



2024 2Q The Great Controversy Lesson 1 The War Behind All Wars

by Tim Jennings

What do you understand the Great Controversy to be? What is it over?

INTRODUCTION to STUDY GUIDE

Read second paragraph:

- The great controversy began in heaven with Lucifer's rebellion against God. At the heart of this cosmic conflict is the issue of God's love. Is He fully loving? Does He have the best interests of His creatures in view? Or is He an authoritative dictator desiring only what is in His own self-interest? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 2).

In EGW's magnum opus the Conflict of the Ages series, the five volumes which covers the entire Bible from beginning to end, the first three words in the first volume *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the last three words at the end of the last volume *The Great Controversy* are "God is love." Everything in between in that magnificent five volume set is unpacking, describing, unfolding, documenting God's character, government, methods and law of love which operates upon truth and freedom in conflict with Satan's kingdom of fear, selfishness, and coercion.

The lesson frames the issue here nicely, if we don't get confused by the subtlety of the language, if we understand it rightly. They contrast God's character of love with that of a dictator who uses external authority and power to force their way.

But there is a subtle change in the way God's character of love is described—I don't think it is nefarious, but it still can lead to misunderstanding. So, we need to understand this clearly, while God is loving—He is far more than loving. Angels and humans can be loving—but **God is love**, not just loving. To move God away from being love to being loving opens the door to introduce corrupting ideas such as is often said, "God is not only loving but He is also just" and those who say this do so to introduce the idea that God's justice is something other than His love, that God uses His power to inflict just punishments for sin—which immediately undermines the truth of God's character of love and makes God out to be like Satan in character. Such concepts introduce coercion—which destroys love. So, we must be very careful in how we understand these things lest we allow subtle distortions to enter into our thinking which ultimately undermine our understanding of God's love and truth, this is what has happened to millions throughout history, including that specially called and blessed people who faithfully studied the Bible, kept all the rules, including the Bible Sabbath, but because they believed God's law functions like human law they hated and rejected God when He stood among them.

As we will see throughout this quarterly, the enemy of God uses the same strategies and methods over and over again to entrap hearts and minds in rebellion against God, and those whose hearts remain entrapped too often believe they are serving God while they are in fact warring against God, just like Saul of Tarsus did before the Damascus road.

SABBATH

Read second paragraph,

- God is a God of incredible love. His very nature is love (1 John 4:7,8). All of His actions are loving (Jer. 31:3). **Love can never be forced, coerced, or legislated.** Ellen G. White states it well when she writes, “Only by love is love awakened.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 22. **To deny the power of choice is to destroy the ability to love, and to destroy the ability to love is to eradicate the possibility of being truly happy.** God wins our allegiance by His love. He is dealing with the great controversy between good and evil in such a way that sin will never arise in the universe again. God’s purpose is to demonstrate before the entire universe that He has always acted in the best interests of His creatures. Looking at the world through the lens of God’s love, in the light of the great controversy between good and evil, reassures each of us that right will triumph over wrong and will do so forever. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 6, emphasis mine).

This is well stated, and absolutely true. And because this is an absolute truth what does this truth make impossible?

Are we free if God uses His power to inflict pain, suffering, and death upon us if we disobey? Or is that the definition of coercion, “Do what I say or I will kill you”?

So, if God will not, and in fact cannot, use His power to inflict death upon the wicked lest He destroy love, incite rebellion, and destroy individuality making people mindless drones, robotic rule-followers, then what theologies are immediately recognized to be false, to be distorted in some way, to be misconstrued, and erroneous?

- Any theology that requires God to be appeased, propitiated, or assuaged
 - I didn’t say there isn’t propitiation—it just isn’t being done to God
- Any theology that has Jesus doing something to change God
- Any theology in which God is the source of pain, suffering, and death
- Any theology in which God inflicts punishment for sin
- Any theology in which there is legal accounting and required punishments for misdeeds
- Any theology that has Jesus interceding or mediating **to His Father** in heaven
 - I didn’t say Jesus is not mediating or interceding, He just isn’t doing anything to His Father because the problem isn’t in or with God

- Any theology that teaches we should believe based on authority, signs, wonders, and rules, and not evidence prayerfully reasoned through
- Any theology that teaches God punished Jesus at the cross
- Any theology that teaches that justification is a legal accounting rather than an actual healing of heart and mind

And what is the underlying root lie that leads to all of these subsequent errors in theology? That God's law functions like human law. It is only by returning to the truth that God is Creator and His laws are the laws reality is built to operate upon and the supreme law is the law of love, just as Jesus taught. And love cannot be commanded, it cannot be forced, and any time one tries to use legislation, rules, rule enforcement, external judicial processes to force righteousness and justice, one destroys love and incites rebellion.

