

ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

JAN FEB MAR 2002

The
Cosmic Conflict
Between
Christ &
Satan



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH



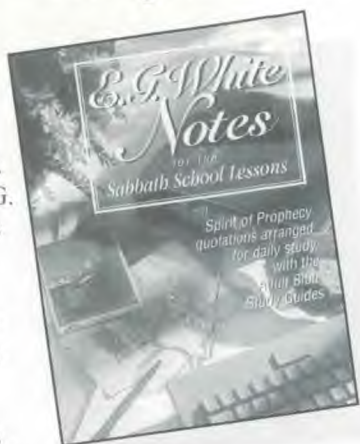
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Check your local Adventist Book Center
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Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

Blood on the Tracks

At 2:30 A.M. on Monday, May 24, 1999, a passenger train, called the Twilight Shoreliner, en route from Boston, Massachusetts, to Newport News, Virginia, struck and killed five people. The dead were Julia Toledo, an Ecuadoran immigrant, and her four sons: Carlos (eleven), Jose (ten), Angel (six), and Pedro (three). An investigation revealed that no one had been at fault. Sure, the mother shouldn't have been on the tracks with her children (they might have all been there by accident, lost), but otherwise, there was no one to blame, no one to charge with a crime, no one to explain why a mother and her four children should get run over so unceremoniously by the Twilight Shoreliner on May 24, 1999. For atheists, this blood on the tracks poses no philosophical problem: We live in a meaningless, senseless world in which mothers and children sometimes get run over by trains. Don't look for meaning because, frankly, there is none.

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we know that answer is wrong. Because we are beings made in the image of God, our lives, each one, have meaning; thus, by default, our deaths (each one) must, as well. The hard question is not *Do they have meaning?* but *What is it?*

Ellen White, writing in the context of Lucifer's fall, said that to explain sin would be to excuse it; sin is inexplicable because it is inexcusable (see *The Great Controversy*, p. 492). Perhaps, then, death, the result of sin, falls into the same category: To explain it would be, in a sense, to excuse, even justify, it, and how can death be justified in a universe created by our loving Lord?

It can't. Instead, all we can know, at least for now, is that we are swept up in a battle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan—and that two thousand years ago, at the cross, the decisive victory was won for us. Because of that victory we have the promise that evil and death will be eradicated, that all God's ways will be vindicated before human beings and angels, and that so much of reality that now comes entombed in darkness will one day radiate in the light of God Himself (1 Cor. 4:5), who promises to make all things right. Until then, and beyond that promise, it can be so fruitless to ask *Why* because there is no *Why* other than that evil *is*, that it is part of this world for now, and that, again, to explain it would be excusing it, and the last thing evil needs in this great controversy is to be excused.

And it's this theme, that of the great controversy between good and evil, that Dr. John Fowler of the General Conference Education department expounds with great depth and clarity in this quarter's lesson study. And though many questions will remain, this Bible Study Guide—with Christ as the focus—helps us see that the only hope we have in a world with things like the Toledo family's blood on the tracks is, indeed, Christ's blood on the cross.

The Cosmic Conflict Between Christ and Satan: The Hard Questions

So often life seems to be only a tangle of questions, hard questions at that. Why does the earth quake, killing hundreds with each spasm of dirt and rock? Why do the rains fall, destroying a season's worth of food with each wet shower? Why do planes plummet from the sky, taking hundreds to terrifying and fiery deaths? *If God is a God of love, why do I have cancer? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He keep my spouse from alcohol? Couldn't He have prevented the car accident that took my child's limb?*

These questions, and endless others like them, lead us to what we have called the great-controversy theme, the great motif of the battle between Christ and Satan that weaves its way through the Bible, from the opening pages to the climax and close. Through captivating stories and inspiring truths, this theme—that of the battle between Christ and Satan, between good and evil—gives us a basic understanding, a basic framework or template, in which we can seek some understanding of these hard questions.

The theme provides a worldview of our origin and destiny and the ebb and flow of human history. It also offers an outline, though broad (even coarse at times) of the following: (1) how sin began; (2) why we suffer; (3) how God can be both just and loving; (4) what really happened through Jesus' life and death; (5) the meaning of Jesus' heavenly ministry; (6) how we should relate to God's law, love, grace, and judgment; and (7) how sin will end.

"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated."—*SDA Church Manual* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995, revised edition), p. 9.

This quarter we will study the great controversy theme in detail. The lessons do not cover all that we might wish on this topic (What human books could?); instead, they provide an outline that, while not giving answers to the hard questions, will provide a framework from which we can, at least, glimpse the hope that lies behind them.

The Sabbath School Bible Study Companion Book for 1st Quarter, 2002!



Why do earthquakes kill thousands? Why do planes fall from the sky? Why do loved ones contract cancer or die in auto accidents? *The Cosmic Conflict Between Christ and Satan* seeks to give us understanding from a "war-room" view of the galactic struggle going on between good and evil. Using captivating stories and inspiring truths from Scripture, Dr. John M. Fowler examines the great-controversy theme with depth and clarity to provide us a broad understanding of (1) how sin began; (2) why we

suffer; (3) how God can be both just and loving; (4) what really happened through Jesus' life and death; (5) how sin will end, and more! This companion book to the first quarter Sabbath School lesson for 2002, helps us see that the only hope we have in a world of sin is, indeed, Christ's blood on the cross.

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War in Heaven



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17; Revelation 12.

MEMORY TEXT: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16, NRSV).

KEY QUESTIONS: Where did the great controversy begin? Whom and what did it involve? What were the initial consequences?

GOD IS LOVE" (1 John 4:16). God's dwelling place is characterized by His love, and all who abide with Him live in such a way that glorifies His character.

But here is a great mystery. Lucifer, an angelic being abiding in God's presence, chose to question God's loving character. Little by little this being spread his dissatisfaction among other angels, causing a "war in heaven. Michael [Jesus] and his angels fought against the dragon [Lucifer], and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he [the dragon] was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven" (Rev. 12:7, 8, NIV).

This week's lesson provides "a history of the origin, initial position, and downfall of the angel who later became known as the devil and Satan."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 675. How God chose to handle this conflict exemplifies further His loving character. As you study and begin to understand how the great controversy is won in your own life, remember that Lucifer was "not strong enough" then (when he first rebelled against Christ), and he is not strong enough now—because God's "love endures forever" (Ps. 107:1, NIV), a love that is perfected in those who abide in Him (1 John 4:17).

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 5.)

GOD AND HIS PERFECT CREATION (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 104:24, 25).

In each of the following verses, what one word does the author repeatedly use to describe God's creation? Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. What does this word imply about His character?

In Psalm 34:8, David invites us to "taste" (experience) for ourselves this aspect of God's character. In Psalm 145:7, he describes a time when people will celebrate this goodness with joyful singing: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness."

What applies to God's earthly creation applies to the entire cosmos. If He made the earth so "good" and created human beings without any tendency toward evil, surely heaven and its inhabitants reflect these same attributes.

Even though the origin of sin is a mystery, what characteristics in particular helped bring it to fruition? The following verses provide clues.

Isa. 14:12-15 _____

Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6 _____

God can force all creatures in the universe to worship Him, He can force all creatures in the universe to obey Him, He can force all creatures to fear Him—but He cannot force even a single one to love Him. Love, to be love, must be free. In what ways do we experience every day this freedom that God's love has given to us? How do you day by day use, or abuse, this freedom? What principles motivate your actions? Ask yourself this hard question, too—What are you doing with the freedom that God has given you?

FROM THE ANOINTED TO THE EVIL ONE (Ezek. 28:12-17).

Using the king of Tyre, an evil and morally bankrupt monarch, as a metaphor, Ezekiel portrays the king of all evil.

Ezekiel 28:12-16 points to the fall of Lucifer from “anointed cherub” to God’s adversary. Answer the questions below regarding this event.

1. How did the anointed cherub come into being? (vs. 15).
2. What was his responsibility? (vs. 14).
3. Where was his dwelling place? (vs. 14).
4. Describe his original character (vs. 15).
5. Explain the meaning of “filled with violence within” (vs. 16, NKJV).
6. What was the iniquity found in him? (vss. 16, 17).

Before his fall, this angelic being is described as “the covering cherub,” a figure related to the mercy seat in the sanctuary (Exod. 25:8-22; 37:6-9; Heb. 8:5). How could iniquity occur in a being who occupied such a lofty position, a being who was, in fact, created “perfect”? How does the role of freedom fit into this situation?

The fall of Lucifer shows that neither ecclesiastical position nor power is a safeguard against sin. Such safety is found only in a nurturing relationship with the One who creates and sustains. (See Rev. 12:11.) Thus, even a perfect being like Lucifer needed to maintain a humble, submissive relationship to His Creator. How much more so, then, should we?

Ezekiel 28:15 states that this highest of angels was a created being. What is wrong with a created being claiming or striving to be equal with the Creator? Can we fall into a similar trap, even in more subtle ways than openly claiming equality with God? If so, how?

LUCIFER'S SIN (Isa. 14:12-15).

Compare Isaiah's description of Lucifer's sin with the description in Ezekiel by listing five comparable elements.

Isaiah 14:12-15	Ezekiel 28:12-17
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

First and foremost, Isaiah and Ezekiel were addressing the rulers of Babylon and Tyre. But some details in each prophecy are true only of someone more powerful than these two fleshly kings. We can understand the details of the prophecies when we understand the nature of biblical writings. Just as God was behind Israel's Davidic throne (Isa. 41:21; Zeph. 3:15), Satan was behind the throne of these pagan monarchs. Just as Israel's kings were to reflect the characteristics of their true King, so the kings of Tyre and Babylon exhibited characteristics of the one who ruled them. Also, just as the Davidic psalms give details pointing to the Messiah that are not true of David, so, too, these prophecies detail things that are not true of the kings of Babylon and Tyre but refer instead only to Lucifer. (See Peter's argument in Acts 2:14, 22, 25-36 that Psalm 16:8-11 refers to Christ, even though David wrote the passage as though he were speaking about himself.)

The title applied to Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12 reflects the position he once held in heaven as leader of the angels. But because he was a created being, his position always would be lower than that of his Creator, Christ (John 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2). Lucifer refused to acknowledge this fact.

No matter how much God gave Lucifer, it obviously wasn't enough. He wanted more. *And all this in a being who from the start had been created perfect!* What warning should Lucifer's fall have for us—sinful, selfish, and defective beings from the start—about the danger of self-exaltation, pride, and covetousness, especially when they arise in a very subtle manner?

LUCIFER'S SINISTER PRESUMPTIONS (Isa. 14:13, 14).

Lucifer's claims began in the heart—that is, in the mind. God created the mind as the seat of all emotions, decisions, and actions. As is the mind, so is the life. "Your word I have hidden in my heart," says the psalmist, "that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11, NKJV). A mind filled with God's thoughts and His will serves as a shield against sin. But Lucifer filled his mind with rebellious, prideful thoughts:

“ ‘**I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God**’ ” (Isa. 14:13, NKJV). Lucifer's ultimate presumption was that he could seize the sovereignty that Christ had above all other created thrones. His presumption was not only false but in direct revolt against the basic law of the created order: Only the Creator can be sovereign.

“ ‘**I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north**’ ” (vs. 13, NKJV). Psalm 48:2 describes Mount Zion as being “on the sides of the north.” Lucifer's ambition was to sit on the mount of the congregation—an ambition that once fulfilled would no doubt win the angels' allegiance and their worship. But worship is the prerogative of God and Him alone (see 1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 96:9; Rev. 14:7).

Upon what other presumption did Lucifer dare to act? Vs. 14.

What is wrong with this particular presumption of Lucifer's? After all, doesn't the Bible itself tell us we should seek to be like God, to love like Him, to serve like Him, to forgive like Him, to hate sin like Him, to be a source of hope like Him? (Gal. 5:22-26; Col. 3:12-14). The problem, instead, is what it was about God that Lucifer wanted for himself. Lucifer desired God's power, position, authority, and glory; not His love, His benevolence, His mercy.

Lucifer's rebellion did not begin as a full-blown revolt; it rarely does, even in us. It starts small, unperceived, a little doubt here, a little hatred there, a little greed or jealousy somewhere else. Soon it all adds up into something that we never imagined at first. Unless we guard our minds with God's Word and commit ourselves daily to Him, revolt will not be far away.

All of us have harbored, at one time or another, the germs of mutiny and revolt. How can we quickly recognize these problems within ourselves, so that we can, through surrender to God and death to self, exterminate them before they lead us to our eternal ruin?

SATAN CAST OUT OF HEAVEN (Revelation 12).

When Michael and His angels crushed the rebellion in heaven, what happened to Lucifer and his angels? Rev. 12:7-9.

Revelation 12 provides a dramatic overview of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Given in three major scenes, *that are not in chronological order*, the chapter provides the basic background of a conflict that involves every one of us (no one is neutral in this war).

Verses 1-6 focus upon Satan's attack on earth, first against the Christ-child and then against Christ's church, which has to flee into the wilderness for "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (vs. 6, NKJV).

Verses 7-12 focus upon the original war in heaven, when Satan first rebelled and with his fallen angels fought against Christ, a battle they lost.

Verses 13-17 focus back on the earth, where Satan, cast out of heaven, continues his war against Christ (whom he was unable to defeat) by attacking Christ's church, the next best thing to attacking Christ Himself.

As best you can, go back through Revelation 12 and write down the sequence of events *chronologically*, starting, for example, with verse 7, which describes the war in heaven. What follows, and in what order do they come? (Remember that some events are repeated.)

Centuries ago, a German theologian and philosopher named Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz coined the word *theodicy*, meaning "the justification of God," the idea being that, in the end, all His ways will be justified before the universe. How do you understand this notion of God being "justified" in His actions before creatures of His own creation? What does that tell us about His character? How does the idea of theodicy help us understand the continued existence of Satan, even after his defeat at the Cross?

FURTHER STUDY: The great controversy is a study in contrasts: Satan's character of pride and self-glorification as opposed to Christ's character of unselfish love and service. Proverbs 6:16-19 gives us a picture of one. Philippians 2:5-8 portrays the other.

"Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 42, 43.

To learn more about the topics discussed in this week's lesson, read any or all of the following: *Early Writings*, "The Fall of Satan," pp. 145-147; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "Why Was Sin Permitted?" pp. 33-43; *The Great Controversy*, "The Origin of Evil," pp. 492-504.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways does Satan fit the description in Proverbs 6:16-19?
2. Why does the Bible refer to sin as the "mystery of iniquity"? (2 Thess. 2:7; see also Rev. 17:5, 7). Contrast this mystery with the one Paul wrote about in 1 Timothy 3:16.
3. Augustine once wrote that it seemed as if humans were put in an arena to do battle for the truth. How do you understand this concept, that of us doing battle for the truth, in the context of the great controversy?

SUMMARY: The great controversy began in heaven when Lucifer attempted to exalt himself above his Creator. Calling into question God's loving character, he was able to deceive a third of the angels. Because pride and self-glorification cannot by its very nature live in harmony with God's selfless love, Lucifer, along with those he seduced, was cast from heaven. Even though the great controversy still rages on global and personal levels, we should not despair. "God is love," His "love endures forever" (1 John 4:16; Ps. 107:1, NIV), and His love has defeated the foe in our behalf.



Faithful Hitchhikers, Part 1

Gladstone Simmons

When Clara Smith, a single parent living on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, learned about a prophecy seminar that the All Nations Adventist church in Gallup, New Mexico, was conducting, she decided to attend. She took her three teenage children with her. Night after night Clara and her children, Alexis, 18, Dana, 17, and LaCora, 14, made the 80-mile round trip to attend the meetings. They were thrilled by the clear explanation of Bible truth that the pastor presented, and in November 1999, Clara and her children committed their lives to God in baptism.

Every Sabbath Clara and her teenagers faithfully made the trip in her aging auto to worship God with her new church family. Then late one night as the family returned home after prayer meeting, a black cow wandered across the dark highway in front of her car. There was no time to stop, and Clara hit the cow.

No one was seriously injured, but the car was totaled. Clara had no insurance, and the cow's owner refused to repay her loss. Clara could not work because of rheumatoid arthritis, and had no money to replace the car. And no other church members live anywhere near her to give them a ride to church.

But Clara and her family refused to let this setback keep them from their weekly appointments with God. Clara and her children prayed that God would help them get to church some other way.

Early on Sabbath morning Clara and her children set out on foot toward the highway. A few minutes later a car stopped, and the driver offered them a ride into town.

Week after week the family prayed for a ride, then set out for church. God is faithful, and the family did not miss a single Sabbath. And they are never late, in spite of their irregular mode of transportation. They even attend prayer meeting, and once a month Clara and her children hitchhiked to the church to take their turn cleaning it for Sabbath.

One Sabbath a driver stopped to offer the family a ride. He asked where they were going, and when Clara replied that they were going to church, the driver said, "I am on my way to work. When I reach my job, you may drive on to church. Just bring the car back to me when church is over."

(continued next week)

Gladstone Simmons is pastor of the All Nations Adventist Church in Gallup, New Mexico.

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Issues in the Great Controversy



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 8:42-46; 14:9-11; Rev. 12:17.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works’ ” (John 14:10, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: The great controversy is a cosmic battle involving God and Satan. What are the root issues of this conflict, and how have they been manifested?

LET GOD BE GOD. Though the Bible doesn't give a systematic explication of the specific issues in the great controversy, we may gather from the overall biblical portrayal that these issues center on God's character and around God's law, which reveals that character.

As we study this week's lesson, we need to be aware of God's infinity and our finiteness, of God's omnipotence and our frailty. We are mortals approaching a divine mystery. God is holy; we are sinners. Let us take off our shoes (Exod. 3:5, 6) as we seek to understand the ways in which His grace and love are His chief weapons in the great controversy.

“He that ruleth in the heavens is the one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread, and who, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, beholds the accomplishment of His own purposes of love and blessing.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 43.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 12.)

GOD'S LAW.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).

If Satan wars against God's people because they are faithful to His law (Rev. 12:17), we can conclude that one of the issues in the great controversy is that law. Scripture says that “everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4, NIV). But sin is more than lawlessness. Read Psalm 40:8. This Messianic text identifies the principles of God's law with His personal will. Sin, therefore, is also rebellion against God Himself.

When 1 John 3:8 says that “the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (NIV), it seems that right from the start of the great controversy, Lucifer rebelled against God by questioning the necessity of obeying His law.

What position did Jesus take regarding the law?

Matt. 5:17, 18 (what Jesus taught) _____

John 15:10 (Jesus' testimony) _____

2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22 (the sinlessness of Jesus) _____

The nature of a government is discerned by its laws: Evil governments have evil laws; good governments have good laws. In this context, what does it mean to say that God's law is a “transcript of His character”? (see *The Great Controversy*, p. 434).

GOD'S CHARACTER AND AUTHORITY (2 Chron. 20:6; Jer. 31:3; Dan. 7:14; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Rev. 19:6).

What do the passages listed above teach us about God's character, power, and authority?

The New Testament word used to describe God's love is *agape*. It refers to love in its highest, fullest, and most selfless sense. The entire Bible portrays God's love, but nowhere more vividly than it does at the Cross (1 John 4:9, 10). God's law, mercy, providence, and judgment are all in harmony with His love. Even the commandment He gave to Adam and Eve regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) stemmed from that love. God not only loves; He *is* love. This love includes "mercy," "loving-kindness," "long-suffering," and "goodness."

One of the most famous verses in the Bible is 1 John 4:8, "God is love." What does that mean? If it said "God exudes love" or "Love is a manifestation of God's character," then it would be easier to understand. But "God is love"? Love is an emotion, a principle, or (to get really technical) a specific chemical reaction in the brain. How, then, do we understand this idea that God is love?

How did Lucifer dispute God's character, power, and authority in heaven? The following texts give us some clues: Matt. 5:21, 22; John 8:44; 1 John 3:11-15.

In John 8:44, Jesus states that "from the beginning" Lucifer was a liar and a murderer. Thus he was in violation of God's law (Exod. 20:13, 16), which, in essence, is His character. But whom did he kill or lie about "from the beginning" (that is, before he was thrown out of heaven)? Both Jesus and John state that anger and hatred are the motivating forces behind murder (Matt. 5:21, 22; 1 John 3:11-15). Therefore, in John 8:44, Jesus is apparently alluding to the emotions Lucifer was harboring in his heart that led to spreading lies in heaven about God's character. In effect, he was "murdering" God.

Discrediting God's law, His character, and His authority doesn't always have to be openly and blatantly manifested to be real. In fact, more subtle forms could be even more dangerous, because those doing so might not even be aware of what they are doing. In what subtle ways could we, even as professed followers of Christ, be guilty of this same sin? Even more important, how can we break free from this most deadly of deceptions?

GOD THE SON (Matt. 4:8-11; John 14:10).

