesus, Satan unmasked himself before the universe as the liar and murderer he has always been.
20. In order to fully understand the great controversy and the issues involved, it is very important to notice in Romans 3:25-26 that Paul said three times in direct response to Satan’s accusations, “God is righteous,” before he mentioned what God has done for us. But, theologians almost always focus only on what God has done for us.
21. Throughout the ages, many cultures have myths or ancient stories about conflicts between good and evil. Modern higher criticism has even led many Christians to deny the reality of a personal Devil and his angels. Fortunately, there are some among our Christian friends who recognize the reality of the cosmic conflict. Gregory Boyd has written a book entitled *God at War* where he commented on Daniel 10 saying:

The Bible from beginning to end presupposes spiritual beings who exist “between” humanity and God and whose behavior significantly affects human existence, for better or for worse. Indeed, just such a conception, I argue in this work, lies at the center of the biblical worldview.—Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War*. Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997, p. 11.
22. So, what happens to our understanding of the great controversy if we eliminate Satan and his demonic friends? We are left with some kind of a conflict going on between God and man!
23. In ancient times, it was believed that might makes right. Thus, kings and military leaders

exercised their authority by producing fear in their subjects. God has repeatedly refused to take that approach.

Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain in heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.—Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* 498.2-499.0.

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.

Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour's cross; for though they did not then understand all, they knew that the destruction of sin and Satan was forever made certain, that the redemption of man was assured, and that the universe was made eternally secure. Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished."—Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* 764.2-4.

24. So, why is it that God is so opposed to having us serve Him out of fear?

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. [If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints.] Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.—Ellen White, *MS 20*, 1897 (*MR # 970*); *Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897, par. 11; section in brackets is omitted in *That I May Know Him* 120.4; *12MR* 236.1.

25. Is it obvious to you that we are still in the great controversy? Will Satan ultimately be able to destroy us? See Isaiah 33:10-16. But, we must not be naïve. "Everyone who wants to live a godly life, in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12, *GNB*) If we are not

being persecuted or somehow treated like Job, is it because we are not really any threat to Satan's kingdom, and therefore, he is leaving us alone?

26. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Christ won the great controversy by His decisive victory on Calvary. Is there anything we can do to hasten the end of this great controversy? God is waiting for us to get ready so He can come back. (2 Peter 3:10-12. Compare *Evangelism* 694-697.)

By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return.—Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* 633. (1898)

It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to [697] gather the precious grain.—Ellen White, *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 22.4. (1904); *Ev* 696.5.

27. When Satan accused Job, did he really care about Job? Or, was his plan to accuse Job in order to accuse God? Satan was hoping to prove that Job was not “blameless and upright” and, thus, prove that God was mistaken. Clearly, Job suffered a lot. Is that—by causing suffering—the only way that Satan gets involved in the events of this earth?
28. It might be easy for those of us growing up with western mindsets to think that in the great controversy there are two equally powerful forces in conflict. That is not true. Satan's very life is sustained by God. No life can exist without God's continuing support and power.

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.—Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* 759.1.

29. It may be hard for us to understand why God did not just eliminate Satan when he first started to rebel or perhaps quarantine him to some far corner of the universe so he could no longer harass us. But, God was not happy with the idea of just eliminating Satan; He wanted to decisively defeat Satan and disprove all his arguments and preserve the records for eternity.
30. One of the ways in which Satan has tried to corrupt our thinking about God is by suggesting strange stories about how this world came into existence.

The famous *Enuma Elish* epic is an ancient Babylonian story about creation that stems in its original form from the twelfth century B.C. and was found by Austen Henry Layard in 1849 in the ruins of Nineveh. It describes creation in terms of a *Chaoskampf* (German for “struggle against chaos”) in which Marduk, the supreme Babylonian deity, enters into combat with Tiamat, who represents the mighty and chaotic waters. Marduk eventually subdues and destroys Tiamat in battle and then rips her corpse into two parts, from which he forms the earth and the skies. Throughout the epic story, there are always two sides—order versus chaos, good versus evil (although Marduk himself is quite a barbaric character as it turns out), thus creating a strong dualist perspective on creation, which is based on an epic battle. The Bible, in contrast, presents a very different picture of the origins of our earth and of sin.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 27.

31. Unfortunately, we must admit that Satan has often been pictured in Christian art as having horns, animal parts along with a tail, sometimes with chicken legs and other fearsome body parts. He is shown carrying a pitchfork which we assume is supposed to be his instrument for stoking the fires of hell.
32. Because these false pictures are so unbelievable, many “moderns” just laugh off the idea of Satan’s existence. But, it is impossible to understand the Bible without realizing that Satan is a very intelligent, personal being. The Old Testament word for *Satan* means “the adversary” or “the enemy.” See for example 1 Kings 11:14; Psalm 109:6; Zechariah 3:2; Job 1:7-9,12; 2:1-4,6-7; and 1 Chronicles 21:1.
33. One of the obvious questions that arises when we talk about God and evil is the question: How could a good God make a bad world? There have been numerous attempts to try to answer that question. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 give us some hints. Ellen White said:

It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. **Nothing is more plainly taught in [493] Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin.** Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” [1 John 3:4] it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.—Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* 492.2; *TMK* 15.2; *FLB* 66.3. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

34. In conclusion, let us remember that the great controversy is not over. This world of ours—this little blue dot in an immense universe—is the theater of the universe at this time. (1 Corinthians 4:9) The great controversy will finally come to an end when Satan is thrown into the “lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:10) When everyone has been given an opportunity to see exactly his/her role in the great controversy and to reap the results of his/her own choices without any force or arbitrary decisions on the part of God, the great controversy will end.
35. But, at this point in time, we need to recognize how Christ’s death on the cross and His ministry before that make a difference in our own lives.
  1. He died for my sins. What does that mean?
  2. He died to show the results of sin—death. Do we understand the implications of that?
  3. He died to show what will happen to sinners in the end if they refuse to repent and turn to Him.
36. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been blessed enormously by the help of Ellen White, spelling out the details of the great controversy. Are we taking advantage of that?

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