This is why the Bible teaches that it is not by might or power but by the way the Holy Spirit works that God wins the war (Zechariah 4:6). And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and love, it is the truth that sets us free from the lies and love casts out the fear and in that faith or trust relationship with God, we receive through the indwelling Spirit the mind of Jesus, becoming partakers of the divine nature as Peter wrote (2 Peter 1:4). This is reality.

The point is that the promotion of penal/legal theologies with a god who is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as so-called just punishment for sin perpetuates the war and obstructs the final message of mercy to the world.

SUNDAY

Read Revelation 12:7-9:

- And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Revelation 12:7-9 NIV84).

What is this text describing? Is this a war of might and power? Do we think there are angels with light sabers battling throughout the heavens?

The only way to have a reasonable understanding of such things is to read the Bible as a whole, harmonizing all the various parts to understanding the grand central theme, which is the war that began in heaven. But Revelation can only be understood if one has a deep knowledge of the other 65 books of the Bible for it is those truths that provide the underpinning for decoding and comprehending the symbols and elements of Revelation.

Before we get to Revelation, we must know the following correctly or we will not be equipped to accurately understand Revelation:

- How do we understand God’s law functions? If we believe any aspect of God’s law functions like human law, then we will misconstrue Scripture and especially Revelation.
- We must understand specific design laws of God, such as the law of love, truth, liberty, and worship—how these design protocols actually work and function, if we do not understand these laws, how reality works, then we will misconstrue the meaning of Revelation
- We must have a knowledge of who Michael is—and this requires comparing many other evidences throughout Scripture. There are four views on the identity of Michael:
 - He is an archangel, a created being, of the same order as Gabriel or Lucifer and Jesus and Michael are completely different beings
 - He is Jesus in His preincarnate form, but this Michael/Jesus is not God, he is a created being, created by the Father like all the other angels.
 - Michael is Jesus in His preincarnate form, but rather than being created like other angels, he is a created god—that is he is a divine being but a demi-god, a subordinate god, and lesser god than the Father, a child, or offspring of the Father who came into existence as an action of the Father, in other words there was a time when this Jesus/Michael did not exist, but when he came into existence he possessed divine attributes.
 - He is Jesus in His preincarnate form, but this Michael/Jesus is fully God, pre-existent, with life original, unborrowed, underived from another source. That Jesus was the member of the Godhead who would only manifest in angelic form, but was not an angel, and was always in existence. This third view is my view and here is why:
 - God is an infinite being who lives in unapproachable light 1 Tim 6:16, unapproachable by all finite beings including angels. Therefore, in order for God to have the closest intimacy with His creatures, and since creatures cannot enter into infinity, if God wants the closest interaction and intimacy with His creatures a member of the Godhead must leave infinity and enter into time, linear existence to interact on our plane, and that member of the Godhead is Jesus. And prior to His incarnation as human He manifested in the form of an angel, but He is not an angel, He is fully God. This conclusion is supported by the following Bible facts:
 - There **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.**” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to **look at God**. (Exodus 3:2-6, emphasis mine) (See also Acts 7:30-38; Judges 13:16-22)

- Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live...** Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when **all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out**—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:25,28,29, emphasis mine).
 - “For the **Lord himself** will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the **voice of the archangel** and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**” (1Thessalonians 4:16, emphasis mine).
 - But even the **archangel Michael**, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 9, emphasis mine).
- We must know that Jesus as Michael appeared in the form of an angel, but was not an angel, He was fully God. And that Jesus in His preincarnate form shared a name with Lucifer.
 - And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star** rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19 NIV84, emphasis mine)
 - The Greek is *phosphoros*, which translated into Latin is Lucifer, and we read in Isaiah 14:12 of Lucifer’s fall:
 - How you have fallen from heaven, **O morning star**, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! (Isaiah 14:12 NIV84, emphasis mine)
- We must understand the nature of the war and the weapons God employs:
 - For though we live in the world, we do not **wage war** as the world does. The **weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world**. On the contrary, they have **divine power** to demolish strongholds. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension** that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84, emphasis mine)
 - We must remember Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

There is so much Bible knowledge we must have before we can accurately understand the secrets within the highly symbolic book of Revelation.