In heaven, Satan sought for himself the worship only God deserves (Isa. 14:12-14). And, if that wasn't enough—on earth he attempted to get even God the Son to worship him! In exchange for that worship, Satan offered Christ “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor” (Matt. 4:8, NIV).

But were they really his to offer? On the contrary, they were “stolen property, but so long as they were in his hands Satan proposed to trade with them to his own advantage. Christ was the true owner, and His ownership was based on the fact that He had made ‘all things’ (John 1:3). He had never abdicated His rights. Satan knew that Jesus had come to contest his claim, and now offered to surrender it without a conflict—but on conditions.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 314.

What makes Christ (as opposed to Satan) the true “owner” of this world? See Col. 1:16.

Linked to the idea of Christ as owner of the world is the last of Jesus' three temptations in which His status as God the Son, the Creator, is another issue in the great controversy:

1. Satan disputed Christ's unparalleled position. (For Christ's status, see Matt. 16:16; John 1:1-3; 10:30; 14:10; 17:5; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-8; Titus 2:13.)

2. Satan was jealous of Christ's position in the Godhead, and on earth he thought he could make Christ bow to him.

3. Satan knew that God alone is worthy of worship and that as God the Son, Christ deserves worship from all created beings. Getting Christ to worship him meant getting Him to doubt His own position in the Godhead.

4. Jesus' mission was to return Satan's “stolen property” to the Father by shedding His blood for sin.

“Satan had questioned whether Jesus was the Son of God. In his summary dismissal [Matt. 4:10] he had proof that he could not gainsay. Divinity flashed through suffering humanity. Satan had no power to resist the command. Writhing with humiliation and rage, he was forced to withdraw from the presence of the world's Redeemer.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 130.

Harry was raised in the church, but as a young man, he left, disgruntled and angry. Whenever anyone in his family tried to talk to him about the claims that Christ had on his life, he would retort: “No one owns me. I am my own man.” Are we really our own? How would you answer him?

GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY (Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3:1-5).

Based on Revelation 12:10 and Zechariah 3:1-5, what is another issue in the great controversy?

Satan, Jesus said, is a liar; he is also the “accuser of our brethren.” What are some of the accusations Satan makes against us? Does he even have to lie about us? Can the truth, alone, of our deeds be enough to condemn us? If so, what’s our only defense against his accusations?

Can God be both just and merciful—or are these two attributes mutually exclusive? If obeying God’s will is so crucial to the welfare of His created beings, then how can it be fair to grant mercy to those who violate His will? Lucifer disputes God’s right to offer sinners grace and forgiveness, and he bases that dispute on questions such as these.

Even the casual observer can see what a dilemma sin must be for God. He loves His creatures no less because they have sinned (Hos. 11:8). But how can a holy God remain true to His nature if He forgives them? The following illustration helps us to understand:

Martin Luther dreamed he was standing before the judgment seat of God, where Satan spread out a long scroll on which he had kept a careful record of Luther’s innumerable sins. With great fervor, the accuser argued before God, “This man cannot enter the kingdom. He has violated the law times without number. He deserves death. He cannot enter heaven where only the loyal and the obedient live.” Martin Luther then told Satan to take his hand off the scroll. Satan said, “I will not.” Luther again demanded that he do it, and the devil again refused. Finally, Luther said, “In the name of Jesus Christ, move your hand!” Satan then moved it from the scroll, which said: “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses Martin Luther from all his sins.”

Here is the mystery of the Cross, the mystery of how God could be both just and merciful. At the Cross, He poured out His righteous and just indignation against sin. That’s God’s justice. But He poured it out in the person of Jesus, not us, the ones who deserved that punishment. That’s God’s mercy. Thus, it was through the Cross, and only through the Cross, that God was able to be both just and merciful.

Picture yourself among some of those soldiers nailing Jesus to the cross. Imagine taking the nails and hammering them into His hands and feet. Though we weren’t there, in the flesh, doing that to Jesus, we still, in a real sense, share in the guilt of His death. How so?

GOD'S PREROGATIVES (Deut. 10:12, 13; Matt. 7:21; Rev. 14:7).

Because God is who He is, He has certain rights or privileges (prerogatives) that His creatures cannot claim for themselves. What are some of these prerogatives? Based on previous lessons in this Bible Study Guide, how did Lucifer take issue with each of them?

Texts	God's Prerogatives	Lucifer's Issues
Deut. 10:12, 13		
Matt. 7:21		
Rev. 14:7		

When we understand (to whatever degree possible) what God has done for us, when we accept His activities on our behalf and apply them to our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit, then we can fear God. Fearing God means approaching Him with awe and reverence, being completely loyal to Him, and surrendering ourselves totally to His will (see Deut. 4:10).

Giving God glory means to praise Him and honor Him (see Ps. 115:1; Isa. 42:12; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 25).

"The Creator of the universe is the true and only object of worship. No man, no angel, is worthy of worship. This is the prerogative of God only. Creatorship is one of the distinguishing features of the true God in contrast with false deities (Jer. 10:11, 12). The appeal to worship God as Creator has become especially timely in the years following the initial preaching of the first angel's message, because of the rapid spread of the theory of evolution. Furthermore, the call to worship the God of heaven as Creator of all things implies that due heed be given to the sign of God's creative works—the Sabbath of the Lord. . . . If the Sabbath had been kept as God intended, it would have served as a great safeguard against infidelity and evolution."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 828.

Why does God ask us to worship Him? Does the Creator really need our worship? Or is worship for our own good? If so, how would worshipping God be to our advantage? In other words, what good does it do for us, personally, to worship God?

FURTHER STUDY: According to Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, what is another issue in the great controversy?

The word ‘prophecy’ describes any inspired message communicated by God through a prophet (see on Matt. 11:9). Prophecy may be a prediction of future events, though more commonly it is not. The expression ‘spirit of prophecy’ refers specifically to the ‘manifestation of the Spirit’ in the form of a special gift of the Holy Spirit that inspires the recipient and enables him to speak authoritatively as a representative of God (1 Cor. 12:7-10) when ‘moved by the Holy Ghost’ to do so (2 Peter 1:21). The context of the expression in Rev. 19:10 defines ‘the testimony of Jesus’ and ‘the spirit of prophecy’ in this sense. In view of the fact that the ‘remnant’ of ch. 12:17 specifically refers to the church after the close of the 1260 prophetic days of vs. 6 and 14, that is, after 1798 . . . , ch. 12:17 stands as a clear prediction of the special manifestation of the ‘spirit,’ or ‘gift,’ of prophecy in the church in our day. Seventh-day Adventists believe the ministry of Ellen G. White meets the specifications of Rev. 12:17 in a unique way.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 876.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What role does God’s law have in the great controversy? Why did God not change His law in order to meet humanity in its fallen condition? Would having changed the law been an admission that something was wrong with it from the start?
2. Didn’t God know, even when He created Lucifer, that eventually Lucifer would rebel? God knew, too, that Adam and Eve would sin, did He not? Why, then, did God create these beings, knowing what would happen? Perhaps a key to understanding this is to understand that God has given His creatures free will; that if He wanted beings who could love Him, He had to create them free, for only free beings can love. Yet this freedom has caused so much pain and suffering. Was it worth it? How does what happened at the Cross, in that God Himself suffered in the person of Jesus, help answer some of the issues involved in the great controversy?

SUMMARY: At the root of the great controversy lie several issues. Some of these include God’s law, His character and authority, His justice and mercy, His prerogatives, and the position of His Son, Jesus. Satan raised these issues while he was an angel of light in heaven, and he is still raising them globally and in our personal lives. But praise be to God for His love and mercy—two indestructible weapons in the fight against sin.



Faithful Hitchhikers, Part 2

Gladstone Simmons

Although Clara Smith and her teenagers live 40 miles from the Adventist church, they never missed a Sabbath service or prayer meeting. When their car was demolished in an accident, they prayed for a ride and began hitchhiking to church.

Sometimes the family would get a ride quickly, but occasionally they had to walk several miles before someone would offer them a ride. When this happened Clara sometimes asked the pastor's wife for a bandage to cover the blisters on her aching feet, but she never complained, though her arthritis caused her a great deal of pain. Always the pastor or someone in the church would take them home.

Being without a car caused other problems for the family. Alexis and Dana have completed secondary school and want to attend college, but the nearest college is in Gallup, 40 miles away, and there is no public transportation to town. The family cannot afford to send them to a boarding college. Alexis hopes to study history and law, and Dana would like to become an elementary school teacher.

While waiting for an opportunity to continue their studies, Alexis and Dana have tried to find jobs. Repeatedly they hitchhiked into Gallup to look for work. But lack of a consistent means of transportation and their refusal to work on Sabbaths have stymied their efforts to find jobs. But the young people would not grumble. Instead they threw their energies into helping the family and serving their church. Alexis enjoys leading the song service, and Dana runs the sound system.

The family continues to rely on God's providence and the kindness of strangers to get to church. Clara testified,

"I receive such a blessing as I worship with God's people. I cannot understand why some people do not attend church regularly."

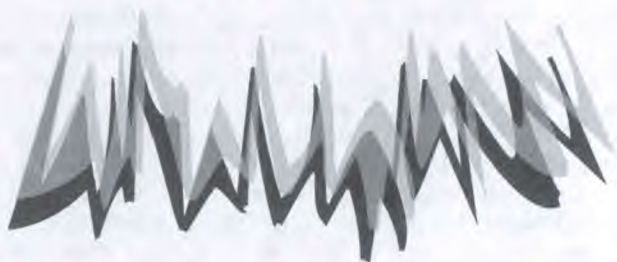


Clara Smith and her family (left). Gladstone Simmons is pastor of the All Nations Adventist Church in Gallup, New Mexico.

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The Contenders



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 2:5-11; 1 John 1:5-10; 3:4-9.

MEMORY TEXT: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: Who are the chief contenders in the great controversy? What weapons does each contender employ, and how effective are they?

THE LORD OF LIGHT VERSUS THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS. Many New Testament word pictures portray the contenders in the great controversy. Studying these pictures will help us better understand the nature of the war. Anyone who wants to know the truth can see the stark contrast between the opponents. They are Immanuel—God with us—versus the devouring lion in our midst; the Lord of light versus the prince of darkness; the God of truth against the father of lies; Christ versus antichrist. One is the Shepherd, the other a wolf.

We should be able to see, too, that there's no compromise between these two contenders. The issues between them are too deep, too divisive, too contrary to allow for any kind of truce, any kind of conditional surrender, any kind of synthesis of sides into some sort of settlement, as often happens between warring nations. Instead, it's a matter of one side that is wholly good fighting against another side that is wholly evil in a battle that only one or the other can win. There's no middle ground between them, no possibility of cooperation. Whenever the battle is over, the victory will be complete and unconditional, with one side, *our side*—under the command of Lord Jesus—enjoying the fruits of a hard-fought battle that we're all engaged in, even if Jesus was the decisive victor for us 2,000 years ago.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 19.)

GOD WITH US VERSUS A LION IN OUR MIDST (Matt. 1:23; 1 Pet. 5:8).

When God cast Satan out of heaven, Satan took upon himself the task of deceiving the whole world (Rev. 12:9). With the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan turned this world into a battlefield on which the opponents fight over the issues we studied in lesson 2.

As he did with Eve, Satan often pretends to be our ally. "He frequently appears as an angel of light, assuming friendly airs, presenting peculiar temptations which it is difficult for the inexperienced to withstand."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 207. But however subtle Satan may be, he remains our "adversary," lurking "about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, NKJV).

Based on such a description, what deceptions might Satan use to get us on his side? Might we be on Satan's side without even knowing it?

Peter's own experience with Satan certainly qualified him to portray our enemy as a stalking lion seeking its prey. During their last Passover together, Jesus told Peter that Satan would haunt his footsteps (Luke 22:31). Indeed, before the night was over, Peter would deny his Lord and Savior not once but three times (vss. 34, 54-62). Jesus, however, did not leave him without hope. Immediately after telling him that Satan desired to have him, Jesus said, " 'But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers' " (vs. 32, NIV).

Jesus could offer Peter hope because of a plan that God, in His infinite wisdom, formulated to redeem us. When did He develop this plan, and what did it include? Rom. 5:19; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8.

Satan claimed this world as his (Matt. 4:8, 9; John 14:30), but God sent us His Son. Born as a babe, He became " 'Immanuel . . . God with us' " (Matt. 1:23, NKJV). He took upon Himself our human nature, and in that nature He crushed Satan.

Who of us hasn't, at some point, fallen as Peter did, in the sense that—though boldly proclaiming (maybe just in our hearts) that we'd stay faithful to Christ no matter what—we allowed Satan to come in and cause to us betray Christ anyway? Yet why didn't Jesus reject Peter, and why can we have hope that He, Immanuel, won't reject us either, if we do the same?

THE LORD OF LIGHT VERSUS THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS.

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

In the beginning of Creation, Christ, the Creator, said: “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3; John 1:1-5). Thus He dispelled the darkness that was over the earth. The same Christ now proclaims that He is the Light of the world—a light that has come to dispel the moral and spiritual darkness that has overtaken the world as a result of sin.

As light, what does Jesus provide for us?

2 Cor. 4:6 _____

1 John 1:7 _____

Ps. 119:105 _____

Ps. 27:1 _____

It has been said that all the darkness in the world can't cover or hide the light from even a single candle. In the same way, no matter how “dark” our situation might be, Jesus, the Light, is there to guide us through the darkness, if we are willing to turn toward Him.

There is something absolute about the Father and Christ being light. Because light is what the Father and Christ are, there can be no darkness in them at all (1 John 1:5). Because light is opposed to darkness, Christ is by nature opposed to Satan, the prince of darkness. As the presence of light dispels darkness, so the presence of Christ assures Satan's defeat.

Scientists speculate on the existence of black holes, objects in space so dense, so full of mass, that their gravitational pull allows nothing to escape, not even light. Considering, in the spiritual realm, who our Light is, can any spiritual black holes exist?

THE GOD OF TRUTH VERSUS THE FATHER OF LIES.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

John 14:6 is a profound statement, not carelessly made or selfishly asserted. He not only came to show the truth about God the Father, Satan, sin, and redemption; He *is* the truth. Because He is the incarnation of truth, He is the only way to the Father and the only source of eternal life.

The truth is divine reality—who God is, what He does, and how He relates to His created beings. Many people have speculated on what constitutes truth. Even with Truth standing before him, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). There are many and varied answers, and Satan delights in all of them, because they are all weapons in his arsenal. But the Creator has the ultimate weapon. Jesus says that He is the truth (John 14:6). Truth has put on human garb, and to know Him is to know the Father and to have eternal life (John 14:9; 17:3).

So often, we tend to think of truth as propositions, statements, such as $A=B$ and $B=C$, therefore $A=C$. Jesus, however, by the statement that He *is* truth, puts even the concept of truth in a whole different perspective. How do we understand this idea of truth being a Person? Consider the fact that Jesus is the Creator of everything created (Col. 1:16). Could that concept help us understand how Jesus is the truth?

While Jesus is the truth, Satan is “the father of lies” (John 8:44, NIV). Satan told lies in heaven, in Eden, and in the wilderness. In the following verses, we see not only blatant lies but even more subtle ones. What were they?

Eden (Gen. 3:1) _____

Heaven (Job 1:10, 11) _____

Wilderness (Matt. 4:5, 6) _____

Jesus is the truth; Satan is the father of lies. The contrast is blatant. However, in our own lives, the line can seem blurred, especially when we find ourselves in positions in which the temptation to lie, even for a “greater good,” is very alluring. What does today’s lesson teach about whom we’re reflecting when we lie? What should it tell us about lying? Is anyone ever justified in lying?

CHRIST VERSUS ANTICHRIST (Matt. 16:13-17; 1 John 2:18-23).

We saw last week that one of the issues in the great controversy centers on Christ's status in heaven. Satan refused to acknowledge that Christ is equal to the Father. Since his expulsion to our world, he battles this issue with even greater vigor. Satan has tried to usurp the role that belongs only to Christ. This action has been manifested in various ways, through Satan himself or his proxies (see Isa. 14:13, 14; Ezek. 28:2, 6; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4).

First John 2:18-23 speaks of the antichrist in both singular and plural terms. The singular reference is to Satan, the original antichrist, who, from the beginning of the battle, has opposed Christ.

Satan also works against Christ and His role in redemptive history through certain human agencies and systems. Though antichrist has been around since John's time, it has been manifested particularly in a church that assumes for itself the role and prerogatives that belong only to God or Christ Himself.

Antichrist doesn't mean just "against Christ" but, in fact, "in place of Christ." How does that definition better help us identify the antichrist?

Christ Himself asked His disciples who they thought He was. How did Peter respond? Matt. 16:13-17.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, the second Person of the Godhead—coexistent, coeternal, and coequal with God the Father. Jesus was not a created being but rather existed from eternity with the Father. As such, He's in a whole separate category from any created being. As part of the Godhead, He's the Creator; everything and everyone else, Lucifer included, are created. The difference, then, between Christ and Satan is, in a sense, the difference between the finite and the infinite. Like Peter, Satan is fully aware of Christ's position; but unlike Peter, he constantly attempts to usurp that position, one way or another.

In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." How do these words fit in today's lesson? How do you understand His meaning here? More importantly, if you were to take an honest, serious look at your own life, at your own priorities, at how you spend your time, which of these two masters could you honestly say you are serving?

THE SHEPHERD VERSUS THE WOLF (John 10:11-15).

Answer the following questions based on the scripture above:

Who is the Good Shepherd? _____

Who is the hireling? _____

Who is the wolf? _____

What is the relationship between the wolf and the hireling? _____

Explain the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep.

Oftentimes, a hired hand is interested only in the money he will make, but a good shepherd does not work for compensation alone. The shepherd owns the sheep and loves them. Likewise, Jesus is not just going through the motions for His benefit. He loves us to the point of actually having died for our sins. It was His love for us that led Christ to take up the cross. He died because He willed to die and thus turned an earthly government's instrument of capital punishment into the heavenly government's instrument of victory over sin, death, and Satan.

Between the flock and the peril stands the Good Shepherd. The wolf's only objective is to devour the sheep. List some of the contrasts that exist between the work and attitudes of the Shepherd and the wolf. (For example, Christ died that we might live. Satan lives to lead us away from life.) And though we are sheep, helpless against the wolf without the protection of our Shepherd, what things can we do to make the Shepherd's job of protecting us easier? In other words, what do we do that makes it very difficult for the Shepherd to be able to render to us the protection He wants to give us? At the same time, what can we do to best place ourselves under the protection the Shepherd willingly offers us? In the end, if the wolf devours us, where must the fault ultimately lie, and why?

FURTHER STUDY: This week, we studied five sets of contrasting word pictures that portray the role and function of the chief contenders in the great controversy. Following are three other such portraits: Acts 3:15/John 8:44; 1 Tim. 2:5/Rev. 12:10; Isa. 9:6/John 14:30. As you read each one, consider what it tells us about Christ and Satan and the part they play in the war over good and evil.

“Christ is ‘the Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6), and it is His mission to restore to earth and heaven the peace that sin has broken. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Romans 5:1. Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace.

“There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 27, 28.

To learn more about this week’s topic, read *Prophets and Kings*, “Joshua and the Angel,” pp. 582-592.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Christ is the friend of sinners. So is Satan. What are the differences between these two friendships?
2. We may not be pastors, elders, or deacons. We may not be holding any official position in the church. Yet we have a responsibility to nurture other church members. If we fail in that responsibility, how are we like the hireling in the parable of the Good Shepherd? (see Thursday’s lesson). List ways we can fulfill our nurturing role.

SUMMARY: Christ and Satan, the chief contenders in the great controversy, both employ certain strategies and weapons. But Satan’s attempts to coerce, spread fear, and tell lies about God’s character are no match for us as we learn to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and His love for us. Dressed in the armor of Christ’s righteousness as we rally around the Cross, we glory in His victory, for it is ours, as well.



The Joy of Christ

J. H. Zachary

Dennis Patinde pastors a small group of Adventist Christians in Mali, a predominantly Muslim country.

Lamine is the son of the *imam*, the Muslim teacher. From childhood Lamine had memorized large portions of the Qu'ran. But as he matured, he became discouraged over the uncertainties of life. He wished for a deeper spiritual experience, but he did not know how to achieve it. Then he met Pastor Patinde, the first Christian pastor Lamine had ever known.

"Religion should be a joy," Lamine told Patinde. "So why is it such a burden? Why is there so much fear and hatred, so much killing?"

The youthful pastor and the *imam*'s son talked for some time. As the two discussed spiritual issues and prayed together, Lamine caught a new glimpse of God. Patinde gave Lamine a Bible, and Lamine began to read it. He was amazed that it contained some stories found in the Qu'ran.

When Lamine read in the Qu'ran that a true believer should read the prophets, the Gospels, and other writings of the Bible, he felt that he was following the counsel of Mohammed, Islam's prophet. As he continued studying the Bible, his burden was replaced with joy. He felt a peace he had never known.

Lamine had to be careful that no one saw him enter or leave the pastor's home. Each night he went home by a different route so that no one would know where he had been.

But in spite of his care, word spread that Lamine, the son of the *imam*, had become a Christian. Lamine's parents were angry and disowned him. Pastor Patinde visited them and talked about their son. "Something has happened to our son," Lamine's father said. "He is a different boy, happy and confident." Patinde explained that Lamine had discovered the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lamine's parents eventually accepted his decision and are now studying the Bible. Lamine is praying that they, too, will follow Jesus one day soon.



Lamine (left). J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

The War Comes to Earth



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6; 4:1-12; 6:1-9:17; 11:1-9.

MEMORY TEXT: " 'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel' " (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: When Satan was cast out of heaven, he eventually found his way to the earth; thus, the great controversy shifted its theater of operation. What strategies did he use to capture the human race? How does he use these strategies today? What did God do to counterattack?

DECEPTION AND DELIVERANCE. Genesis 1 and 2 provide a picture of what God meant for us to be and to have, but like a knife to a master's canvas, the events in Genesis 3 slash the idyllic scene to shreds. Now instead of peace, harmony, and selflessness, we witness anger, jealousy, pride, disobedience, shame, and guilt—words, thoughts, and actions that earlier had no existence. "God's creation of man as a person stands as the source of good in us; now we face the source of evil." —Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1987), p. 32.

From this point in time, the agencies of deception and deliverance have struggled over the heart of each person on earth. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel illustrate well the beginning of this struggle, its underlying issues, and motivating forces. As you study this week's lesson, consider how the agencies of deception and deliverance are at work in your own life and how you can choose deliverance.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 26.)

ADAM AND EVE (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6).

God's laws govern His entire creation. When He placed Adam and Eve in Eden, they were subject to His laws. Obedience is the Creator's first command and the creature's first privilege. Both are born of love.

What did God require of our first parents? Gen. 2:16, 17. What was the essence of this requirement?

“Given the intention of God that man should be in His own image, that tree was a necessity! There is no moral dimension to the existence of a robot; it can only respond to the program imposed by its maker. Robots have no capacity to value, no ability to choose between good and bad, or good and better. To be truly like God, man must have the freedom to make moral choices and the opportunity to choose, however great the risk such freedom may involve.”—Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*, p. 32.

Scottish atheist J. L. Mackie has argued that an omnipotent God should have created free beings who could have chosen to make only good decisions and that freedom didn't require the potential to do wrong. “If God has made men such,” he wrote, “that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he have not made men such that they always freely choose the good?” What's wrong with that argument? Would Adam and Eve have truly been free moral agents if they could have made only right decisions? Discuss this further with your class.

Adam and Eve had given the wrong answer to a spiritual and moral test. God had proven His unselfish love for them by creating them in His own image and then entrusting them with dominion over the rest of His creation. But they yielded to everyone's first and greatest temptation—the desire to be one's own god. They destroyed their relationship with Him by placing their will against His and in so doing joined forces with the chief of all rebels.

The test God presented to Adam and Eve was about loyalty to God and making the right choices. Obey the Sovereign Lord or the usurper. Abandon self or establish oneself as God. In what ways do we face these same choices every day, even in the “little things”?

THE FIRST LIE (Gen. 3:1-6).

What methods did Satan use to tempt Eve?

Gen. 3:4, 5 _____

Gen. 3:6 _____

Satan tempts us all in many ways, but his objective in doing so is always the same: to get us to distrust and then disobey God. His speech to Eve is basically a three-part lie: 1. You shall not die. 2. Your eyes shall be opened. 3. You shall be like God.

How did God respond to the fall of Adam and Eve? Gen. 3:15.

“Reference is made to the agelong struggle between Satan’s ‘seed’ or followers (John 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:10) and the woman’s seed. The Lord Jesus Christ is styled by pre-eminence ‘the seed’ (Rev. 12:1-5; cf. Gal 3:16, 19); it was He who came ‘to destroy the works of the devil’ (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). . . .

“[I]n this pronouncement is compressed the record of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, a battle that began in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), was continued on earth, where Christ again defeated him (Heb. 2:14), and will terminate finally with Satan’s destruction at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:10).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 233.

The enmity that God puts between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent also can be viewed as the way by which sinful humans can return to Christ. This way is none other than divine grace, the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We can read Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus regarding this work in John 3:5-8. Laboring with our conscience (Rom. 9:1), the Holy Spirit aspires to convict us of sin and lead us to the Cross. Thus, He enables us to hate sin and love righteousness (Amos 5:14, 15; Heb. 1:9).

Read how the Old Testament describes the work of divine grace on our hearts in Jeremiah 31:31, 33; Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 18:31; 36:26, 27. Through divine grace, we can (1) have our sins washed away, (2) receive a new heart, and (3) have His Holy Spirit live in us. Think of it as God’s three-part remedy to Satan’s three-part lie.

CAIN AND ABEL (Gen. 4:1-12; 1 John 3:10-12).

Satan used Cain in the great controversy to (1) introduce a false system of worship and (2) to cause resentment between human beings. Both involve the commandment of love—the first toward God (Exod. 20:3-11), the second toward our fellow humans (Exod. 20:12-17; see also Matt. 22:37-40).

A false system of worship. “Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering” (Gen. 4:3-5, NKJV).

What did Cain’s offering symbolize? Why was Abel’s offering pleasing to God? Heb. 11:4.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits. . . .

“The class of worshipers who follow the example of Cain includes by far the greater portion of the world; for nearly every false religion has been based on the same principle—that man can depend upon his own efforts for salvation. . . . Humanity has no power to regenerate itself. It does not tend upward, toward the divine, but downward, toward the satanic. Christ is our only hope.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 72, 73.

Resentment between human beings. “Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him” (Gen. 4:8, NKJV).

Cain loved neither God nor his brother. Where there is no love, sin thrives and Satan rejoices. Cain is an example of how a lack of love destroys life, but Christ is the supreme example of how love redeems life. “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, RSV).

Put yourself in the role of Cain, working hard to present your offering to God, who rejects it while He accepts your brother’s offering, which is nothing but a slain animal. What was Cain’s problem? What didn’t he understand? What lessons does that hold for us today who might be tempted to harbor sentiments similar to Cain’s?

NOAH AND THE FLOOD (Gen. 6:1–9:17).

Somehow, between Genesis 3 and 6, Satan was able to gain so much ground in the great controversy that “the Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. . . . But Noah found favor [grace, KJV] in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:6-8, NIV).

What does that mean, the idea that God’s heart was filled with pain? Does God have emotions? (See Exod. 32:11; 34:7; Deut. 4:31; 1 John 4:7.) How do we understand God’s “emotions,” if that’s even the right word? What limits do we have, as fallen beings, in trying to understand this concept?

God’s “emotions” brought the Flood. The Flood tells us that God cares very much about right and wrong, that His universe is moral, and that He will punish unrepentant sinners. However, because of His love for sinners, He gave the people 120 years to reconsider whose side they wanted to be on in the great controversy. And while they waited, they watched. The ark grew before their very eyes as a symbol of the gospel God wanted them to accept.

The Flood is God’s judgment on sin. Love, no less than justice, demanded that the earth be cleansed of evil. How does God’s judgment reflect His grace?

While God’s judgment destroys sin (2 Pet. 3:5-7), His grace and love pursue the sinner as far and as long as possible. God’s love is limitless, His justice certain. To symbolize that love, God made a covenant with Noah at the conclusion of His judgment (Gen. 9:8-17). In His mercy, God looked down upon the small handful of people who came out of the ark, and He pledged never again to destroy the entire earth by flood. As a sign of this covenant, He set a rainbow in the sky. Noah did not, could not, originate the covenant or the rainbow. Because of God’s promise, we have the assurance that His goodness never fails.

Imagine being one of those who lived during the time of Noah. Here’s this man, claiming that water would fall out of the sky—something that’s never happened before. (He might as well have said that fish could climb trees.) No wonder so many didn’t get on board. In what ways does Satan use this same ploy today, getting us to doubt that which we have yet to see, in order to try to keep people from “getting on the boat”?

THE TOWER OF BABEL (Gen. 11:1-9).

Why did Noah's descendants desire to build a tower that would reach to the heavens? Gen. 11:4.

What was the underlying motive of their desire? Compare this motive to the motive that misdirected Lucifer while he was still in heaven. Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:17.

The Tower of Babel stood as a symbol of distrust in God's Word. His covenant with Noah assured his descendants that a flood would never again destroy the entire earth (Gen. 9:11). But still they distrusted God and sought to save themselves by their own works.

The people "disbelieved God's covenant that He would not again bring a flood upon the earth. Many of them denied the existence of God and attributed the Flood to the operation of natural causes. . . . One object before them in the erection of the tower was to secure their own safety in case of another deluge. By carrying the structure to a much greater height than was reached by the waters of the Flood, they thought to place themselves beyond all possibility of danger. . . . The whole undertaking was designed to exalt still further the pride of its projectors and to turn the minds of future generations away from God and lead them into idolatry."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 119.

The tower also was a symbol of disobedience to God. His command at Creation and after the Flood was for people to spread throughout the earth. But the builders of Babel became their own god and sought strength in their faulty human reasoning. So, once again, God intervened to fulfill His purpose. And once again Satan stood defeated, if not speechless, while God confused the language of the builders.

"The tower of Babel was a great human achievement, a wonder of the world. But it was a monument to the people themselves rather than to God. We may build monuments to ourselves (expensive clothes, big house, fancy car, important job) to call attention to our achievements. These may not be wrong in themselves, but when we use them to give us identity and self-worth, they take God's place in our lives. We are free to develop in many areas, but we are not free to think we have replaced God. What 'towers' have you built in your life?"

—Life Application Study Bible, p. 25.

FURTHER STUDY: Read in 2 Peter 3 how Peter summarized and applied the message of the Flood. Give each verse a title or summary statement to help you develop a thorough idea of what he is saying. Then determine how Peter's application is true for us.

“‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.’ Christ was engaged in this warfare in Noah’s day. It was His voice that spoke to the inhabitants of the old world in messages of warning, reproof, and invitation. He gave the people a probation of one hundred and twenty years, in which they might have repented. But they chose the deceptions of Satan, and perished in the waters of the Flood.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, pp. 1088, 1089.

If you are interested in learning more about how the great controversy came to this earth and spread, read any or all of the following chapters from *Patriarchs and Prophets*: “The Temptation and Fall,” pp. 52-62; “The Plan of Redemption,” pp. 63-70; “Cain and Abel Tested,” pp. 71-79; “The Flood,” pp. 90-104; “After the Flood,” pp. 105-110; “The Tower of Babel,” pp. 117-124.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Some scholars have viewed the narratives of the Fall and the Flood as myth. Why do we affirm that they are historical incidents? Consider the implication of New Testament evidence as part of your answer.
2. Based on 1 Peter 3:4-7, how should the story of the Flood affect our lives?
3. Discuss the deceptive doctrines and beliefs that are an outgrowth of Satan’s threefold lie (Monday’s lesson). Another method Satan uses to tempt us is to mix truth with his lies. In what ways was this first lie “true”?

SUMMARY: With the fall of Adam and Eve, this world has become the center of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. They, along with Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel illustrate how good and evil struggle to win the hearts and minds of human beings. Satan’s weapons include lies about God, our desire for self-exaltation, false systems of worship, and resentment between humans. But Genesis 3:15 tells us that God’s weapon—divine grace shaping and molding the human heart through the work of the Holy Spirit—will prevail.



The Illiterate Evangelist

Ch. Victor Sam

"The mission needs 50 volunteer evangelists to help enter new villages in our area," the pastor announced one Sabbath. "There will be training for those who volunteer. Those who are interested see me after the service."

Sangayya (sung-GEE-yah), felt that God was calling him, and after the service he told the pastor, "I would like to be one of those volunteers."

"But Sangayya," the pastor said kindly. "You cannot read or write. How will you take notes on the lectures during the training program? How can you give Bible studies?"

"I will take my little daughter to help me," Sangayya answered. "She is in the fifth grade and can read and write well. She will take notes for me. I will memorize the Bible studies, and she can help me find the Bible texts."

Reluctantly the pastor added Sangayya's name to the list of volunteers. He was accepted, and he and his 10-year-old daughter went to the training program together. For six days the child sat next to her father during every session. Carefully she took notes on everything the teachers said. At the end of the training, Sangayya stood in commitment to study the Bible with everyone in his village.

Sangayya and his daughter went from house to house praying for the people and sharing words of hope and truth about Jesus Christ. At the end of one month he invited a pastor to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings. Sangayya invited the people with whom he had studied to attend the meetings. At the close of the meetings 100 precious new believers were baptized.

"I can't read nor write," Sangayya admits. "But that will not stop me from sharing the wonderful truths I have come to love. I am glad that God is willing to use even poor and illiterate me to build up His kingdom."

Sangayya and his daughter (left).
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Winning and Losing



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 39; Judges 13–16; 2 Samuel 11–12; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Heb. 11:23-29.

MEMORY TEXT: “ ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him’ ” (1 Kings 18:21, NKJV).

KEY QUESTION: The great controversy is fought, in part, through human agents. In what ways is the battle manifested in our lives?

THE BATTLE CRY OF THE GREAT CONTROVERSY. Satan will attempt to influence every person, especially those who claim to be God's servants, to deny their Creator and view His commandments as harsh and arbitrary. During such struggles, the cry of the battle is: Whom will you serve? This week we will study about Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, and Elijah to see how they prepared themselves to answer this battle cry.

“The whole universe is watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that they be loyal to the God of heaven? All through the ages, God has had moral heroes, and He has them now—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to acknowledge themselves His peculiar people. His special blessing accompanies the labors of men of action, men who will not be swerved from the straight line of duty, but who with divine energy will inquire, ‘Who is on the Lord's side?’ (Exodus 32:26).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 148. As you read this week's lesson, ask yourself how the lives of the people we are studying can help you remain true to duty in the battles that you, personally, are facing.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 2.)

JOSEPH (Genesis 39).

“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

How did Joseph know that having an affair with his master’s wife would have been a “sin against God” when the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai was still many centuries away?

Make a list of excuses Joseph could have used to rationalize away his sin, had he chosen to do so:

A salesman confessed to his pastor one day that he had become entangled in an illicit love affair. “I couldn’t help it,” he rationalized. “You can’t possibly understand the outside pressures that were affecting me.”

The pastor responded: “You couldn’t help it? Outside pressures? Whatever happened to your inside braces?”

Joseph had his outside pressures too! The daily persistence of an attractive woman. The promise of romance. Sexual passion. The likelihood of not getting caught. Society’s tolerance of sexual immorality. The possible advantages of climbing high on the professional ladder. And above all, Satan’s ceaseless whispers that such an act was nothing. But Joseph’s inside braces kept him from betraying God. The story of Joseph, however, up to that point, revealed something that showed why he acted as he did. What was it? See Genesis 39:1, 2.

Suppose Joseph had succumbed to Satan’s wiles and sinned against his master and his God. Would this have been the unpardonable sin? No. Couldn’t he have been forgiven and the slate wiped clean? Yes. But there’s a deeper issue with sin than just forgiveness. Would God have been able to use Joseph to the extent that He did if Joseph had fallen at that time? In other words, how does sin, even if forgiven, sometimes limit what we could otherwise accomplish for the Lord?

MOSES (Heb. 11:23-29).

Moses' role in the great controversy was to forge a nation out of battered tribes who had nearly lost their identity to slavery—a nation through whom God would spread the message of salvation to the world and from whom would come the Messiah.

Satan, however, hoped to win a decisive victory in the war between good and evil, and his tool in this case was Pharaoh's determination to keep Israel under his domination (Exodus 1; 5). When that didn't work, he thought he could gain victory through Israel's complaining spirit and subsequent 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Num. 10:11-14:45).

How did Moses prepare for his role and succeed in fulfilling it? Heb. 11:23-29.

Moses made choices that prepared him for the battles ahead. Putting things into perspective early in his life, he refused Egypt's throne. He chose affliction with God's people rather than the pleasures of sin. He esteemed "disgrace for the sake of Christ" (vs. 26, NIV) greater than the riches of Egypt. He confronted Pharaoh, kept the Passover, then led Israel to freedom (Exodus 5-12). He mediated the law and established the sanctuary service (Exodus 19-30). He snuffed out rebellion, pleaded to God on Israel's behalf, and finally brought them to the borders of the Promised Land (Exodus 32; Num. 22:1-36:13). But he could not enter Canaan because of one specific sin (Num. 20:7-11, 24). However, he was resurrected and taken to the presence of God (Matt. 17:1-13; Jude 9).

"Never, till exemplified in the sacrifice of Christ, were the justice and the love of God more strikingly displayed than in His dealings with Moses. God shut Moses out of Canaan, to teach a lesson which should never be forgotten—that He requires exact obedience. . . . He could not grant the prayer of Moses that he might share the inheritance of Israel, but He did not forget or forsake His servant. The God of heaven understood the suffering that Moses had endured; He had noted every act of faithful service through those long years of conflict and trial. On the top of Pisgah, God called Moses to an inheritance infinitely more glorious than the earthly Canaan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 479.

Through Moses' faith and obedience, God's justice and love stood vindicated. How can you, as a single individual, make a difference in the conflict between good and evil? Or can't you?

SAMSON (Judges 13–16).

Samson was a miracle child. His birth was the direct result of a divine promise for a divine purpose. The angel of the Lord, who delivered the promise to his parents, gave detailed instructions regarding what his mother should not eat and drink and how she should raise him.

Study these instructions in Judges 13:4, 5, 13, 14. Also take note of Manoah's prayer in verse 8. What do these instructions and the prayer suggest about the role of the home in the great controversy?

Samson's role in the great controversy was to deliver Israel from the Philistines and to be a judge over God's people. Because he started out in life with every advantage possible, he should have been incredibly successful in fulfilling this role. But what character traits prevented him from realizing his goal in a timely manner? Judges 14:1-3; 13:5; 15:7, 8; 16:1, 4, 17.

No question, Satan wanted to destroy Samson, or at least his effectiveness for what God wanted to use him for. The devil knows our weak points and will press hard upon them. How crucial that we surrender ourselves every day to the Lord, especially when temptation comes. God promises that we can have victory: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

List other texts in the Bible that promise us divine aid to overcome the temptations that will, inevitably, come our way.

How ironic that the strongest man on earth became the weakest because of his selfish passion. With his eyes, he had gazed upon lovely women and had fallen to the temptation of these pleasurable sights. Ultimately his "eyes" became the reason for his capture and a source of great pain and grief. He whose goal it was to defeat the Philistines was defeated by them, even as he succeeded in fulfilling that goal.

Was Samson a winner or a loser in the great controversy? Give reasons for the answer you choose.

DAVID IN CRISIS (2 Samuel 11; 12).

David had his ups and downs, his triumphs and tragedies. But his greatest crisis was the sin he committed against Bathsheba, Uriah, and the Lord. Adultery combined with murder offered the perfect opportunity for Satan to hail that even a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) cannot keep the law. Satan's jubilation was a challenge to God's stand in the great controversy. But God declares: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20, 21, NIV).

God and Satan seemed locked in a battle over who would win David's heart. What brought about Satan's defeat? Ps. 51:1, 4, 10.

In this Psalm, David penetrated to the heart of the issue. His relationship with God was more than some legal contract. It was grounded in an understanding that God cared for him personally, that God cared for what sin did, not just to those he hurt but to David himself.

"With David's heart attitude corrected, forgiveness could flow and the Spirit of God could work again to cleanse David. When he was cleansed, God would work through David to do good for Zion and for all his people."—Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary*, p. 236.

In Psalm 32:1, 2 (RSV), David used four words to define sin: (1) *transgression*—a deliberate, premeditated, willful violation of a divine norm; (2) *sin*—an act that misses the mark and deviates from what God has marked out; (3) *iniquity*—an act of crookedness and perverse behavior; and (4) *deceit*—an attempt to cover up and evade obligation. David's actions described in 2 Samuel 11 and 12 cover all four of these definitions. Furthermore, he is aware of what his actions have done to him (Ps. 51:2-4). The effects of sin are so diabolical that there is nothing the sinner can do to escape from its clutches (Rom. 7:24).

When we desire a pure heart and steadfast spirit (Ps. 51:10) we will be enabled to receive God's grace and sing the song of victory: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Psalm 51:10 reads literally in the Hebrew: "A clean heart create for me, God." How does allowing God to create "for" us a clean heart enable us to be better able to withstand the foe's assaults against us?

ELIJAH (1 Kings 18:20-40).

As this week's memory text implies, the great controversy is a battle for allegiance, a battle for our minds. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal and King Ahab was, perhaps, one of the most graphic portrayals of this spiritual conflict.

Elijah's challenge was especially to those people who wavered between God and Baal; to those who seek in the church a comfortable pew and a compromising message; to those who find in Christianity not the power of the gospel to convict and save but a tool that brings social status and approval. To such comes the prophet's challenge: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21, RSV).