So, with all this in mind, what is the nature of the war? What is the central issue in the war? How was Lucifer in heaven able to deceive angels? What lie did he tell?

He told the lie that God is unjust and makes up rules and God’s form of justice requires sin to be punished. But how? By alleging equality with Jesus, who, in His preincarnate state, manifested in the form of an angel—but Jesus was NOT an angel.

Because Jesus is fully God, He would go into counsels with the Father, enter into infinity, whereas Lucifer could not fully enter, he could only come partially into God’s presence, similar to Moses

only being able to partially enter into Jesus' presence on the mountain. But Lucifer alleged that God made up an arbitrary rule because there was no reality-based, objective reason, to keep him out, and his allegations suggested that God would harm and punish if Lucifer disobeyed, in other words, that God uses coercion to enforce His way.

In truth, in reality, Lucifer as a created being, could not internalize, process, assimilate, or comprehend, the full infinite power and presence of God. Thus keeping a functional barrier between Jesus and Lucifer was the reality-based outworking of the distinction between the Creator God and a creature. However, Lucifer, without any reason, cause, or flaw in his being, chose to become jealous; he coveted power, prestige, and position which were only those of God and used the apparent similarity of physical appearance between Jesus' manifesting in the form of an angel, along with Jesus' natural graciousness, gentleness, patience, kindness, and meekness to advance his lies.

Lucifer also used his position of trust and leadership against the angels in heaven. Those who had known him their entire lives and had previously been blessed when before his rebellion he had shared truths with them. Thus, because of Lucifer's exalted position, long standing previous truth-telling, the love and trust developed in him by the angels, it became all the more difficult to expose him as a liar, especially since God is exactly NOT the kind of being Lucifer alleges, meaning that God would not use power to force Lucifer to comply, because it goes against who God is, and also such an action would only spread rebellion, fear, and distrust.

Read second paragraph,

- God did not create a devil. He created a being of dazzling brightness named Lucifer. This angelic being was created perfect. Included in his perfection was freedom of choice—a fundamental principle of God's government, which runs by love, not coercion. Sin originated with Lucifer in heaven itself. There is no logical explanation why this perfect angel should have allowed pride and jealousy to take root in his heart and grow into rebellion against his Creator. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 7).

Again, this is very well stated, and I believe is completely true—and since this is in fact true, since freedom of choice is a fundamental principle of God's government which cannot run on coercion, what kind of law and government is ruled out? Imposed law with imposed and inflicted punishments. This truth alone should be sufficient for all thinking people to reject the penal/legal theologies, for they are mutually exclusive—both ideas cannot be true, it is either we have genuine freedom, or God makes up rules and enforces them with external punishments.

Do you see why we are still wandering in this wilderness of sin? Because the lie that God's law functions like human law continues to operate within the church and God is presented as a being whose justice is the use power to punish sinners and Jesus' death was for the purpose of taking away God's punishment and His blood is an offering, a legal payment, made to God to propitiate His wrath. In other words, the most common version of Christianity is perpetuating Satan's lies about God's law which keeps people distrusting God—and instead of trusting God they trust Jesus to

protect us from God, or trust in some payment of Jesus' blood or some legal accounting, or being hidden, or having records erased etc.

Read third paragraph,

- Lucifer, a created being, desired the worship that belonged only to the Creator. He attempted to usurp God's throne by questioning God's authority. His rebellion led to open warfare in heaven. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 7).

What do we understand this to mean?

When we think of God's throne what do we consider it to represent, to mean? What did Lucifer seek?