According to 1 Kings 18:28, the prophets of Baal "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." What does this example teach about the notion that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere in believing it"? Why is that sentiment something that Satan, in the great controversy, would be glad to have people believe?

The lone prophet was pitted against 450 priests of Baal. But one person committed to God's truth can defy any evil army. Elijah knew that. He also knew that he was doing God's bidding. There lies the strength of the lonely soldier of the Cross in the conflict between good and evil. The powerful representation of God's power was done in a way that only God Himself, not any man, could have done.

Look again at this verse: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21, RSV). Notice the interesting use of the verb "limping." Why is that such an appropriate word to use in this situation? Why do people "limp" between these two positions? What does that tell us about the nature of the great controversy?

FURTHER STUDY: All of the people we studied this week knew what it was like to both win and lose in the great controversy. Based on Wednesday's lesson, it is easy to see how Moses and David both lost and won. In what ways did Joseph, Samson, and Elijah both lose and win? Base your answers on the following texts: Genesis 37:1-19 (Joseph); Hebrews 11:32, 34 (Samson); 1 Kings 19:1-18 (Elijah). How do their mistakes and successes help us to answer Sabbath's key question?

"Of everyone He [God] expects loyalty, and to everyone He grants power according to the need. In his own strength man is strengthless; but in the might of God he may be strong to overcome evil and to help others to overcome. Satan can never gain advantage of him who makes God his defense. 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Isaiah 45:24."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 175.

If you would like to read more about the people we studied this week, see any of the following: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "The Return to Canaan," pp. 204-212; "Joseph in Egypt," pp. 213-223; "Joseph and His Brothers," pp. 224-240; "Moses," pp. 241-256; "The Death of Moses," pp. 469-480; "Samson," pp. 560-568; *Prophets and Kings*, "Elijah the Tishbite," pp. 119-128; "The Voice of Stern Rebuke," pp. 129-142; "Carmel," pp. 143-154; "From Jezreel to Horeb," pp. 155-166; " 'What Doest Thou Here?' " pp. 167-176; " 'In the Spirit and Power of Elias,' " pp. 177-189.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is Elijah's conflict with Ahab and Jezebel similar to the conflict God's people will have in the last days, particularly regarding Sabbath keeping? Why is Satan so interested in attacking the Sabbath?
2. English poet John Donne once wrote that no man is an island. How did the actions of each of the people looked at this week impact others, both for good or bad? Is sin something that we do in isolation or are others, often innocent, hurt by what we do or don't do?

SUMMARY: The great controversy is partly fought through human agencies. "Whom will you serve?" is the battle cry we must answer, and how we answer determines if we win or lose. The people we studied this week teach us that we will occasionally both win and lose. We will lose when we focus on ourselves, but when we focus on Christ and His salvation, we will win.



Cambodian Refugee Finds Hope in Jesus

J. H. Zachary

During Pol Pot's regime, Cambodians were taken from cities and forced to labor under impossible conditions. Starvation and death were common. Hardly a family escaped without losing at least one member. Iam Wet lost his parents, sister, brother, and more than 30 members of his extended family. Soon he realized that his only hope for survival lay in escaping his homeland. He joined thousands who risked being shot as they made their way toward the safety of the Thai border.

Iam made it across the border and spent the next 17 years living in a refugee camp in Thailand. He married and fathered four children while in the camp.

The camps were full of people desperate to find lost relatives. As families fled Cambodia they often became separated in an attempt to avoid soldiers. For eight years Wet worked with the Red Cross trying to locate lost family members. Every day he met death and sorrow face to face, and eventually he lost hope in the future.

Raised a Buddhist, Iam accepted a friend's invitation to visit a Christian church. There for the first time in his life he heard the story of Jesus, who volunteered to die for the sins of the world. From that one visit Iam began to believe that there is a God, a God who cares for humanity.

As soon as it was safe to return to Phnom Penh, Iam enrolled his children in a public school. But he was concerned about the level of moral education they were receiving. A neighbor told him that the Adventist church had just opened a new school. She described the spiritual influence that the school offered. Iam transferred his children to this new "God-school."

Iam discovered that the Adventist pastor had been his friend in the refugee camp. Iam and his wife went to visit their old friend, Hang Dara. Soon the couple began studying the Bible with their pastor friend, and in 1999 they were baptized.

Today Iam rejoices in a new life that his family has found in Jesus. "Every day we thank God for the happiness and hope that we now have. And we look forward to the day that He will come again.

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Faith Amid Turmoil



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 17:1-11; 22:1-18; Ruth 1:16, 17; 4:13-22; Esther 4:13-17; Job 19:25-27; Dan. 6:22.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at last on the earth’” (Job 19:25, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: One of the issues in the great controversy is whether God's people can be faithful to Him. What strategies does Satan use to make us think that faithfulness is an impossibility? What defenses do we have against his subterfuge?

HOW ORDINARY PEOPLE WIN EXTRAORDINARY BATTLES. The Bible is filled with stories of men and women afflicted by Satan. Job, Abraham, Ruth, Daniel, and Esther stand among those who won decisive victories in the great controversy. Facing pain, grief, confusion, temptation, and even the possibility of death, they stepped out in faith, willing to risk all. They were able to do so not because of any power of their own but because of what they permitted God in His grace to do in their lives, both before and during the crises they faced.

As you study the lives of these ordinary people who contributed to the history of salvation in extraordinary ways, remember that “The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 553.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 9.)

JOB: VICTORY IN TRIAL (Job 19:25-27).

Job's life is a clear illustration of how Satan targets God's people in the great controversy. Why did Satan want to test Job, and why did God allow him to do so? Job 1:6-2:10.

After his second test, "Job's grief placed him at the crossroads of his faith, shattering many misconceptions about God (such as: he makes you rich, always keeps you from trouble and pain, or protects your loved ones). Job was driven back to the basics of his faith in God. He had only two choices: (1) he could curse God and give up, or (2) he could trust God and draw strength from him to continue."—*Life Application Bible*, p. 845.

Affliction can destroy our faith if that faith is not grounded in an experiential relationship with Christ. At the same time, affliction can strengthen true faith, which—based on our past experiences with God—knows that the only way to survive is to put our hand in His.

State in your own words how the following verses describe Job's faith.

Job 13:15 _____

Job 19:25-27 _____

Job 23:10 _____

In the middle of Job's story, the confidence he has in God (Job 19:25-27) is revealed. His acclamation in these verses is even more astounding when we realize that he was not aware of why he was being tested and that he thought God had caused all that had happened to him. Even though he believed this way, he had enough faith in God to trust that after it was all over He would be on his side. Thus Job is one of the first people in the Bible to express belief in the resurrection of the body.

Satan made accusations against God regarding the faithfulness of Job. Why was it so important, not just for Job but for God, that Job remain faithful even amid adversity? What is it about the great controversy theme that makes our faithfulness to God amid adversity an important part of the conflict? In other words, why does it matter to God that we stay faithful to Him?

ABRAHAM: COVENANT FAITH (Gen. 17:1-11; Gen. 22:1-18).

The covenant theme runs throughout Scripture. We see it with Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and in the book of Hebrews. Through the covenant, God becomes our heavenly Parent, and we become His children. It begins with Him and establishes a community of people who exercise love, faith, and obedience in Him.

Read the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-11. Then answer the following questions.

What promises did God make?

How many times does the covenant refer to God's activities? Whom did the covenant include?

What did God require of Abraham and the covenant people?

What changes occurred because of the covenant?

It takes two sides to make a covenant. What was Abraham's part of the bargain?

Were there other things he should do that weren't explicitly mentioned in the above texts (such as a willingness to sacrifice his son)?

The Israelites were to give God not only their bodies but their hearts, as well. Circumcision was evidence of their faith in His covenant and, as such, it symbolized separation from sin and a heart purified by one who had surrendered the will to God. Only after doing so could they have a covenant faith amid turmoil and be winners in the great controversy. (See also Rom. 2:29; 4:11, 12.)

Abraham's faith came under the most severe test when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac. Most likely, Satan sowed seeds of doubt in his mind. How could he do this to his own son? And, if he sacrificed Isaac, how could the covenant be fulfilled through him? Furthermore, the heathen nations around him practiced human sacrifices. Hadn't God called him away from such an environment and its practices? (See Lev. 20:1-5.)

After her father read the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah and explained that Abraham was doing what God asked, an eight-year-old girl responded, "Daddy, if God asked you to do that to me, would you?" How would you answer?

RUTH—A GENTILE IN THE MESSIANIC LINE (Ruth 1:16, 17; 4:13-22).

Ruth is King David's great-grandmother. A Moabite by birth, she is listed in David's genealogy and through him has a place in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5, 6).

Matthew wrote his Gospel mainly for Jewish Christians. What reason did he have for listing the name of a Gentile in Christ's genealogy?

God does not limit the plan of salvation to any particular race (Rev. 14:6). He is Lord of all, the Sovereign of the universe. Only He can destroy the barriers that exist between so many of us; barriers of race, nationality, ethnic origin, even gender, barriers erected by Satan to prevent the gospel from going forward (Eph. 2:11-18; Gal. 3:27-29).

Being a Moabite did not stop Ruth from accepting the true God. Most likely, she learned about Him from Naomi and her family. The more people see God's transforming power in our lives, the less of an advantage Satan will have in the great controversy.

Below is a list of character traits we find in Ruth that are essential for fighting the good fight of faith. Match each of the following texts to its corresponding trait (you will want to use some texts more than once): (a) Ruth 1:15, 16; (b) 1:17, 18; (c) 2:8, 9; (d) 2:1-17; (e) 2:4; (f) 3:1-5; (g) 3:14; (h) 3:15; (i) 3:11-13; (j) 4:1-10.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| _____ worship of the true God | _____ love |
| _____ respect for a wiser, older family member | _____ faith |
| _____ respect for womanhood | _____ generosity |
| _____ respect for community | _____ compassion |
| _____ responsibility | _____ courtesy |

Read Psalm 126:5. Ruth's life illustrates the truthfulness of this song. We may shed tears over Satan's unjust dealings, but if our faith in God remains strong, our tears, too, shall turn to joy. What are some other Bible promises that you can cling to in order to draw comfort that whatever our lot in the great controversy now, we will rejoice as victors in the end?

DANIEL—GOD MORE THAN LIFE (Daniel 6).

Considering some of the issues so far discussed in the lesson, why would Satan want Daniel to pray to another god? Or did Satan, working through the “governors and satraps,” know that Daniel would not pray to another god and this was all simply a plan to kill him? Why would it be to Satan’s advantage to kill him?

One of the most fascinating verses in this chapter, particularly in the context of the great controversy, is verse 5, in which is said, basically, *If we want to do harm to this man, we have to do something that pits our laws against the law of his God, because it is clear from watching him that he will not violate the law of his God.* In other words, they knew that here was something that was not going to change, and that was Daniel’s obedience to God. Therefore, they needed to weave a plot around their knowledge that this is one thing that will not change.

Though King Darius obviously considered himself a “friend” of Daniel, he unwittingly found himself the key player in Satan’s plot against the aged Hebrew. What was Darius’s sin that allowed Satan to use him like that, and what lesson can we learn from this about how our sins can be exploited by the enemy?

How easy it would have been for Daniel to rationalize actions that could have spared him this test. After all, he could have closed the window (Dan. 6:10) or done something to have (at least for 30 days) protected himself against what was clearly a law aimed at him. Yet, for whatever reasons, Daniel decided to do just as “was his custom since early days” (vs. 10, NKJV).

Look at both sides of the issue here. Could Daniel have been justified in taking measures—without compromising his faithfulness to God—that would have protected himself? Did he have to do things exactly the way he had always done? Or would any change, in any way, have been a compromise, if he did it out of fear? Should prudence have dictated that he take simple precautions to spare himself legal problems? Does Daniel’s example mean that believers, in all cases, should not take steps that could alleviate potential problems with the authorities?

ESTHER: "IF I PERISH, I PERISH" (Esther 4:13-17).

The word *God* does not appear in the book of Esther, yet from start to finish, it shows how the Lord can arrange events to help those who are faithful to Him. Haman, no doubt inspired by Satan, planned to kill the Jews. But Mordecai and Esther use to their advantage the situations in which they find themselves to bring about the deliverance of their people.

Two expressions in the book are of special interest as we cooperate with God in the fight against Satan: (1) "Who knows but that you [Esther] have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (4:14, NIV), and (2) "If I [Esther] perish, I perish" (4:14-16). The first indicates that on some occasions God might give some of us a special role to play in the great controversy within a specific time frame. The second stresses that faith in God is no faith at all unless it is willing to risk all for Him.

Below are the names of the principal characters in the book of Esther. Compare and contrast each one's personality. What character traits motivated each of them, and how do these traits aid or hinder us in the great controversy?

Principal Character	Character Traits
Ahasuerus (Xerxes; 1:4-8, 10-12)	_____
Mordecai (2:5-7, 21-23; 3:1, 2; 4)	_____
Haman (3:1-9; 5; 7:6-8)	_____
Esther (4:15, 16; 5:1-8; 7:1-6)	_____

Character, it has been said, is destiny. We see this, clearly, in the story of Esther. And though, as Christians, we believe that our ultimate destiny rests only upon the perfect character of Jesus—the perfect righteousness that He wrought out for us in His life and credits to all who accept Him by faith—the Bible time and again shows that personal character traits play a big role in our more immediate destinies in a way that can't be separated from our ultimate one. No wonder the Bible stresses the need for personal holiness and character development in the life of believers, even now.

Write down all the ways Esther could have rationalized a decision not to go to the king. Some of them sound pretty convincing, do they not? What's been your rationale for some of the wrong decisions you have made lately?

FURTHER STUDY: In this week's lesson, we saw how the faith of Job, Abraham, Ruth, Daniel, and Esther survived the turmoil the great controversy can generate in a person's life. Prayer plays a significant role in faith maturity. Read Daniel's great intercessory prayer in Daniel 9:4-19. What does this prayer say about the great controversy and how we should face the issues that sometimes confront us with all the grace and subtlety of a steam roller?

Also read the answer to Daniel's prayer in verses 20-27.

"Through His chosen agencies God will graciously make known His purposes. Then the grand work of redemption will go forward. Men will learn of the reconciliation for iniquity and of the everlasting righteousness which the Messiah has brought in through His sacrifice. The cross of Calvary is the great center. This truth acted upon will make Christ's sacrifice effectual. This is that which Gabriel revealed to Daniel in answer to fervent prayer. . . . By the humiliation of the cross He was to bring everlasting deliverance to all who would walk after Him, giving positive evidence that they are separated from the world."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, pp. 1172, 1173.

Read also *Prophets and Kings*, "In the Court of Babylon," pp. 479-490; "In the Lions' Den," pp. 539-548; "In the Days of Queen Esther," pp. 598-606; from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "The Test of Faith," pp. 145-155.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Haman exhibited a spirit of hatred against a minority whose lifestyle and faith were different. How does such hatred work toward Satan's advantage in the great controversy? How do we exhibit hatred like this today, and how is it overcome?**
2. **Go back and look at the specific situations of each of the people studied this week. In what ways could each have rationalized acting differently (in other words, less faithfully) than he or she did? What lessons can we learn about the potential danger of rationalization when we face situations in which our faith demands that we take a firm stand?**

SUMMARY: Satan could use neither temptation, pain, grief, confusion, nor the threat of death to convince the people we studied about this week that it was impossible to follow God. Through prayer, by cooperating with Him, and by accepting His strength and grace they learned that "those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31, NKJV).



Alice's Stubborn Heart, Part 1

Jeff Bishop

Alice Sukua of Papua New Guinea awoke thinking about the dream she had. She had seen a wide road filled with people. Nearby was a narrow road on which only a few people traveled. *What could it mean*, she wondered.

A few months later Alice had another dream. In it she approached a village, and a man invited her to enter. As they walked through the village, she smelled burning meat. As she left the village, the man told her, "Think about what you have seen here."

The next morning Alice told her family about the dream, hoping they could help her understand its meaning. She knew that the meats she had smelled were unclean, and that Adventists do not eat them. But she was not an Adventist. In fact, she often fought against the Adventists in her village.

A few months later Alice and her family moved to the district capital, where she would teach school. She met Adventist missionaries Jeff and Bobbi Bishop. The two families became friends. One day Jeff Bishop saw Alice sitting alone in her classroom, and he stopped to talk.

"I was listening to the radio the other day," Alice said. "The announcer offered a book that sounded interesting. I would like to read it, but I can't remember the name of it." Jeff was stymied as well, but he offered to try to help her get the book. He began guessing book titles.

"Could it have been *The Great Controversy*?" he asked, stabbing at any title that came to mind.

"That's it!" Alice said excitedly. Jeff agreed to try to get her a copy. He managed to find a working telephone and relay the request for the book to the bush pilot who flies across Papua New Guinea and was planning to come to the nearby airstrip the following week. "And bring me *The Desire of Ages*, too," he requested.

The pilot arrived on Sunday as planned, and Jeff picked up his supplies, including the books for Alice. She began reading them. Jeff could see that God was moving on her heart, but Alice continued to resist the Adventist message. Then the Bishops were assigned to their permanent village two hours upriver by canoe. The families were not able to keep in touch with each other except when Jeff returned to the district capital for supplies. *What will become of Alice and her fledgling faith?* the missionaries wondered.

(continued next week)

Jeff Bishop and his family serve with Adventist Frontier Missions in Kotale, Papua New Guinea.

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Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:16-28; John 6:1-15.

MEMORY TEXT: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (Galatians 4:4, 5, NRSV).

KEY QUESTIONS: In what ways did Satan tempt Christ? How did Christ resist? How can we apply Christ's responses to our lives?

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. In Lesson 1, we discussed how, in heaven, Lucifer desired to be first (Isa. 14:13, 14). To gain this position, he systematically attempted to discredit God's law and character.

After Lucifer was cast out of heaven, he successfully spread his lies about God throughout the earth. So how was God to prove that Lucifer was wrong? Because He is a God of love, He could not use force. One solution was to somehow contrast His character with Lucifer's. "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 [Christ] must rise, 'with healing in His wings.' Mal. 2:2."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

Satan unleashed his most relentless attacks against our Savior. If he was to win the great controversy, he knew he needed to occupy the ground upon which the Cross would stand. But Christ's victory against Satan is ours, and how He won remains a model for us.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 16.)

“IN THE FULNESS OF THE TIME.”

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

What does the phrase “the fulness of the time” mean in the context of Christ’s first coming? Did Jesus have to come when He did? Of course, we say that the prophecies (such as Daniel 9:24-27) pointed to that time, which is true. But the prophecies did so only because God planned for Him to come then. Why at that specific time, as opposed to some other one?

Not only did the Messiah come at the time indicated in Daniel’s prophecy, He came at the most favorable time in all history. The world was at peace, under one government. Travel by land and sea was relatively safe and expeditious. There was a universal language, Greek. The Scriptures had been available in Greek—the LXX—for about two hundred years. Men were dissatisfied with their religious beliefs and were longing for the truth about life and human destiny. The Jews were dispersed everywhere, and in spite of themselves, bore witness to the true God. From all parts of the world they came to attend the feasts at Jerusalem, and could carry with them, as they returned, news of the Messiah’s coming. . . . Providence could have appointed no place and time more auspicious for launching the gospel message to the world than Palestine at this period of history.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 965.

Satan, too, was aware of the significance of time. Under his leadership, “sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. . . . It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 37.

In what ways do the conditions of the world today match those at the time of Christ’s first advent? Suppose Christ’s first advent had been in our day and age. Try to picture the scenario, perhaps, of Baby Jesus being born outside Berlin or Manhattan, Seoul, or even Bethlehem. Would His reception have been any better? Would a modern-day Herod have found it easier to dispose of Him? Hypothetical questions, for sure, but they lead to one important point worth remembering: Whatever the human foibles involved, God’s ultimate plan will be consummated.

“‘IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD’” (Matt. 4:1-7, NIV).

We often talk about the great controversy between Christ and Satan as the background motif for what happens in our world. Of course, we never see the actual battle between them itself; we see it, instead, in various secondary manifestations, such as what happens even in our own hearts.

In the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, however, we see the great controversy between Christ and Satan literally, in the purest form—Christ against Satan, Satan against Christ, no proxies involved. Here, some of the fundamental issues in the great controversy are played out in about as clear a manner as possible. No symbols, no hidden codes to interpret, no guess as to who is on which side. What we are privileged to see is the essence of the great controversy, Christ against Satan, period.

Notice what Satan says to Christ in Matthew 4:3: “‘If you are the son of God’” (NIV). What is Satan trying to do here that reflects what he tried to do in heaven? What issue is at stake in these words, and how does it fit in with the whole great controversy theme?