Did Lucifer walk into the throne room of God one day and look around and say:

“Wow God, this is the most amazing building I have ever seen. The ceilings are 100 miles high, covered in gold, sparkling with diamonds, accented with platinum, with amazing cosmic view-screens to every galaxy in the universe, the colonnades are made of the most exquisite pearls, decorated with rubies and emeralds, and the sapphire pavement accented in gold and platinum is unbelievable, and the throne upon which you sit, it is the most ornate piece of furniture I have ever seen. God, would you mind if I sit in that chair, in fact can I have this room for my home?”

What do you think God would have said to such a request for a throne and throne room made out of inanimate material? What do you think the God who speaks worlds into existence would have said? Do you think God would have said anything other than, “Lucifer, my dear son, of course you can have this chair and room if you derive joy from it. No worries, I can speak millions more into existence if I have need of another.”

Did Lucifer really want to sit on a chair in a room all alone, or did Lucifer seek a different throne? What throne? He wanted to be enthroned in the Spirit temple, in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings as the one most loved, adored, trusted, valued, the one who could wield his power over others, by governing their hearts and minds!

Lucifer, seeking to enthrone himself in the hearts and minds of intelligent beings sought to dethrone God as trustworthy through his claims of equality with Christ and allegations that God the Father is unfair, arbitrary, and the maker of laws and enforcer of those laws.

And that is what Paul describes in 2 Thessalonians:

- He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4 NIV84)

MONDAY

Read second paragraph,

- When war broke out in heaven, the angels had to decide—would they follow Jesus or Lucifer? What was the nature of this war in heaven? Was it a physical war, or a war of ideas, or both? We don't know the details, but the conflict was physical enough that Satan and his angels eventually were “cast out,” and a place was not “found for them in heaven any longer” (Rev. 12:8, 9, NKJV). This war obviously includes some kind of physical element. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 8).

What do you think of the idea that the heavenly conflict was physical in some way? What of this historical quotation?

- **God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth;** but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. (The Desire of Ages p. 759).

Hmmm...was the war a physical war? To suggest there was some aspect of the war that was physical seems misleading. If it was a war of might and power it would have been over in an instant—but what would have happened in the hearts and minds of the loyal angels if God had used might and power to destroy Lucifer? Fear and distrust and thus rebellion and sin spread.

So, no, might and power and physical conflict were not part of this war. Then how do we understand Satan and his sympathizers being cast out of heaven?

When was Satan cast out, does Revelation 12:8,9, which was cited by the lesson, say when Satan was cast out? No, but does Scripture elsewhere suggest when Satan was cast out of heaven?

- Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; **now the ruler of this world will be cast out.** And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all **peoples** to Myself.” (John 12:30-32 NKJV, emphasis mine).

According to Jesus when was Satan cast out and restricted to the earth? At the crucifixion, why? Because the truth had destroyed his lies and no angel in heaven would listen to him anymore, not because some physical force was being used.

In fact, don't we have evidence from the book of Job that Satan was still entering and leaving heaven prior to the cross?

Consider this historical quote from *The Desire of Ages* two pages from the previous quote:

- Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer.** By shedding the blood of the Son of God, **he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.** (The Desire of Ages 761).

In the Great Controversy there is no employment of physical might and force on God's part to win the war, because what God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, friendship and that can only be won by God's methods of truth, love, and freedom, any use of might, power, and force destroys all that God wants.

TUESDAY

Planet Earth becomes Involved

How did Earth get dragged into the war which began in heaven?

What came first, Lucifer's rebellion, or God creating Earth and mankind?

Evidences:

- Satan was in Eden from the beginning to tempt, suggesting that he was already in rebellion.
- Job 38:4-7: "Where were you **when I laid the earth's foundation**? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and **all the angels shouted for joy**? (Job 38:4–7 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Then there is this historical quote showing that the Adventist reformers saw it this way, from EG White:

- **Angels on probation had been deceived by Satan, and had been led on by him in the great rebellion in heaven against Christ.** They failed to endure the test brought to bear upon them, and they fell. **Adam was then created in the image of God and placed upon probation.** He had a perfectly developed organism. All his faculties were harmonious. In all his emotions, words, and actions, there was a perfect conformity to the will of his Maker. (Confrontation p. 18, emphasis mine).

So Satan rebels, why bring Earth into it?