Another important point regarding the great controversy as it is manifested here is the subtlety of Satan. Ellen White says that he appeared as an angel of light; his purpose was, of course, to try and trick Jesus, just as he tried, and succeeded, to trick Eve in Eden. In other words, Satan did not attempt to use violence or force against Christ. He didn't threaten Him with violence, jail, or anything that could have given him or his purposes away. Instead, he worked subtly, smoothly, even quoting Scripture in response to Christ's quoting Scripture, though Satan purposely twisted the Word. He quoted a divine promise from Psalm 91:11, 12 and challenged Christ to rely on that promise (Matt. 4:5-7). Notice, however, that he omitted the words “to guard you in all your ways” (NIV). “In order to set forth the true meaning of the words quoted from Ps. 91 and to prove that the devil had misapplied them, Jesus quoted another passage (Deut. 6:16), whose context sets forth the circumstances under which one may claim the blessing of God (see vs. 17-25).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 313.

In what similar ways, in your own life, are you facing the same type of struggle with Satan that Christ did in the wilderness? Even if the exact manifestations are different, can you discern similar principles behind what you are experiencing? What are they, and what is your only hope not to be snared by them?

WORSHIP ME (Matt. 4:8-10).

List the characteristics of the third temptation. Matt. 4:8-10.

As stated in lesson 2, worship is the sole prerogative of God. It is the one factor that forever separates the creature from the Creator, and as the great controversy draws to a close, the issue of worship will be brought to the surface in a very dramatic, universal manner.

Here Satan takes the Creator of the universe to a mountaintop and shows Him all the kingdoms of the earth. He no longer baits Jesus with the phrase “‘If You are the Son of God’ ” but offers Him instead a crown without a cross. In essence he is urging, “Why go through the struggle? Why die a criminal’s death on an instrument of capital punishment? What assurance do You really have that doing so will benefit anyone? Doesn’t the fact that God the Father sent You here to do this prove what I’ve been saying all along—that He is unfair and selfish?” So Satan presses in on the tired, starving, and lonesome Jesus for the final thrust with the promise of something for nothing.

Of course, Jesus didn’t worship Satan; to have done so would have, in effect, done what Satan, even in heaven, wanted all along. What was Satan looking for in this temptation, and why didn’t Christ give it to him?

Notice, too, Christ’s manner here as opposed to the other temptations. Christ’s final dismissal of Satan is one of contempt. Basically, He is saying, “I have come to do My Father’s bidding. And I *will* do so.” Absolute resolve to obey God is the ultimate answer to Satan’s lies and tricks. He must know that our obedience to God is not for sale, not even for all the kingdoms of the world.

Most of us aren’t offered all the kingdoms of the world. We’re offered, instead, only a slice (30 pieces of silver, perhaps), often a paltry one at that. Yet so many people grab that slice, even with gusto, though it means (at least symbolically) bowing down and worshipping Satan to get it. What can we—those who have publicly proclaimed our refusal to accept Satan’s offer—do to show those who have made the wrong choice just how wrong that choice has been? What hope can we offer them that it is not too late to turn around and make a decision to serve Christ?

NAZARETH: REJECTION AT HOME (Luke 4:16-28).

At the time of Christ, what reputation did Nazareth have? John 1:45, 46.

A despised and wicked city, Nazareth was the unseen battleground of Satan against the Son of God before He began His public ministry at the age of 30. But what Satan could not accomplish when Jesus lived in Nazareth, he would attempt to do when He visited His hometown for the first time nearly two years after leaving. Notice how different Satan's approach was here, as opposed to what he tried to do to Christ in the wilderness.

Think how painful it must have been for Jesus, the Son of man, to have been rejected by those in His own hometown (Luke 4:16-30). For those who have faced something similar, perhaps rejection by family or friends because of their faith, in what ways can comfort be drawn from Christ's experience here? After all, if Jesus Himself faced it, why should any of His followers expect less?

As long as Jesus was honoring God's law (vs. 16), declaring His allegiance to God's Word by reading from it (vss. 16, 17) and affirming the work and anointing of the Messiah (vss. 18, 19) and proclaiming the fulfillment of the prophecy He had just read (vs. 21), the religious leaders were delighted (vs. 22). As soon, however, as He asserted that God's kingdom would not be limited to just this people (vs. 27), the religious leaders became enraged, especially when He implied that not all of those who professed to have the truth would be saved by it.

"Satan was determined that blind eyes should not that day be opened, nor souls bound in slavery be set at liberty. With intense energy he worked to fasten them in unbelief." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 238.

Considering the purpose of the Jewish nation, which was to proclaim the gospel to the world, why should the leaders have gotten so upset at what Jesus said about the gospel going to others, as well? What does their reaction tell us about how even those who have the "truth" can so twist it until their own concept of the truth makes them, in fact, enemies of the truth? What other examples of this principle have we seen in either biblical or secular history? What lessons do these incidents hold for us as Seventh-day Adventists?

BY FORCE A KING.

“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone” (John 6:14, 15).

It's not surprising that the Jewish people wanted to make Jesus a king in the hope that He would overthrow the Romans. The general climate of the times supported an arrogant, violent nationalism. The historian Josephus tells of two self-proclaimed prophets who sought to overthrow Roman tyranny (*Antiquities*, 20. 5. 1; 8. 6). Theudas swayed thousands of Jews to follow him to the Jordan River, where he vowed to divide the waters. The Romans crushed him. The other was an Egyptian who led a crowd to the Mount of Olives. There he claimed that at his word the walls of Jerusalem would collapse, and he would establish a kingdom. Romans quelled this uprising too.

Against this background, and within the context of the miracle of feeding the five thousand (John 6:5-13), it is no wonder the crowd exclaimed, “‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world’ ” (vs. 14, NIV). What did they plan to do next? John 6:15.

The idea of Christ as an earthly king remained all through His ministry. Even Pilate asked Jesus, “‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ ” (John 18:33, NKJV). Jesus never denied that He was, even if His kingdom was “not of this world” (John 18:36). He drew a line between the political and the spiritual kingdoms, the economic and the moral, the temporal and the eternal, the visible and the not-yet-visible. The great controversy is a conflict between these two. While Satan offered Jesus the first, He persistently focused on the Cross—the basis of the true kingdom.

“Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

What dangers do modern Christians pose, both to themselves and others, when they attempt to use the forces of humanity to establish the kingdom of God on earth? In what ways can we, even as individuals, on a smaller scale be tempted to do the same thing?

FURTHER STUDY: In Monday's and Tuesday's lessons we studied how Christ met Satan's temptations in the wilderness. We can rely on the following promises when Satan tempts us. Choose one or two to memorize: Ps. 121:2; Luke 1:37; Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 10:13; 15:57; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13; Heb. 2:18; 4:16; James 4:7, 8; 2 Pet. 2:9.

"In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. 'Be of good cheer,' He says; 'I have overcome the world.' John 16:33."
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 122, 123.

To learn more about the topics in this week's lesson, read any or all of the following: *The Desire of Ages*, " 'The Fullness of the Time,' " pp. 31-38; " 'We Have Seen His Star,' " pp. 59-67; "The Temptation," pp. 114-123; "The Victory," pp. 124-131.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Sabbath's lesson, we learned that in order to prove that Lucifer was lying about God's character, someone needed to show the contrast between God's character and his. Based on this week's lesson, how did Christ do so?
2. God's divine strategy works with precision and order. In Sunday's lesson we noted that the first advent of our Lord came "in the fullness of the time." Can we say the same about the Second Coming? Explain your answer.
3. Review this week's memory text. In light of the great controversy, what does it mean that Christ was "born under the law"? Why was it necessary for Him to be "born under the law" to redeem us?

SUMMARY: Jesus is our model in every aspect of Christian life, not the least in how we may obtain victory over Satan. Satan always was ready and willing to attack Him when He was most vulnerable, but Jesus met his assaults in ways that are available to each of us. He met Satan head on with God's Word and power, prayer, personal resolve, angels, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.



Alice's Stubborn Heart, Part 2

Jeff Bishop

Alice Sukua had resisted Adventists who tried to convert her. Then shortly after the Adventist missionaries left for their new post, Alice became sick and was hospitalized. She lay helpless in bed as nurses tried desperately to find a vein and insert an IV. Alice, who had fought God's convicting voice, finally gave in. "OK, God," she said. "I will keep the Sabbath!" Just then the nurses located a vein and started the IV. Alice slipped into unconsciousness.

When she regained consciousness, she turned to her husband who was standing by her bed and said, "I am going to keep the Sabbath." As soon as she was able, she sought out two Adventist families in the area. The tiny group had ceased meeting regularly when the missionaries moved away, but when they learned that Alice wanted to worship with them, they began meeting again.

Alice took her twin daughters to the services and tried to convince her husband to attend too. But he had not set foot in a church for 30 years, and Saturday was his drinking day. The more Alice tried to get him to stop drinking and straighten out his life, the more he resisted. Seeing that her plan was not working, Alice stopped nagging and began praying for him. She treated her husband with kindness and told only God her desires for her husband.

Several months passed, and one Sabbath Alice and her daughters were waiting impatiently for their father to come out of the bathroom so they could prepare for church. When he walked out of the bathroom, the twin girls stared in amazement. "Daddy, why are you dressed in your best clothes to go drinking?" one of them asked.

"I'm not going drinking; I'm going to church," he answered. The girls hugged their father, and the entire family, including two teenage boys, went to church together.

Today some 50 to 70 people gather in Joseph and Alice's home to worship God on Sabbath. God used many Adventist organizations and individuals to reach the hearts of Alice and Joseph and their family: Adventist World Radio broadcast the programs that Alice heard; Adventist Frontier Missions sent the Bishops to minister in Papua New Guinea; an Adventist colporteur provided the literature for Alice; and an Adventist Aviation plane and pilot delivered the books to her. But the Holy Spirit sent the dreams that had awakened in Alice questions that led to the family's conversion and eventual baptism.

Jeff Bishop and his family serve with Adventist Frontier Missions in Kotale, Papua New Guinea.

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The Great Controversy in the Parables of Jesus



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 13:1-9, 18-30; 21:33-41; 22:1-14; Luke 15.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father’ ” (Matthew 13:43, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What do Jesus' parables teach us about the great controversy? What themes run through His stories that enlighten us regarding the nature of the war between good and evil and, most importantly, its outcome?

HE SPOKE MANY THINGS TO THEM IN PARABLES” (Matt. 13:3, NKJV). As stated in an earlier lesson, Christ came to this earth so people could see the striking difference between the two contenders in the great controversy. Another way people could see this difference was through Christ's parables. With this method, Christ illustrated the unknown with the known and “sought to remove that which obscured the truth. The veil that sin has cast over the face of nature, He came to draw aside, bringing to view the spiritual glory that all things were created to reflect. His words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 18, 19.

This week we will study the parables of the soils, the tares, the vineyard, the wedding feast, and the lost coins in order to see what they reveal about the war between good and evil and how it is fought in our lives.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 23.)

THE FOUR SOILS (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23).

List at least four things the above texts teach about the great controversy:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Matthew 11 and 12 record how the religious leaders rejected Christ and plotted to kill Him. In every age, some people accept Jesus, while others reject Him. Why? The answer, simply, is that there's something in the human heart that leads people to choose either life or death. What, exactly, is it, and why, specifically, do some accept and some reject Christ? It remains a mystery, at least to us, at least here and now. (See 1 Cor. 4:5.)

In every case, however, Satan stands ready to snatch away what is sown or to prevent the seed of Christ's righteousness from taking root. Then there is always worry and anxiety to strangle our joy in the gospel. In every instance, it is his plan to cloud our understanding and confuse the issues so God's Word will not yield fruit.

What hope does the parable give us regarding the outcome of the great controversy? Matt. 13:8, 23.

This hope is manifested in two ways: (1) Those who hear God's Word and live accordingly are good not because of anything in themselves (Rom. 7:18) but because the Holy Spirit lives in their hearts (Phil. 2:13). Thus their lives are transformed by faith in Christ. They are assured of victory in the great controversy. (2) Symbolizing Jesus, the sower casts the seed, regardless of where it might fall. No matter how much of the seed goes to waste, the sower knows a harvest is sure. So we should never become discouraged when Satan seems to be winning all the battles. In the end, Christ has won, and through faith in Him, we can win, as well.

In what ways do our own choices determine the quality of our own soil? In the end, can we blame Satan if our soil is poor? If not, why not?

WHEAT AND TARES (Matt. 13:24-30).

Read the text above. Then tell what each of the symbols in the parable represents. Check your responses against verses 37-41.

the field _____

the good seed _____

the tares _____

the two sowers _____

the harvest _____

the harvesters _____

The parable teaches us the following about the great controversy: (1) Evil owes its origin to the "enemy." Though God is not responsible for evil, He is aware of the enemy's presence. (2) It is the enemy who hinders the spread of the gospel. (3) Good and bad will exist within the world and the church until the end of time. (4) While we must be ruthless with the weeds in our own lives, we should never rush to judge others. (5) Once again, God's people are assured of victory (vss. 40-43).

The tare looked so much like wheat that, until it formed a head, not even the best farmers could identify it. Likewise, "Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil, He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one; for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven and earth is toward Satan?"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 72.

How do you respond to a church member who—facing church discipline—claims that our actions against him or her are in violation of the parable of the wheat and the tares?

THE VINEYARD (Matt. 21:33-41).

In the chart below, state what each of the main elements in the parable of the vineyard symbolizes, based on the following list: the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God and preached to Israel; God; God's law; Jesus; Israel; Israel's religious leaders; the Gentiles.

Main Element	What It Symbolizes
The landowner	
The vineyard	
The wall	
The tenants	
The landowner's servants	
The son	
The other tenants	

God is full of love and grace. Just as the landowner protects the vineyard with a fence, so God protects us with His law, if and when we obey it through the indwelling of His Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). And just as the landowner provided all that was necessary for the vineyard to bear a profitable harvest, and just as he expected his tenants to be faithful, so God provides what we need to bear spiritual fruit and desires us to be loyal. In this case, however, not only were those who were given the responsibilities untrue to those responsibilities, but they even turned vehemently against their master. What a warning!

Jesus ends the parable with these powerful, poignant words: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44). What a contrast! In each case a person is confronted by that rock, which with great force does something dramatic to him or her. In one case, however, the person is broken by the rock; in the other, the individual is ground down into powder by that same rock. Who or what is the rock, what's the difference between being broken on it or crushed under it, and why did Jesus end the parable on this note?

THE WEDDING FEAST AND THE WEDDING GARMENT (Matt. 22:1-14).

This parable points out four significant elements in the great controversy. Find a verse in the Bible to match each element.

God's invitation to accept His salvation _____

God's gracious provisions for salvation _____

People's rejection of God's invitation and provisions _____

God's final judgment _____

God's invitation. As does the parable of the vineyard, this story also illustrates Israel's rejection of the gospel and the extension of God's invitation to the Gentiles. However, God extends this invitation to all people through all time. Christ says to each one of us, "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (Rev. 3:20, NRSV).

God's provisions. The host of the feast provided everything his guests could possibly want. He butchered oxen and fattened cattle and even provided special clothes for them to wear, as was the custom. Likewise, God provided the sacrifice for sin so we would not have to die eternally; and Christ's robe of righteousness is ours through faith in Him (Isa. 61:10; Zech 3:3-5).

Rejection of God's invitation and provisions. Of course, Satan does everything he can to keep us from accepting God's salvation. He can even use everyday items that in themselves are not always bad. In the parable, one person was too preoccupied with his field while another was too distracted by his business (Matt. 22:5). In contrast to them, there was the one who came to the feast but who, because of pride and self-sufficiency, had decided he did not need to wear the clothes the host provided.

God's final judgment. Because of his own wrong choice, the guest was unfit to remain at the feast. And so it is with each of us. We lose or win in the great controversy based on the choices we make, *both before and even after making a profession of faith in Christ.* In other words, just because someone makes a choice to come to the wedding doesn't mean he's going to enjoy the final fruits of it. This should be a sobering thought to all who claim to have accepted the invitation.

If someone asked you right now (and you are being asked right now), Are you covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness? what answer would you give, and what grounds do you have for answering it as you do?

THE LOST AND FOUND (Luke 15).

As soon as the great controversy entered this world, humanity was lost. Such a condition arises when we separate ourselves from God, either through innocent wandering, rebellion, carelessness, self-righteousness, yielding to Satan's temptation, or rejecting God's invitation.

Three parables in Luke 15 portray this human condition through three objects that were lost. Identify these objects, the elements that symbolize God, and what each of those elements teaches us about His response to lost humanity.

3 Parables of Luke 15	Verses 3-7	Verses 8-10	Verses 11-32
Lost object(s)	sheep	coin	prodigal son
Symbol of God			
What God's response teaches us about Him			

God's response to sinners stands in direct contrast to what Satan has said about Him. These parables show us that God's love is so vast and so amazing that He would empty heaven to save one lost person.

The parable of the two sons not only portrays God's love through the sons' father; it also focuses on humanity's response to its lost condition. The younger son began his journey into the wasteland of sin by exclaiming "Give me!" Self was his goal, self-sufficiency his god. Such a focus could bring him to only one place—Swineland. But then came the return journey, prompted by the memory of his father's love. "In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as stern and severe. How different his conception of him now! So those who are deceived by Satan look upon God as hard and exacting. They regard Him as watching to denounce and condemn, as unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there is a legal excuse for not helping him. . . . But he whose eyes have been opened by the love of Christ will behold God as full of compassion."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 204.

Self was also the goal of the older son, self-sufficiency also his god. He exclaimed, " 'You never gave me' " (Luke 15:29, NIV), and for years he worked for and obeyed his father, thinking that such efforts would win his heart (vss. 28-30). It's called legalism. The Bible does not tell us if this son found the true way home or not. As the parable stands, which son was the victor?

FURTHER STUDY: What do the following parables teach us about how we can be victorious in the great controversy? Matt. 25:1-13; Luke 12:16-21; 18:9-14.

"The prayer of the publican was heard because it showed dependence reaching forth to lay hold upon Omnipotence. Self to the publican appeared nothing but shame. Thus it must be seen by all who seek God. By faith—faith that renounces all self-trust—the needy suppliant is to lay hold upon infinite power."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159.

Read any or all of the following to learn more about the parables we studied this week and their relationship to the great controversy: *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Sower Went Forth to Sow," pp. 33-61; "Tares," pp. 70-75; "Lost, and Is Found," pp. 198-211; "Two Worshipers," pp. 150-163; "Gain That Is Loss," pp. 252-259; "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 284-306; "Without a Wedding Garment," pp. 307-319; "To Meet the Bridegroom," pp. 405-421.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Based on what we've read and studied, not just this week but so far this quarter regarding the great controversy, how do you understand Jesus' words, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad"? (Matt. 12:30). Why can no one be neutral in this?
2. The parable of the weeds shows us how Satan works to overthrow God's kingdom. When you think you have identified tares among the wheat, what should you do? Or is it even your job to attempt to identify tares?
3. The parable of the prodigal son portrays two different responses to God's love. Does our response to God change His love for us? If not, what does our response change? (For it does change something, even if it's not God's love for us.)
4. The younger son symbolizes salvation by faith in Christ's righteousness. The older one symbolizes salvation by works (legalism). Discuss the difference between the two.

SUMMARY: Jesus came to this earth to uncover Satan's lies about God. He did this not only through the way He lived but through the parables He taught. From many of these, we learn how subtle Satan can be and how he uses everyday things to cloud our vision, affect our attitude, and appeal to our sense of pride and self-sufficiency. But each parable rings a note of victory. There is a harvest. People do accept God's invitation. Some of us do find the way home.



Timid Christian Becomes Soul Winner

J. H. Zachary

Sri's Muslim father permitted Sri to enroll at the Adventist school, but warned him to never become a Christian. Sri enjoyed studying at the Adventist elementary school, and he especially enjoyed the Bible classes. He continued his studies in a Christian secondary school. After graduation he found work with a bank and married a Christian woman. But he had not committed his own life to Christ.

Sri's wife prayed earnestly that her husband would give his life to Christ. Then one day Sri told her, "I will be baptized, but you must promise not to tell my parents." He knew they would be very angry.

But as Sri's faith grew, so did his desire to share his love for Christ with others. He left his bank job and started his own business when Sabbath problems arose.

Sri agreed to study the Bible with an elderly Buddhist woman in a suburb of Jakarta, Indonesia. Every time he went to the woman's humble home, he found more of her neighbors ready to listen. When the group reached 30 people, Sri asked a pastor for help. He did not feel qualified to teach a large group. But the pastor urged Sri to continue teaching the group. Sri prayed for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to the members of his class. Today this group has grown to a full-fledged church of 100 members.

Sri found a suburb of Jakarta where no church existed. He began studying with interested people, and today a church of 400 members thrives there. The founding members of this congregation were from Sri's Bible-study group.



So far the Holy Spirit has blessed Sri in raising up five churches. But he is not stopping to count. He is too busy sharing his love for Jesus with others. This former banker and once-timid Muslim is now a leading soul winner in Jakarta, Indonesia.

J. H. Zachary (left) is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

The Great Controversy and the Miracles of Jesus



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 8:5-13; 12:22-32; Mark 5:25-34; John 5:1-18; John 11:1-45.

MEMORY TEXT: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25, NRSV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What do Jesus' miracles portray about Him? How did they advance the cause of salvation, and how did they confront Satan's position in the great controversy?

MIRACLES WITH MEANING. A miracle is an occurrence we cannot understand because of the limitations inherent in human knowledge. They are things that happen outside the known bounds of science and natural law; they can't be explained by common physical phenomena. That's why, in fact, they're called miracles.

The Bible records about thirty-five miracles that Jesus performed while in the flesh. Each one served a specific purpose, and all of them together advanced His mission of defeating Satan, death, and sin. These miracles also show how closely the conflict between good and evil is fought in the lives of individuals.

This week we will study five miracles that focus on how Jesus brought healing, life, and truth to those who so desperately needed them. In addition to illustrating Jesus' power and authority, the miracles also testify to His mission as the One sent by the Father to save humankind from the consequences of sin, something far beyond our capacity—even in the age of the Internet, space shuttles, and limb transplants—to do for ourselves. Good news, indeed!

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 2.)

BY THE POOL OF BETHESDA (John 5:1-18).

Explain the significance of the question Jesus asked the invalid lying by the pool (John 5:6).

This man's biography is brief. Because of a 38-year illness, he had lost everything, including hope, family, and friends. He was a victim of greed—when the waters of the pool stirred, others who believed that healing could be found in the waters pushed him out of their way. He, like all of us, was suffering the consequences of sin, both his own sin and the sins of others, though at that point in his life and experience, it hardly mattered whose.

What four results did this miracle produce, and how do they shed light on the great controversy?

John 5:14 _____

John 5:15 _____

John 5:16, 18 _____

John 5:17 _____

In this account, Satan's ongoing war against God's law is seen, but from a different perspective. Satan would have us believe that it is harsh, unfair, and impossible to keep; thus he does everything he can to place it in a bad light, even using the supposed defenders of the law to do his work. That's what happened here. It was over the law—the Sabbath (of all things!)—that Jesus faced attacks by those who claimed that He was violating the law. How ironic that Jesus, the Lawgiver Himself, would be accused of breaking the law, especially by those who saw themselves in the role of defending the law. The irony should not be lost.

What's so sad about this story is how Satan was able to manipulate the leaders, using their own supposed adherence to the law to blind them to the deeper issue, which was Jesus. In other words, ignoring the miracle that had just happened, they attacked the Lord because He, supposedly, violated the law. What lessons are here for those of us who see ourselves as defenders of the law (and the Sabbath!)?

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT (Matt. 8:5-13).

Discord among humans was one of the first effects of the great controversy on this earth. When Cain killed Abel, Satan rejoiced that he had succeeded in this work of disunity. Jesus' mission, therefore, included not only physical healing but spiritual healing that would bring people together and facilitate the spreading of the gospel.

In this context, the centurion's request was most unusual for two reasons. First of all, as a career military officer, the centurion was responsible for 100 Roman soldiers; and the Hebrews despised the Romans for their oppression over them. Second, the centurion sought help for his slave. Both Greeks and Romans considered slaves to be less than human (the Roman author Cato counseled people to throw out old, sick slaves along with useless agricultural implements).

Satan revels in such attitudes, for not only do they represent his character (as opposed to Christ's); they prevent the spread of the gospel. But the centurion stands in direct contrast to Satan and in harmony with the gospel's initiative to break down the barriers that divide humanity.

What caused Jesus to commend the centurion, and why? Matt. 8:8-10.

How interesting that a Roman, a Gentile, showed such faith in Christ. No wonder Jesus replied: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11).

This centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings—and still further shut out by the bigotry of those who viewed themselves as the exclusive heirs of salvation—*he nevertheless responded in faith to Christ in ways that those who should have didn't*. What a rebuke to those who claimed to be God's faithful servants.

A young man, having read some Adventist literature, was so excited about what he read that he rushed to an Adventist church at his first opportunity. Sadly, the church he entered was cold and dead, and in the lobby afterward he even heard some people talking in a way that cast doubt upon our message. In what ways does this story here parallel the story of the centurion?

THE DEMONIAK (Matt. 12:22-32).

The New Testament recognizes the reality of demon possession, but many people today attribute its symptoms solely to physical or psychological deficiencies.

Describe the reaction of the general public and the Pharisees to the healing of the demoniac. Matt. 12:22-24. Why did each group react the way it did? How did Jesus answer the charge that He cast out the devil under the direction of Beelzebub? Vss. 24-32.

Part of Jesus' answer includes a parable in verse 29, which shows the foolishness of the religious leaders' reaction and sheds a great deal of light on the great controversy. This parable "reinforces the truth stated in v. 28 that the 'kingdom of God' is come and that the kingdom of Satan is being invaded."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 395.

Read Matthew 12:29. What was Jesus saying with these words? How can we apply His warning here in our own lives as we need to protect our own "homes" from the enemy?

In this chapter, Jesus places before us a non-negotiable choice. Choosing Christ results in being gathered into the kingdom; choosing Beelzebub results in being scattered under judgment. We all take sides in the great controversy; by not taking sides, by claiming to be neutral, we, automatically, by default, wind up on Satan's side. That's just the nature of reality.

Jesus also adds one more element here: the unpardonable sin (vs. 32). This sin occurs when we persistently reject Christ and deliberately choose options contrary to the principles of His kingdom, when we no longer view sin for what it is, when we mistake darkness for light, when Satan's lies become to us the truth, and when our hearts are so hardened they no longer recognize the need for forgiveness. Thus, when someone fears that he or she has committed the unpardonable sin, in what ways does that fear show that this person, in fact, hasn't committed it?

Read Matthew 12:30. Those are very strong words. They leave no middle ground. Look at your own life. You can't be in the middle (it doesn't exist). Ask yourself: Which direction am I gathering in?

THE TOUCH OF FAITH (Mark 5:25-34).

For twelve years, Satan held this woman captive to an incurable hemorrhage that weakened her, not only physically but emotionally and spiritually. Because this condition rendered her unclean (Lev. 15:25-27), she could not meet with family and friends for worship and fellowship. Having tried everything, having spent all, having lost all hope, she heard that Jesus was coming to town. Might He be able to help her?

What types of things do you think she heard about Jesus? (Matt. 8:5-9, 13; Mark 1:29-34, 40-45; 2:1-12.)

Was Jesus her last resort or her first bright hope? Explain your answer.

Before Jesus healed this woman, He had performed at least sixteen miracles on all sorts of people. Is it possible that some of them told her about what He had done for them? Spreading the good news about Jesus is one of the first steps we must take in defeating Satan.

But hearing about Jesus is not enough. Hearing must lead to faith, and faith must lead to action. None of the people whom Jesus healed hoped to live a normal, joyful life until he or she came to Him, and in this woman's case, not only until she *came* but until she *touched*.

We cannot be victorious in the great controversy until we "touch" Jesus. The type of faith that saves is not an intellectual approval or acceptance of truth but a faith that makes Him our personal Savior. As it was with the woman, so it must be with us. "Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

Faith must have power to "arrest" God, to "stop" Him on Main Street. "Who touched Me?" asked Jesus. The question is not one of rebuke but of recognition that in this battle-scarred world where Satan claims victory, faith can reach out and touch God.

However much comfort we can draw from Jesus' miracles of healing, no doubt one question often remains. As far as the Gospel records go, Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. Today, however, we all know that though we pray to Jesus for healing, it doesn't always come. Does that mean He cares any less? If not, how do we understand the difference between what happened in the Gospels and what happens today?

“‘LAZARUS, COME FORTH’ ” (John 11:1-45).

As their brother grew seriously ill, Mary and Martha turned to Jesus for help. No doubt they, too, had heard of Jesus' many miracles; perhaps they had even seen some. In addition, verse 3 suggests that Jesus and Lazarus had a special friendship. The word here translated *love* means “admiration,” “respect,” and “esteem.”

If Jesus' relationship with Lazarus was so special, why did He delay going to his house? Vss. 14, 25.

“He tarried, that by raising Lazarus from the dead He might give to His stubborn, unbelieving people another evidence that He was indeed ‘the resurrection, and the life.’ He was loath to give up all hope of the people, the poor, wandering sheep of the house of Israel.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 529. Also, had “Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver. Therefore Christ remained away. He suffered the enemy to exercise his power, that He might drive him back, a conquered foe.”—Page 528.

Raising Lazarus was the one miracle above all the others that established Christ as the Truth over and against Satan's opposing claims.

Satan's extremes. Satan attempts to work both ends against the middle, at least regarding the question of death, a question that, to some degree, everyone thinks about.

For many modern, secular minds, death is the end of everything human: We just stop functioning, our body decays, and we go back to the emptiness out of which we first arose. There's nothing else for us, so we might as well enjoy our time here the best we can.

In contrast, many others believe that there's something inherently eternal that naturally exists within us and that even if we “die,” that is, our bodies decay, this eternal element goes on living, so that in the end we really don't die. Thus, whatever we do here, eternal life awaits us.

If people believe one way or the other, they really don't need Jesus, do they? On one hand, they die and everything's forever over, whether they believe in Him or not; on the other, they go on living anyway, Jesus or no Jesus in their lives. Lies can be multifaceted (coming in all different forms, shapes, and colors), in contrast to truth, which doesn't come in so many options.

How does what Jesus said and did in the story of Lazarus help debunk both of these demonic lies about death?

FURTHER STUDY: This week we studied five of Jesus' miracles to see what we could learn about the great controversy. What else do the following miracles teach us about the great controversy: (1) Matt. 14:22-33; (2) Mark 1:21-28?

"The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. [Isa. 27:5 quoted.] The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says, . . . 'The prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.' Isa. 49:24, 25." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 258, 259.

The following provide more material on the miracles we studied this week: *The Desire of Ages*, "Bethesda and the Sanhedrin," pp. 201-213; "At Capernaum," pp. 252-261; "The Centurion," pp. 315-320.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus performed seven of His recorded miracles on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-28; 29-31; 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-4; John 5:1-5; 9). Why would He do so when He knew that the religious leaders would accuse Him of being a law-breaker? Discuss the role of the Sabbath in the plan of redemption (see Hebrews 3; 4).
2. Discuss the following quote: "The . . . transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 407. Why is transformation of character the greatest miracle of all?
3. As we near the end of the great controversy, how will Satan use miracles to deceive God's people? Matt. 24:24; 1 Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 16:14; 19:20.

SUMMARY: Jesus' miracles brought healing to the sick, freedom to the captives of sin, rebuke to the demons, sight to the blind, acceptance to the rejected, life to the dead, and above all, forgiveness to those who needed it. The miracles also carried the hope that the God who walked amid humanity would win the great controversy, that the One who said "I am the resurrection and the life" would have the last word against sin and death.



The Errant Errand

Maria Salnikova

Hatuna and Gogi, refugees from the country of Georgia, moved to the village of Zaoksky, Russia, near the Adventist Theological Seminary. The young father was not well, and the family learned that he had cancer.

While buying bread in the market, Hatuna met two Georgian girls who were studying at the seminary. As they talked the students learned about the family's desperate needs. Gogi could not work, and the family had no money.

The students shared the family's situation with their Sabbath School class, who began visiting Gogi in the hospital.

Masha and her husband, Sasha, members of the class, love people and quickly took this family under their wings. One day Masha planned to visit the family, but the important errand slipped her mind during her busy day. All day she knew she must do something important, but she could not remember what it was. Then late at night as she was preparing for bed, she remembered that she had not visited this family. When she told her husband, he asked, "Do you want to go now?" Masha quickly gathered some food and wrote a note. If the family was already asleep, she would put the note and food on the windowsill, where they could find it the next morning.

When Masha and Sasha arrived at the house, all the lights were on. Masha knew something was wrong. When they knocked, Hatuna opened the door. Her face was wet with tears, and Masha could hear loud cries. Gogi was in terrible pain.

Masha and Sasha offered to pray for Gogi. As they ended their prayer, Gogi's pain subsided. The couple stayed to read the Bible with them and encourage them. When they left, Gogi's pain was gone.

Gogi and Hatuna began attending Sabbath School, and in time they were baptized. Gogi wanted to return to Georgia to die, but the family had no money to travel. The Sabbath School members, none of whom had more than bare essentials themselves, pooled their money and bought them tickets to Georgia. Before they left, Gogi and Hatuna promised to keep in touch.

When the couple arrived in Georgia, Gogi was weak, but felt no pain. A doctor examined him and could find no cancer. It has been five years since Gogi and Hatuna left Zaoksky, and Gogi remains alive and well. The family remains faithful to their Lord and shares the miracle of his healing with those they meet.

Maria Salnikova is the dean of women at Zaoksky Theological Seminary in Russia.

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Jesus Wins



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 10:29-34; 14:17-25, 32-42; 1 Cor. 15:1-28; Col. 1:19, 20.

MEMORY TEXT: "I [Jesus] have glorified You [God] on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What is the main part of God's plan to crush the revolt Satan began in heaven? How does it shed light on the issues of the great controversy, and what does it mean for each one of us personally?

THE FATHER'S WILL provided the motivating force behind all that Jesus did while He lived on this earth. He was fully aware that the Father's will involved not only His death as an atonement for sin but triumph over all death through His resurrection (Mark 8:31, 32). With the vision of this atonement and triumph ever before Him, Jesus anticipated fulfilling the promise in Genesis 3:15 that He would crush the head of Satan.

The outcome of the cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil, between Christ and Satan, would be decided on the cross. Toward that objective, Jesus walked alone but steadfastly through the perils of His journey, for at the end there would be a victory for Him to share with all who claimed Him as their Redeemer.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 9.)

THE SON OF MAN "MUST". . . .

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31).

"The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

Notice that one word these three verses have in common is the word *must*. The Son of man "must" be delivered and crucified, the Son of man "must" suffer many things.

Why "must" the Son of man go through all this? Because only through Christ's perfect life and atoning death could fallen humanity have any hope of being spared the doom that sin inevitably brings (Rom. 6:23)—that's why.

God has a law, that law has been violated, and a just God, to be just, has to punish those violators. But this same just God is also a merciful God, and out of that mercy He gave Jesus, equal with Himself, to die that death for the human race, to suffer vicariously, in our place, the righteous wrath of a Holy God against sin. That's why Jesus "must" die. At the Cross, God's justice was met, fully and completely. Without the Cross, our fate would be no different than the animals; in fact, it would have been worse, because unlike the beasts, we can envision something like eternity or heaven, something greater than what we experience now, and that realization of something that is greater but out of our reach makes the little we have that much more unsatisfying. No wonder the Son of man "must" suffer and die. If He didn't, we'd have nothing but the capacity to envision eternity but no hope of ever inhabiting it.

Imagine if you had only two minutes to give someone the essence of the Cross. Write down something you could say in that period of time that explains the Cross, why Jesus died there, what He did for the human race there, what the Cross promises us, and what our fate would be without it.

BROKEN BODY, SHED BLOOD (Mark 14:17-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

What instructions did Jesus give for the future at the Last Supper? 1 Cor. 11:24, 25.

These instructions have an important purpose: "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26, NKJV). In other words, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we proclaim our faith in God's power against Satan—a power based on His redemptive activity through Jesus' death.

Jesus established the Lord's Supper within the historic framework of the Passover (Exodus 12), which recalls Satan's bondage of the Jews, human helplessness, and God's grace as the only hope for anyone to be free from that bondage. Just as Israel's freedom was rooted in history by God's redeeming act, so our freedom from sin is grounded in the historic event of the Cross. Jesus is our "Passover" Lamb, "sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7, NKJV). Because of that sacrifice, we share Christ's victory in the great controversy.

Jesus' claim that His broken body and shed blood establish a new covenant (Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25) confronts the core issue of the great controversy. Satan charges that God's law is arbitrary, unjust, and impossible to keep. Through His death, however, Jesus established a new covenant by which the law could be written in the hearts of God's people (Jer. 31:31-34). This new covenant enables us, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to love the Lord and obey the commandments of Him "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4, NKJV).

It is to this new-covenant experience that Jesus calls us when He says, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56, NKJV).

"As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 661.

However important the corporate practice of Communion, why is it so important for us personally to—day by day—partake of "the blood and body" of Christ? How does that practice fortify us in the battle against Satan's wiles?

GETHSEMANE.

“And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36, emphasis supplied).

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7).

Once again a lush garden becomes a battleground upon which rages the war between truth and falsehood, righteousness and sin. What a contrast, however, between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane.

What are some of the parallels and some of the differences between what happened in Eden and what happened in Gethsemane?

Read through the story of Jesus in Gethsemane. In what ways do we see just how human the Son of God was? How do you understand His prayer for the cup to be taken away from Him, if possible? Why was it not possible? Or was it?

In Mark 14:37-50, Jesus, facing the greatest test of His earthly ministry, found His disciples sleeping, unable to stay awake long enough to pray for Him. And then, when awake, they didn't provide much comfort either, for, as Mark wrote, “They all forsook him, and fled” (vs. 50).

What do we see here, in this whole scene, other than the utter depravity and corruption of humanity in contrast to the perfection and love of God? Judas betrays Him, the disciples fall asleep on Him only to awake and flee, the mob takes Him by night (including the religious leaders); in short, this is a dramatic example of what is basic to Christian theology: the decrepit moral state of sinful, weak, sleepy, greedy, fleeing humankind.

All this, of course, in contrast to the holiness and self-sacrificing love of Jesus.

In the story of Gethsemane, Satan seems to have triumphed (at least temporarily for some) over all the characters represented—except, of course, Jesus. In what ways did Satan exploit the weakness of all these people, and why did he fail when it came to Jesus? What can we learn from this contrast that could help us better withstand personal trials?

“IT IS FINISHED” (Matt. 27:27-53; Mark 15:20-28; Luke 23:26-46; John 19:16-30; Col. 1:19, 20).

What did Jesus mean by the following statements, one made in His high-priestly prayer, the other from the cross? The first is “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4, NKJV). The second, “It is finished!” (John 19:30, NKJV). What exactly did Jesus finish?

The Cross is central to God’s plan for defeating Satan in the great controversy because, without it, the universe would not have learned the true nature of Satan’s rebellion. Three words help us summarize Christ’s work on the cross. These words are *revelation*, *redemption*, and *resolution*.

Revelation. The Cross reveals God’s character. Lucifer argues that God is an arbitrary ruler. The Cross, however, shows the universe just how great His love really is (Rom. 5:8). The Cross is His love in action (see John 3:16).

The Cross also reveals the unchangeable nature of God’s law. If the law could have been changed, there would have been no sin, and, consequently, Christ need not have died (Rom. 3:25, 26).

Redemption. Sin has brought us under Satan’s dominion, and he claims this world as his own. But God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood” (Col. 1:13, 14, NKJV). That blood was shed when Jesus bore our “sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24, NKJV). Through the Cross, then, God has reconciled “the world to Himself.” “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:19, 21, NKJV). When Jesus said that He came to “give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, NKJV), He was affirming that the Cross would accomplish the redemption of the human race.

Resolution. The sin problem must be resolved once and for all in order for God to be victorious in the great controversy. Calvary dethroned Satan as prince of this world and will “bring to nought” (1 Cor. 1:28) “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). At the end of time, he will be “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10).

Revelation. Redemption. Resolution. Review what they mean and then apply them to your own life. How has the knowledge of what these words mean, in the context of the Cross, changed you? In what ways should they change you?

HE IS RISEN (John 20:1-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-14).

As you read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28, list in sequence Paul's explanation of his belief in Christ's resurrection. Then explain how he connects his belief with God's plan for the defeat of death and Satan.

Satan and his allies hoped that the Roman seal affixed to Jesus' tomb would put an end to His mission. But the devil's hope was only an outrageous wish. What right does the tomb, a place for sinners, have over One "who committed no sin"? (1 Pet. 2:22, NKJV). "It was not possible that He should be held" by the grave (Acts 2:24, NKJV). Satan could no more hold Jesus in the grave than a cork could hold back an erupting volcano.

Satan, however, is a determined fighter. He knew that the Cross made his work null and void. He also knew that the Resurrection sealed his fate. Yet, he continued his deception. List below how Satan began to sow doubts regarding the Resurrection.

Matt. 28:12, 13 _____

Matt. 28:17 _____

Luke 24:9-11 _____

Since Calvary, Satan relentlessly tempts people to question the reality of the Cross and the Resurrection. Intellect defies these divine events; reason is too crude, too coarse to grasp these events; and science cannot prove (or disprove) them. However, as Jesus said to Thomas: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29, NKJV).

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Genuine faith reaches beyond what we can touch and see to comprehend the fact that the One who said "It is finished" is also the One who is risen.

"The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.

Write down what you think Paul means when he says, "So we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Can you honestly say that since accepting Christ, you have had this "newness of life"?