My understanding is God wins with evidence, not declarations and claims, nor by forcing His way through punishment. Lucifer, as a created being, alleged equality with Jesus who was manifesting in the form of an angel, but Jesus is fully God. He used this allegation to accuse God of arbitrariness and restrictions on liberty, i.e., God won't let me go into counsels that Michael goes into.

So, how can God expose Satan's lies, expose that God is not arbitrary, wouldn't it be evidence revealing or demonstrating that there is a difference between Lucifer and Michael—and what would be a way to do that? How about bringing Earth into the setting as the stage to demonstrate the difference? And the Earth at that time was a dark void in space, an deep abyss covered only by darkness. And I can imagine God saying to Lucifer, “You claim equality with Michael, well, here is this dark whole in the Milky Way a deep nothingness. Show us what you can do. Use your power to create.” And of course Lucifer the created being can't do anything so then, after appropriate time, Michael steps forward and says, “Let there be light...”

Remember who the Bible teaches is the member of the Godhead through whom all things were created:

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3 NIV84).
- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV84).
- For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. (Colossians 1:16 NIV84).

Earth and humankind was not a new idea conceived of by God after Satan's rebellion, but God chose to bring Earth and mankind into existence at this time in universal history as evidence to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact fully God and far superior to Lucifer.

And the lessons of Jesus creating Earth were to go far beyond merely creating physical reality, Jesus created a planet teeming with life, and He crowned this creation by creating Adam and Eve in the image of God and the entire planet was built upon the design law of love in which every living creature lives by giving freely to other creatures. And Adam and Eve were created as two individual beings of the same substance with unique individualities but capable of becoming one in love and in that unity of love creating beings in their own image.

This creation not only demonstrates Jesus is fully God, but is designed to reveal the design laws of God, as Adam and Eve were intended to govern the planet in perfect love. We also see demonstrated in this creation why God didn't allow Lucifer into counsels Jesus entered when we recognize why

Adam and Eve didn't include the giraffe or elephant into their planning sessions. It was not because they were making up arbitrary rules or were selfish but the animals could not contribute to the discussion. And the gap between a human and an animal is much smaller than the gap between a created being and our infinite God. Lucifer was not admitted to the counsel that Jesus attended because he couldn't process the information, not because God was selfish or restrictive.

And this is why Lucifer targeted Earth above all others because he wanted to coopt the lesson book and occupy God's throne inside the spirit temple, to reside enthroned in the hearts and minds of people created to be image bearers of God and thereby get us, by our lives, attitudes, actions, and choices to misrepresent God. Satan wanted to replace in the human temple the spirit of love and trust with the spirit of fear and selfishness.

And thus the need of a Savior—Jesus, the promised seed of Genesis 3:15, came to reveal the truth about God to win us to trust, but also to eliminate the infection of sin from the species human, to eradicate fear and selfishness and restore in the human being the spirit of love, truth, freedom, and trust. And Jesus, by His victory in a weakened humanity demonstrated that Adam's fall in a perfect humanity was not because of some manufacturer's defect. Sin is not attributable to God!

In Jesus we have God in human form perfectly revealing the character of God and exposing Satan as a liar while simultaneously destroying the infection of fear and selfishness and restoring God's perfect law of love as the basis of life in humanity.

What happened to God's image in Adam and Eve? What was the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Why did God place it in the garden? What does it reveal about God's law and how He governs?

Since Adam and Eve were created in the middle of a war over God's character, law, methods, and trustworthiness—a war of ideas, they had to be exposed to the issues and decide for themselves what type of people would they become—what would they choose to know. Would they choose the truth and love of God and thereby know good, know loyalty, love, truth, faithfulness and godliness, and life or would they choose lies, and know evil, fear, guilt, shame, selfishness and death? Sadly, they chose to know evil by believing lies.

God placed the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden for them to freely choose what they would know for themselves, not know cognitively, but know by experience, in heart and character. Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- **God might have created man without the power to transgress His law;** He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case **man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation.** Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. **There could have been no development of character.** . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. (Conflict and Courage p. 13.3, emphasis mine)

- **Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband.** They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors, and it was only by repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah that they could hope ever to regain the lost image of God. (Review and Herald January 5, 1886, par. 8)
- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, character, and relationships a terminal condition

Do we understand that we (human beings) were created with the high calling of revealing the truth about God, that we are to be images bearers of God, that we still, because of Jesus, have the privilege of choosing to know good, to live out the living law of God and be solidified into loyalty to God?