FURTHER STUDY: Spend time this Friday evening reviewing the closing scenes of Christ's ministry on earth as they relate to the great controversy. You might want to use the following texts and references as a basis for your study: Matthew 26:14-28:15; Mark 14-16:15; Luke 22-24:12; John 13-20:29; *The Desire of Ages*, beginning with the chapter "A Servant of Servants" and ending with the chapter "'Peace Be Unto You,'" pp. 642-808.

"Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, 'It is finished.' John 19:30. The battle had been won. His right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory. As a Conqueror He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 758.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 13:1-17. In these verses, the disciples' Master became their Humble Servant. Explain how this act sheds light on the issues of the great controversy. What significance does our participation in this practice have for us in light of the great controversy?
2. The Cross proved false Satan's claim that God's law is dispensable. What part does claiming to honor the day of the Resurrection (Sunday observance) play in Satan's attempts to abolish God's law? (Exod. 20:8-11). What part will Satan's attacks against this portion of God's law play in the great controversy as the end of time approaches?
3. Some Christians believe that Christ's death merely served as a revelation of God's love and that there was no need for Him to shed His blood in order to save us. How would you respond to that rather lame understanding of the Cross? Why is it so inadequate an explanation of Calvary?

SUMMARY: As the mainstay of Heaven's strategy in the great controversy, the final events of Christ's life on earth ensured that Satan's attempts to discredit God's character would themselves be discredited. No other event could prove Divine love as surely as Divine love dying on the Cross. No other event could prove God's power over sin as the resurrection of Him who knew no sin. With this same love and power living in our hearts, the victory gained over sin and death can become ours.



The Long Search

Zhao Mu

Determination showed on Zhang's face as this humble man told of his long search for God, how God led him to Adventists, and how eventually he established a church in his home.

As a university student Zhang studied English with a teacher who taught him about Christ. Zhang watched this man and his wife as they lived out their faith. Their testimonies made a deep impression on Zhang, and he began longing for a deeper knowledge of God.

Then the teacher retired and moved away, leaving Zhang feeling like a sheep without a shepherd. He would not be satisfied until he knew the deeper truths of God. However, he had no idea where to look for spiritual help.

Unable to find spiritual truth in his own city, he began traveling to other cities in search of God. His financial situation was not good, and he had no money to travel by bus or train, so he rode his bicycle long distances, even pedaling over high mountains. Because he had no money to stay in local inns, he was forced to sleep in the hay along the roadside. Often he was turned away from hostels because of his appearance. Still he kept going. Through the years he wore out several bicycles traveling in search of Christ.

But God was not hiding from Zhang. Eventually Zhang found the Adventist believers in a large city in western China. There he learned about the Sabbath and the Lord's soon return. At last Zhang's hungry heart was filled. Rejoicing, he returned home with the good news. Zhang traveled on business, and wherever he went he sought out Adventist believers. Zhang felt a burden to share the truths he treasured with others in his home town.

He began visiting his family members and sharing the truths he loved. He met resistance, but he did not give up. Eventually his wife and her parents agreed to let him convert a storage room in their home to a church. People began coming to worship, some from as far away as 25 miles (40 km) or more.

Today some 30 people worship with Zhang in his home. The storeroom-turned-church is too small to accommodate further growth, so Zhang plans to expand it so others can attend. He remembers how long he had to search to find God's truth, and he is determined that others shall find it as well.

Zhao Mu is a Field Director of the Chinese Union.

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The War Within



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 8:31-39; 16:13-17; 26:14-16, 20-25, 47-50; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:10-18.

MEMORY TEXT: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: Ever since the Fall, Satan has sought to control people's hearts and minds. How does he do so, and what weapons do we have that enable us to fight back against this most subtle of foes in what, at times, can be the most subtle of battles?

THE WAR WITHIN. Whatever the grand and cosmic issues of the great controversy (after all, it began in heaven), for us on earth it's manifested primarily as a battle for the human mind and heart. Thus, unlike battles fought noisily with guns, tanks, jets, this one is often slugged out in silence, in the quiet recesses of the human conscience.

It's true: The objective victory in the conflict was won, for us, at the Cross, where Satan stood defeated; and, as a result of that victory, God at the end of the millennium will eliminate Satan, sin, and death from the universe once and for all. These are givens, guaranteed by the Cross. The only question that remains, for each of us individually, is this: Will we be among those eliminated when sin, death, and Satan are, as well? Or, will we—taking advantage of the victory won for us by Jesus at the Cross—be among those who live forever in a kingdom that will never pass away? As you study this week's lesson, ask yourself the hard question: In what ways do your daily choices reveal which side of the battle you're really on?

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 16.)

ONE WHO LEFT.

“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve” (Luke 22:3).

All the disciples of Christ had defective characters, rough edges, selfishness, and other problems that manifested themselves in various ways. What, however, was the difference with Judas, that Satan entered him as opposed to the others?

What do these following texts say that help answer this crucial question?

John 12:1-7 _____

Matt. 26:14, 15 _____

Judas saw the sick, the lame, the blind, flock to Jesus from the towns and cities. He saw the dying laid at His feet. He witnessed the Saviour's mighty works in healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead. He felt in his own person the evidence of Christ's power. He recognized the teaching of Christ as superior to all that he had ever heard. He loved the Great Teacher, and desired to be with Him. He felt a desire to be changed in character and life, and he hoped to experience this through connecting himself with Jesus. The Saviour did not repulse Judas. He gave him a place among the twelve. He trusted him to do the work of an evangelist. He endowed him with power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. But Judas did not come to the point of surrendering himself fully to Christ. He did not give up his worldly ambition or his love of money. While he accepted the position of a minister of Christ, he did not bring himself under the divine molding. He felt that he could retain his own judgment and opinions, and he cultivated a disposition to criticize and accuse.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 716.

Review the list of Judas's characteristics. In what ways is there a little Judas in all of us? What steps can you take to free yourself from making the same eternal mistake that Judas did? (See Gal. 5:16-25.)

ONE WHO LEFT BUT THEN RETURNED.

“Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Matt. 26:35).

“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew” (vs. 74).

The Gospels record two of Peter’s confessions regarding Jesus. What are these confessions, and why are they important? What do they say about Peter’s character? Matt. 16:16-20; John 6:68, 69.

Peter is a study in contradiction. He was among the first to receive the truth that Christ was God in human flesh. However, immediately after Jesus outlined that the mission of the Messiah involved His death, Peter chided Him that it should not be so. His concept of the Messiah had room for a crown but not a cross. Jesus denounced Peter’s Messianic vision as satanic in origin (Matt. 16:22, 23).

Peter’s sense of discipleship wavered again after the Last Supper, when Jesus revealed that He would soon die and the disciples would be scattered. Peter’s impulsive response once again displayed his self-confidence. Whatever others might do, he would *never* deny his Lord. But his Lord knew better (Matt. 26:33-35).

The impetuous Peter could not even stay awake to pray with Jesus in Gethsemane (vs. 40). Soon afterward, however, he could draw the sword against His enemies (vs. 51). Yet going from rash daring to cowardly denial did not take long. The crowing of the rooster brought Peter to his senses, and the sight of his Savior reminded him of His warning and promise: “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV). Remorse and repentance brought Peter back from Satan’s clutches into the circle of discipleship. Thus, he was awarded the privilege of being among the first to see the risen Lord (Acts 2:32) and to receive His commission (John 21:15-17).

Most of us, at some point, have had a “Peter experience,” in that we profess to do something for the Lord and then fail to do what we said. What lessons can we learn from Peter that should help us not to give up in despair when Satan causes us to fail our Lord as he did Peter?

AGAINST THE RULERS OF DARKNESS (Eph. 6:10-12).

How does Paul explain the war between good and evil to the Ephesians? Eph. 6:10-12.

In Ephesians 1:18-21 Paul prays that the Ephesians would experience God's power as He displayed it in Christ's resurrection. In chapter 2:1-7, he explains *how* he hopes they will experience this power. Just as God was able to raise Christ from the dead, so He is able to raise them from death in sin to newness of life in Christ. Now in chapter 6:10-12, Paul closes his letter by reminding them that for the rest of their Christian lives they must rely on this resurrection power to help them fight "the powers of this dark world" and "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (vs. 12, NIV).

Some of "the powers of this dark world" maintain that God is dead, that there is no such thing as sin, only failure. Others believe that socially accepted principles are superior to God's standards, while still others claim that death is a door to another life and that grace is not a godly characteristic that redeems us but a human potential enabling us to save ourselves.

What role does each of these false assertions play in the great controversy? How can Satan use them to deceive us to the nature of our needs and our only remedy for those needs?

Paul leaves no room for doubt regarding the devil's capabilities. He will do anything he can to influence political, judicial, economic, psychological, scientific, and supernatural principalities and powers to entice people away from God. Satan's ploys worked well in Paul's day, and they work well in the modern world, where the whole notion of a literal devil is often mocked and scorned as nothing but superstitions left over from an earlier age of intellectual and scientific darkness. It is hard enough fighting against a power stronger than you of whom you are aware. Who is going to fight against an enemy that one doesn't even think exists?

All around us exist forces that we can't see, hear, feel, or sense in any way: electromagnetism, gravity, radio waves, subatomic particles from space. All these are real yet outside our immediate sensory perceptions. How could knowledge of these imperceptible realities help us convince others of the reality of Satan and the forces of darkness?

THE WEAPONS OF WARFARE (Eph. 6:13-18; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 12:11).

Yesterday's lesson dealt with "the powers of this dark world" and "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" that are engaged in the great controversy. God, however, does not leave us unprotected against these forces.

In addition to the resurrection power mentioned in yesterday's lesson, list other weapons available to Christians as they become engaged in the great controversy.

Which of these weapons is the most important, and why?

Rom. 13:12 _____

Eph. 6:13-18 _____

1 Thess. 5:8 _____

Heb. 4:12 _____

Rev. 12:11 _____

Considering some of Satan's accusations concerning God's character, why is love an important weapon in the great controversy?

Another weapon we are to use is the armor of light. In John 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (NIV). Just as darkness cannot exist where there is light, so sin cannot exist where there is Christ. When we follow Him, He lights the path before us, and before this light, evil flees, as creatures of the night dart for cover when the sun rises.

Write down all the "weapons" we have at our disposal in the great controversy. Review what each one means and ask yourself how, in whatever personal struggles you are facing, you can employ them to aid you as you face the personal assaults of the enemy.

IF GOD BE FOR US (Rom. 8:31-39).

Read over the following verses again and again until you can see clearly the hope and the promises that shout out from them—all because of what God has done for us in Jesus. Wherever Paul uses the word *we* or *us*, put your own name in there and then reread the verses, applying them to yourself and whatever your circumstances are right now. Reach out in faith and grasp the promises: Make them your own for, in the end, what else do you (or any of us) have in this sinful, dying world?

Answer these questions by reading Romans 8:31-39:

What guarantee do we have that God will give us victory?

If we are following Christ, why is it impossible for anyone, including Satan, to condemn us?

What does it mean that “in all these things [vs. 37] we are more than conquerors”?

What does it mean that Christ is making intercession for us? (vs. 34). How should that reality impact how we live? Why do we need an intercessor?

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vss. 38, 39). What do these words mean, particularly in the context of the great controversy? What assurance can we draw from them? At the same time, what don’t they mean? What false conclusions can someone draw from them regarding salvation?

In the midst of these wonderful promises, Paul inserts these words: “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (vs. 36). What is he talking about here? How does this fit in with the rest of the verses? Hint: See verse 37.

FURTHER STUDY: Review Ephesians 6:14-17 by listing on a separate sheet of paper (1) each part of armor, (2) what that part symbolizes, and (3) its application. For example: (1) The first part of armor is the belt; (2) it symbolizes truth; (3) Satan has told lies about God's character, but we can combat these lies with the truth.

"We must put on every piece of the armor, and then stand firm. The Lord has honored us by choosing us as His soldiers. Let us fight bravely for Him, maintaining the right in every transaction. Rectitude [goodness, virtue] in all things is essential to the welfare of the soul. As you strive for the victory over your own inclinations, He will help you by His Holy Spirit to be circumspect in every action, that you may give no occasion for the enemy to speak evil of the truth. Put on as your breastplate that divinely protected righteousness which it is the privilege of all to wear. This will protect your spiritual life." —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

To learn more about the topics in this week's lesson, read any or all of the following: *The Desire of Ages*, "The Foreshadowing of the Cross," pp. 410-418; "The Light of Life," pp. 463-475; "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled," pp. 662-684; "Before Annas and the Court of Caiaphas," pp. 698-715; "Judas," pp. 716-722; "By the Sea Once More," pp. 809-817.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Luke writes, "Then Satan entered into Judas" (Luke 22:3, RSV). How does Satan enter into an individual? Can He enter without the individual's consent? Explain. How is Satan's entry into a person different from Jesus' entry into the human heart?
2. Again and again we see that self-centeredness makes it impossible for God's grace to do its work. Why is this so? In its call for self-abandonment, does Christianity reject the concept of self-esteem? Explain your answer.
3. Why do false philosophies as human institutions, based on worldly errors, make ideal weapons for Satan? How does he use these philosophies to his advantage?

SUMMARY: Satan seeks to gain control of our hearts and minds by appealing to our sense of self-sufficiency. To be victorious, we must accept the salvation Jesus offers through His shed blood. Then, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we will have at our disposal a complete set of armor with which to combat the enemy.



Danger at Sundown

David Gates

With my car loaded with expensive computer equipment, I was heading back to the church headquarters in Lima, Peru. It was sunset, and except for traffic in the road, the streets were nearly empty. Ruffians controlled the streets from dusk to dawn.

As I rounded a corner beside an abandoned bus, the engine began to run rough, and the temperature light came on. Then the engine died. I pulled the loaded station wagon onto the gravel shoulder.

Forcing back the fear that was building in my stomach, I took off my suit coat and tie and got out to examine the problem. The radiator was empty. I managed to borrow a bucket of water, but it ran out as quickly as I poured it in. Fear rose another notch. I was a well-dressed foreigner with a disabled car filled with expensive computer equipment in a dangerous area of the city.

Two men stepped out of the abandoned bus. They picked up a large rock, then started toward me. No one else was nearby. Staying meant risking a beating and possibly death. Leaving would place God's equipment at risk. I prayed that God would protect both the equipment and me. The men raised their rocks as if to throw them. I stepped back.

"Excuse me," a nicely dressed man spoke quietly to me. "Your life is in danger. Get in the car and leave—now."

I tried to explain that the car wasn't going anywhere, but the man insisted, "Get in. I will push." Again I tried to explain the situation, but the man ordered, "Get in, now!" I obeyed, though I was certain that the effort was futile. I turned on the ignition and shifted into gear. *There is no way he can push this heavy car uphill on gravel,* I thought.

I could see the two men, still holding the rocks above their heads, as they had been when the stranger had approached.

The car started to move. As it gathered speed, I let out the clutch and was surprised to hear the engine come to life. The stranger ran to my window and insisted that I not stop until I was out of this dangerous area. I tried to force a few dollars into his reluctant hand, but he said, "I have no need for money."

I drove a few blocks before the temperature light again came on, and the engine sputtered and died. As I coasted into a gas station, I realized that God had answered my prayer by sending an angel to protect both me and the Lord's equipment.

We live in a world filled with spiritual and physical dangers. God is able and willing to care for us if we place ourselves in His hands.

David Gates is director of ADRA/Guyana.

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The Great Controversy and the Church



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 18:19, 20; Acts 4:1-3; 12:5; 15; 20:29-31; Rom. 1:16, 17; 2 Tim. 2:15.

MEMORY TEXT: “ ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you’ ” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: What role does the church play in the great controversy? How does Satan attempt to thwart that role, and what weapons must the church use in her own defense?

THE CHURCH IN AN ALIEN WORLD. Though the Cross sealed Satan's doom, the great controversy will not be over until the church takes the good news of salvation to the entire world and Christ returns. “ ‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come’ ” (Matt. 24:14, NIV). From the inception of the church, however, the forces of evil, under numerous guises, both within and without the church, have plagued the church's attempts to spread the joy of salvation. Persecution, false doctrines, and internal divisions are some of what the enemy uses to thwart the church in its mission. But Christ does not leave His church without help. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the preservation of the Word, its faithful members continue to carry the banner of truth to a perishing world.

This week's lesson provides an outline of the church's role in this battle through the ages. As you study, ask yourself what role you now play and what role you desire to play, as a member of the church destined to fulfill God's divine commission.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 23.)

COMMISSION AND POWER.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19, 20; see also Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).

Christ’s commission to His church is perpetual. Its charge includes every generation. Its duty motivates everyone who has taken the name of Jesus. The purpose of delivering the good news to all nations is the salvation of souls and the creation of a community in which individuals can strengthen one another and continue to canvas the world with the gospel.

That purpose, however, is contrary to Satan’s goal. He despises God’s people and the unity that exists among them. His intention has always been to scatter the sheep and keep them far away from their Shepherd. He seeks to accomplish this through various means, such as using divisive cultural differences to divide the church; by introducing doctrines that have no biblical basis in order to confuse the church; by promoting views that are soothing but not demanding in order to anesthetize the church; and by giving it emotional cushions that eliminate personal crosses in order to weaken the church. We cannot fight this enemy alone. Thus, we have only two choices: Christ or failure.

How does Christ empower His disciples to complete the gospel commission? Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4.

In Acts 1:8, the Greek word translated “power” is *dunamis*. The word *dynamite* originates from this Greek word.

Other religions have had great leaders and lofty agendas. But none has had so daring an objective as Christianity, and no disciples have been given such powerful promises as Christ’s disciples were given. Jesus is our eternal contemporary, the Holy Spirit our eternal empowerment. Together, they enable us to spread the gospel despite Satan’s best efforts.

No one is neutral in the great controversy; even if you’re a member of the church, you are either aiding in the church’s work or diminishing it. Take a good hard look at yourself, your attitudes, your words, your actions, and ask, Am I helping or hindering? And remember—it has to be one or the other.

EARLY STRUGGLES.

Read the passages listed below and after each one write down one word that describes the struggles Satan inflicted on Christ's infant church as its members began to fulfill the divine commission.

Acts 4:1-3 _____

Acts 5:1-11 _____

Acts 7:54-60 _____

Acts 8:3, 4 _____

Satan's anger against God's people as predicted in Revelation 12 was already taking shape in several forms. Dismayed by the phenomenal growth of the church in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, he used everything in his power to halt its progress. If he could stop it early, how easy the rest of his work would be!

One of his first attempts backfired. Stephen's martyrdom, far from destroying the church, proved to be a watershed in its early history. Stephen's sermon (Acts 7) clearly showed the transition from the old to the new, from Jesus whom they crucified to the Christ who fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, from the temple on earth to the temple in heaven where the risen Jesus is seated next to the Father. Both Stephen's sermon and his death opened wide the doors of opportunity for the early church. "The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet [mark] of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface [erase] from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 101.

Satan is just as determined today to keep us from spreading the gospel now as then. What tactics is he attempting to use against us that he used against the infant church? What other tactics is he using, as well?

EARLY VICTORIES (Acts 2:36-38).

Yesterday we studied some of the struggles the infant church faced because of Satan's attempts to discourage its members from fulfilling their divine commission. But because of Jesus' promise to be with them always through the Holy Spirit, the story of Acts is really a story about victories.

Some of these victories include the fact that the early church was faithful to Christian truths and principles despite Satan's attacks. The verses below show how this is so. Read each text and then decide to which truth or principle the church was being loyal. The first two are done for you.

Text	Principle/Truth
Acts 1:14; 2:46	Unity is vital to Christian life and fulfilling our commission.
Acts 2:36	Christ is both divine and human.
Acts 2:4; 4:8	
Acts 4:32-37	
Acts 5:29	
Acts 6:1-4; 15	
Acts 10	
Acts 12:5	

Today it is popular among some Christians to claim that doctrines are not so important. The important things, they say, are to love Jesus and believe in Him. And though certainly those factors are important, why is doctrine indeed important for the church? How could we fulfill the commission to spread the gospel if we aren't even preaching the same gospel? And though some differences will, of course, exist among members, on what teaching must there be harmony?

CORRUPTING THE TRUTH (Acts 20:29-31).

Yesterday's lesson dealt with the victory the early church had in adhering to basic Christian truths and principles, despite Satan's attacks. But as time passed, this would not always be the case.

Based on each of the passages below, how has, and how will, Satan try to corrupt the church with false teachings?

Acts 20:29-31 _____

2 Pet. 2:1 _____

1 John 2:18, 19 _____

Between the close of the Apostolic Age and the beginning of the Reformation (1517), some of the most basic Christian truths and principles yielded to falsehoods, grounded in Roman and Greek philosophy, and the desire for power and self-exaltation on the part of various church centers in the Roman Empire. Some of these falsehoods included: (1) the immortality of the soul (Job 14:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; James 4:14); (2) infant baptism (Acts 8:12, 13, 29-38; 9:17, 18; 1 Cor. 1:14); (3) mediation through saints (Heb. 8:1-6; 9:11-15); (4) Sunday observance (Exod. 20:8-11); (5) righteousness by works (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 2:17); (6) church traditions viewed to be more important than biblical truths (Matt. 15:1-3, 6; Mark 7:8).

The nominal conversion of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century caused Christianity to lose even more of its purity. This event caused great rejoicing, but the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror; its doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions become incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.

Heresies and error don't arise overnight. Satan is patient. He introduces error slowly, through one "small" compromise, which leads to another "small" compromise to another and another and so forth. All these errors begin inside the human heart. People have to accept them in order for them to eventually make their way into the church as a whole. How can we, as individuals, protect ourselves (and thus the church) from this deadly trap?

BACK TO THE BIBLE (Rom. 1:16, 17; 2 Tim. 2:15).

During the Middle (or Dark) Ages, Bible study was confined to monks in monasteries. In fact, it was unlawful for ordinary church members even to have Bibles. However, with the help of Englishman John Wycliffe, who translated the Bible into the language of his people, the stage was set for a powerful reformation. "In giving the Bible to his countrymen, he had done more to break the fetters of ignorance and vice, more to liberate and elevate his country, than was ever achieved by the most brilliant victories on fields of battle."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 88.

In Germany, Martin Luther struck a deadly blow to apostasy by proclaiming two great biblical truths, long neglected by the Roman church: (1) the Bible and the Bible only, and (2) the just shall live by faith.

Why are these two truths so important? What role do they play in the great controversy?

Until Luther made known his thoughts regarding righteousness by faith based on his studies primarily in Romans and Galatians, the church in Rome taught that a person could earn salvation through various works. Risking his life, as did the apostles before him, Luther condemned the purchase of indulgences and false teachings; he urged people to taste the joy of salvation by exercising faith in Jesus' righteousness and that alone. Reformers such as Calvin, Zwingli, Melancthon, and Wesley joined in the restoration of other biblical truths so that the emerging Protestant church repudiated such falsehoods as purgatory, indulgences, transubstantiation (the belief that when taken by the believer, the Communion bread and wine actually become Christ's body and blood), and prayers for the dead.

The Reformation, however, did not restore such truths as the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11), the state of the dead (Ps. 115:7; Eccles. 9:5, 6, 10) and Jesus' high-priestly ministry (Heb. 8:1-6; 9:11-15). The reestablishment of these truths would be the work of another group who would grow out of the Millerite movement (1839-1844) to become the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

How do you understand the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the great controversy? Why did the Lord raise up this church? What specific truths are we teaching that no one else is, and how do these truths fit in with God's plan to end the great controversy, with His own character vindicated before the entire universe?

FURTHER STUDY: Revelation 12:17 gives us a description of God's people in the last days. Revelation 14:6-12 is the message they are to proclaim. How is this message part of the commission Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 28:19, 20?

"To prepare a people to stand in the day of God, a great work of reform was to be accomplished. God saw that many of His professed people were not building for eternity, and in His mercy He was about to send a message of warning to arouse them from their stupor and lead them to make ready for the coming of the Lord.

"This warning is brought to view in Revelation 14. Here is a threefold message represented as proclaimed by heavenly beings and immediately followed by the coming of the Son of man to reap 'the harvest of the earth.' The first of these warnings announces the approaching judgment. . . . This message is declared to be a part of 'the everlasting gospel.' The work of preaching the gospel has not been committed to angels, but has been entrusted to men. Holy angels have been employed in directing this work . . . but the actual proclamation of the gospel is performed by the servants of Christ upon the earth."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 311, 312. (We will study more about these messages as they relate to the last great battle of the great controversy in next week's lesson.)

For more information on this week's topics, read any or all of the following: *The Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 3, 4, 9, 10, 16-18.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. One of the victories of the apostolic church was breaking down the walls of prejudice (Acts 10; 11; 15). Yet Paul suggests that commitment to one family under God is always under attack from Satan (Gal. 2:11-13). How does Satan use prejudice today to prevent the church from doing its work? What prejudices might you be harboring that exclude you from full participation in spreading the gospel?
2. "I have met Jesus, and I cannot keep quiet," said Sadhu Sunder Singh, an Indian convert from Sikhism. He took the gospel to Tibet, where he was martyred. Why is a personal relationship with Christ (as opposed to simply knowledge about Him) so important for witnessing to others?

SUMMARY: The church is to spread the gospel to the entire world. Satan, however, prevents it from doing so through persecution, infighting, prejudices, false doctrines, and lack of Bible study. As we seek to fulfill the gospel commission, we must always focus on Christ and invite His Holy Spirit to transform our lives.



The Little Missionaries

Daryl Famisaran

Around the mission schools established by students from Mountain View College, the children are the most active members. The children are always on time for evening and morning worships with their teachers. Their voices ring through the forests as they heartily sing songs of heaven. Whenever they hear new truths from their teachers, they can't wait to tell their parents or anybody in the village whom they think may not have heard it yet.

Arnold Lucero, who teaches at the Taucucon Mission School, shared the story of Jerlie, the daughter of the village chief. Jerlie was the first in her village to receive Jesus as her Savior, and during a mission jamboree at Mountain View College in 1999, she asked to be baptized. The student missionaries were surprised by her decision. "The chief might be unhappy with us if you are baptized," they told Jerlie.

"Don't you worry about my father, sir," she told the student missionaries. "I'm sure he will be happy." At her instance, she was baptized.

When the teachers and students returned to the village, the student missionaries went directly to the chief's home to tell him about Jerlie's baptism. Just as she had predicted, her father responded, "I am happy for my daughter to follow the religion of our teachers. I know that you are sent by the most powerful God to teach our children."

Somewhat surprised by the chief's response, the student missionaries asked, "What made you say that, chief?"

"When you first came, my people and I had some reservations," the chief answered. "We thought that you would try to force religion into the minds of our children. So we watched everything you did. Then one night I could not sleep. I got up and walked to your cottage. It was bright with light. I peeked into your room through a crack in the wall. You two were sound asleep, but I saw two figures floating in the air above your heads. The light seemed to come from the two beings in white robes. The two beings appeared to me to be angels, which my daughter had told me about when she repeated her Bible stories. I concluded that God had sent you to be our teachers. So you understand that I am happy to have my daughter follow your teachings."

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The End of the Great Controversy



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 12:17-14:20; 19:11-21; 21:1-4; 22-26; 22:1-5.

MEMORY TEXT: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested” (Revelation 15:3, 4, NKJV).

KEY QUESTIONS: How will the great controversy end? What issues will climax at the end? How will God's people be involved, and what will be the most important aspect in this—the conclusion of the greatest battle the universe has ever known?

FULL CIRCLE. The first book of the Bible tells us how the great controversy began on earth; the last book of the Bible describes how it will end. The pages in between have taught us how the great controversy started in heaven, what the issues were (and are), what Satan's ploys are, how God remedied the catastrophe caused by Satan and the Fall, how we can maintain faith under Satan's attacks, and how we as individuals and the church are involved in this great controversy.

As we've said all along, because of Christ and the Cross, victory is assured. At the Cross, Jesus defeated the devil, exposed him to the universe as the liar he is, and guaranteed all who come to Him, Jesus, in penitence and faith, a place in the new earth. This week we will see final results of that victory, which leads to the demise of sin, Satan, and death.

*(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 30.)

SATAN'S LAST ATTACK (Rev. 13:1-17).

This verse tells us that Satan is planning one last battle before the end of the great controversy. Chapters 13 and 14 outline how this conflict will occur.

What two earthly powers will Satan use in the last days to wage war against God's people? Rev. 13:1-17.

The first beast characterizes the church-state union that dominated the Christian world for many centuries and was described by Paul as the "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:2-4) and by Daniel as the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8, 20-25; 8:9-12). The image of the beast (Rev. 13:14) represents that form of apostate religion that will be developed when churches, having lost the true spirit of the Reformation, shall unite with the state to enforce their teachings on others. In uniting church and state they will have become a perfect image to the beast.

How does Satan use the system established by these two powers to help him fight the last battle of the great controversy? What tactics will these powers employ?

Verse	How the Two Powers Will Be Used by Satan
Dan. 7:25	
Rev. 13:12	
Rev. 13:13, 14	
Rev. 13:15	
Rev. 13:15-17	

In his final attempts to destroy God and His church, Satan will inspire the system created by the two beasts to change God's laws, to persecute those who remain loyal to God by obeying His laws anyway, and to kill these steadfast disciples.

The early church, through compromise and apostasy, lost the power of God. As a result, it used force to promote its beliefs. How does this same principle work in our personal lives?

GOD'S INVITATION AND WARNING (Rev. 14:6-13).

Revelation 12:17–13:18 depicts Satan's final efforts in the great controversy to discredit God and destroy His church. Yet, even as he attempts to destroy the church, the church is involved in proclaiming a message to the world that will help, ultimately, lead to the destruction of Satan. No wonder Satan wants to destroy these people.

What part do God's people play in delivering these messages? Vss. 6, 8, 9. In other words, are these literal angels, or are they symbolic of something else? If so, what?

The angels represent "God's saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel, especially the features mentioned in [verse 6], at a time when the 'judgment is come' (v. 7)." —*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827.

The first angel's message announces the "everlasting gospel." Why is this the first thing the verse talks about? What is this "everlasting gospel," and why must all the world hear it?

The second angel cries that Babylon has fallen because it "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication [adultery]." Babylon symbolizes rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-9; Isa. 14:4, 12-14). In Revelation, Babylon stands for all false religious institutions and their leaders, especially the system created by the beast and his image, which will trigger the crisis in Revelation 13:15-17 (review yesterday's lesson).

The third angel's message gives a fierce warning to everyone not to worship the beast and its image. In fact, it presents one of the starkest and most fearful warnings in all the Bible. Thus, it behooves anyone who takes Scripture seriously to learn the content and meaning of these three messages (which are linked), in order to know what the issues are and how to be on the right side of this, the climax of the great controversy, as it's being played out here on earth.

The second angel's message regarding Babylon's fall finds special fulfillment when Protestantism in general departs from the everlasting gospel of righteousness by faith, proclaimed by the first angel. Do you see such a departure occurring today? If so, in what ways? Can we see it even in our own church, or even in your own life? What's the only solution?

GOD'S JUDGMENT.

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7).

One thing is clear: The message of the “everlasting gospel” includes a message of judgment. Usually such references to the judgment refer to the close of human probation and the end of the church’s task in preaching the gospel. But verse 7 has the saints fulfilling their great commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) at *the same time* this judgment begins. Thus the judgment is something that is happening *while* the great controversy is still being fought here on earth.

The angel’s announcement of judgment in Revelation 14:7 points to the beginning of the final judgment just before Christ’s return. We know that Daniel’s vision of judgment in chapter 7 depicts the final judgment because, when it is over, “one like the Son of man” (Christ) receives the eternal kingdom (Dan. 7:13, 14), an act that we understand results from Christ’s second coming.

Thus, Revelation 14:7 announces what Daniel 7 reveals, and that is a judgment in heaven that precedes the second coming of Christ. Both are talking about the same thing, though from different perspectives. Either way, as a result of this judgment, the saints receive the kingdom: “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Dan. 7:22). However one understands the details of the judgment, it’s something that turns out well for God’s people.

Compare Revelation 11:16-19 with 14:7. What is it about 11:16-19 that suggests it is depicting the pre-Advent phase of the final judgment? What is significant about the ark of the covenant appearing in the judgment scene of 11:16-19? (See Exod. 25:16; 17; Deut. 8:1-5.)

How do you understand the role of this pre-Advent judgment in the context of the great controversy? The first angel’s message announces that the judgment of God is come. Could this mean it also will be the hour of God’s vindication, as well?

ISSUES IN THE JUDGMENT (Rev. 12:17; 14:7, 9-12).

(Because the issues in the judgment involve the same issues over which the great controversy started, you might want to review lesson 2 before you study today's lesson.)

How does Revelation 12:17 characterize God's people as they face Satan's last attack in the great controversy? How does this characteristic relate to the first angel's message in 14:7?

The first angel invites all people to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him as the Creator of the earth, heaven, the sea “‘and the springs of water’ ” (NIV). Because God designed the Sabbath to help people remember that He is the Creator and because His commandments urge people to keep the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11), it seems clear that the obedience of God's people during this last battle includes keeping the biblical Sabbath.

But this obedience is more than a mere observance. Revelation 14:1 says that God's people have Christ's and the Father's “name written in their foreheads.” God's name symbolizes His character (Exod. 34:5-7; 1 Corinthians 13; Gal. 5:22, 23), and with His law written in their hearts (Heb. 8:10), His people will reflect His character as they obey Him.

What other issue dominates the last battle of the great controversy? Rev. 14:9-12.

The final issue involves true and false worship, the true and the false gospel. When this issue is clearly brought before the world, those who reject God's memorial of creatorship—the Bible Sabbath—choosing to worship and honor Sunday in the full knowledge that it is not God's appointed day of worship, will receive the “mark of the beast.” This mark is a mark of rebellion; the beast claims that its change of the day of worship shows its authority over even God's law.

Either one's choice of righteousness by faith will be revealed as one participates in a form of worship that God has endorsed, or one's effectual choice of righteousness by works will be revealed as one participates in a form of worship God has forbidden but which the beast and his image command, a humanmade worship.

Consider: How ironic that Adventists are accused of being legalistic for keeping the Sabbath when the Sabbath is the sign of those who truly have embraced the everlasting gospel, in contrast to those who have embraced a theology of works.

THE GRAND FINALE (Rev. 19:11-21).

How does Revelation 19:11-21 picture Christ at His return?

This passage “portrays Christ as the victorious warrior descending from heaven on a white battle horse (verse 11). He comes to claim our planet as His rightful domain: ‘on his head are many crowns’ (verse 12). Neither the dragon with his seven crowns (Rev. 12:3) nor the sea monster with its ten (Rev. 13:1) have received from God the authority to rule over mankind. Christ returns as the ‘King of kings, the Lord of lords’ (Rev. 19:16). Him alone the Father authorizes to govern the earth, and He alone will execute the holy will of God, for He is ‘the Word of God’ (verse 13).”—Hans K. LaRondelle, *Chariots of Salvation* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987), pp. 129, 130.

“The title ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords’ (v. 16) applies in a special sense to Christ at this time. . . . All power has been given into His hands (1 Cor. 15:25). Satan selfishly aspired to the exalted position that had been reserved for Christ as the Son of God (Isa. 14:12-14; Rev. 12:7-9. . . .) But the latter, not counting equality with the Father a thing to be grasped, had voluntarily relinquished the full exercise of the attributes and prerogatives of Deity for a time . . . , and thereby demonstrated His worthiness to receive the honor and dignity implicit in the title ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords.’—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 874.

At Christ’s return, the leopardlike beast and the two-horned beast (Revelation 13; Sunday’s lesson) are captured. In addition, Satan is apprehended and imprisoned for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3).

Based on the texts listed below, outline these following events:

Rev. 20:4-6 _____

Rev. 7-10; 11-15 _____

Rev. 21:1-5 _____

During the final, or executive, phase of judgment, both the evil angels and humans who remained unrepentant will be punished and destroyed. The fire that destroys them will cleanse the earth of sin, and God’s desire “to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth,” is finally a reality (Eph. 1:10, RSV).

Review Revelation 19:11-21. List the four names Christ is called in this passage. How does each name give you comfort now and assure you of the outcome of the great controversy?

FURTHER STUDY: When the great controversy is over, God's people will live with Him for eternity. The Bible uses much more space to persuade people that eternal life is a divine gift than it uses to describe that gift. Still, it is good to meditate on the pictures of eternity we do find in Scripture. As you think about the following passages that deal with eternity, remember that they use ideas from human experiences that can only hint at the marvels of our Creator and Redeemer: John 14:2, 3; 20:19, 26; 1 Cor. 2:9; 15; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-5. Which of these descriptions means the most to you, and why?

"Christ is the truth of all that we find in the Father. The definition of heaven is the presence of Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 989.

"Now the church is militant, now we are confronted with a world in midnight darkness, almost wholly given over to idolatry. But the day is coming in which the battle will have been fought, the victory won. The will of God is to be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Then the nations will own no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving—the robe of Christ's righteousness."—Page 988.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **God's message to the church in Laodicea also is a message to the church that exists just before Christ returns. Based on what we have learned this quarter about the great controversy, why is this message so crucial? Rev. 3:14-22. (See also Matt. 25:1-13.)**
2. **Matthew 25:31-46 is Jesus' description of the executive phase of the final judgment. Upon what are people's rewards based? How does this basis fit with salvation by faith in Christ? Provide texts to support your answer.**

SUMMARY: Satan's last effort to win the great controversy involves the formation of a system that will attempt to force all people to cease worshipping God and obeying His commands. God responds in two ways: (1) by issuing through His followers three great messages that invite all people to accept His salvation and warn them against Satan's last efforts; (2) through the final judgment that, in all its phases, vindicates not only His character against Satan's charges but the faith of His devoted followers, as well.



The False Prophet

J. H. Zachary

Marco Martinez often preached in his Protestant church in Santa Lucia, Honduras. The congregation appreciated his efforts until he began quoting from a book that his wife had brought home. The book, *The Great Controversy*, had a strong impact on Martinez's sermons. But some of the church members began questioning his theology, and some even called him a false prophet.

One thing bothered Norma. Their church taught that women should not hold leadership roles or take an active part in the local congregation. When she accepted an invitation to visit the little Adventist congregation in town, she was attracted by the members' freedom to use their spiritual gifts. She began attending the Adventist church regularly. Norma rejoiced in the love, fellowship, and opportunities to serve in her new church. And her husband enjoyed reading the books she brought home. Martinez was touched by the love of Jesus as he read *Steps to Christ*. He longed to learn more about the Bible.

When the leaders of the Protestant home church realized that Norma was attending the Adventist church, they voted to punish Martinez for allowing his wife to leave their church. He was ostracized, and members avoided him. Martinez missed the close fellowship he had once enjoyed in his church.

About this time the Adventist church sponsored evangelistic meetings. Marco attended with his wife and decided to join his wife in this church. Not one to sit in the pew for long, during the altar call one evening, Martinez circulated through the audience, encouraging others to take their stand for Christ and join the Adventist church with him.

After his baptism Martinez organized a Bible study group in his home. In his free time he hikes over the steep mountain trails looking for interested persons with whom he can share his faith. Martinez takes his turn preaching, for his home church shares its pastor with several other congregations. His sermons are similar to those he preached in his former church, but now when he quotes from Ellen White, he is no longer called a false prophet.

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Bible Study Guide for Second Quarter, 2002

Great Apocalyptic Prophecies, by Angel Manuel Rodriguez, covers biblical prophecies of the last days—prophecies that will build our trust in God's Word, teach us more about Jesus, and make us more hopeful of the future because of what Christ has done for us in the past.

Lesson 1: Interpreting Apocalyptic Prophecies

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: History at a Glance (Dan. 2:8).

Monday: Jesus' Method of Interpretation (Matt. 24:15, 16).

Tuesday: Interpretation of Symbols (Dan. 2:38; 8:21; Rev. 12:9; 17:15).

Wednesday: Paul's View of Prophecy (2 Thess. 2:3-8).

Thursday: Christ-Centered Interpretation (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

MEMORY TEXT: Daniel 2:27, 28.

SABBATH GEM: Besides using symbols and images in the Bible to share with us the future, the Lord has provided a biblical method for interpreting these images and symbols. This week we'll explore this method.

Lesson 2: Daniel 2 and 7: The ABCs of Apocalyptic Prophecies

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Two Parallel Visions (Daniel 2; 7).

Monday: The Fourth Beast (Dan. 2:40; 7:7).

Tuesday: The Little Horn—1.

Wednesday: The Little Horn—2.

Thursday: The First Apocalyptic Time Prophecy (Dan. 7:25).

MEMORY TEXT: Daniel 7:27.

SABBATH GEM: In Daniel 2 and 7, Daniel portrays the sweep of world history from his own time up through ours and finally to the end of the world, when God establishes His final kingdom.

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North American Division



Unions	Churches	Companies	Membership	Population
Atlantic	444	52	88,045	31,894,800
Canada, SDA Church in	325	56	49,233	30,771,000
Columbia	600	51	107,022	47,265,400
Lake	483	29	71,991	33,485,400
Mid-America	467	34	55,875	23,701,600
North Pacific	401	43	84,600	12,264,200
Pacific	613	79	203,876	42,800,680
Southern	940	57	193,662	51,840,360
Southwestern	522	46	72,917	32,410,560
Totals (12/31/00)	4,795	447	927,221	306,434,000

Mission Project:
Strengthen media evangelism to reach a secular society that is not attracted to traditional Adventist approaches to evangelism.



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