Adam and Eve in Eden had the ability to choose only good, but instead they corrupted themselves with fear and selfishness by believing lies about God and breaking trust with Him. We are all born with that infection of fear and selfishness and without remedy we will die. God understood this, and therefore, because He is love, He sent His Son to do for us what we could not do. Jesus came, partook of this terminal sin condition and eradicated it and restored sinless life sinless love into the humanity He assumed and thus became the second Adam and we by faith may partake of that divine sinless nature and be reborn with a new life, new motives, new desires to love God and others and no longer be slaves to fear and selfishness.

WEDNESDAY

Read first two paragraphs,

- Adam and Eve have sinned, and God has told them that they must leave their garden home. From now on, toil and suffering will be their lot. Will they have to suffer and finally die with no hope? Is death the end of everything?

It was at this point that God gave them the promise recorded in Genesis 3:15. Looking directly at Satan, the serpent, He said: “ ‘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’ ” (NKJV). They may not have fully understood at that moment exactly what this meant, but they knew they could hope again. In some way, through the “Seed of the woman,” their redemption would come. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

Why will their lot now be toil and suffering? Are the toil and suffering an inflicted punishment by God or the natural result of nature no longer being under the full governance and dominion God had given to Adam?

And what is the importance of the Genesis 3:15 promise in regard to how we understand the Old Testament?

It is the key to understanding the entire OT narrative. Once Adam and Eve sinned no human could be saved without Jesus coming as our Savior. The entire OT narrative focuses on the fulfillment of this promise and Satan's warfare to oppose and try and stop it from happening. The two antagonistic principles are warring out through human history.

Read the fourth paragraph,

- Do you ever wonder if God really loves you? Look at the Cross—look at the crown of thorns, look at the nails in His hands and feet. With every drop of blood that Jesus shed on Calvary, God is saying, “I love you. I do not want to be in heaven without you. Yes, you’ve sinned; you sold yourself into the hand of the enemy; yes, in and of yourself you are unworthy of eternal life. But I’ve paid the ransom to get you back.” When you look at the Cross, you never have to wonder again if you’re loved. (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

There is no doubt that the cross of Christ, His selfless, freely given, sacrifice reveals God's love to us, and we are so thankful that God is love, and God has provided everything for our salvation. And what Jesus did for us at the cross will be our science and song, our study and our inspiration, the focus of never-ending insights and heart moving love throughout all eternity. We will never stop growing in our insight of God and His character, but also into the significance of the infinite sacrifice of Christ for us at the cross.

One of the healthiest actions we can take is to regularly contemplate the life of Jesus, understanding that we are seeing God live out a human life, God walking, talking, and acting, God in humanity being tempted, abused, rejected, despised, mocked, tortured, and killed; We should stop regularly and consider what it means that when we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father, that no one ever had to intercede with Jesus to protect them from Jesus, even Judas, Jesus' betrayer, didn't need someone in between, Jesus washed his betrayers dirty feet.

Do we realize that Jesus is God acting and that it is done to inform us of who God is, how much the Father loves us, and how the Father will treat us—including all who betray and reject Him? And what happened to Judas, how did God in human flesh respond to Judas? He looked upon Him with infinite love, sadness, and loss—“Oh my son, my child, my friend, how I longed to heal you, to take you under my wings and protect you but you wouldn't let me.” And Judas, looking into those eyes of infinite love and mercy went out and hanged himself. God did not inflict punishment upon Judas, but terrible suffering of heart, mind, soul, the guilt and shame of his own sin and actions led him to kill himself. This is an example to us, it is what God does to the wicked in the end, when infinite truth

and love flows free all the rejectors have the full weight of their own guilt and shame and all the harm and evil they have perpetrated upon others come down upon them, the reality of their own condition in the face of God's infinite love, compassion, sadness and grief for them. They will know that God is not against them, but grieves at what they have chosen to become and they do not want to live in His presence, they beg for the mountains to fall upon them and give up their life preferring eternal nonexistence.

God's love is incredible and we, including myself, do not appreciate it fully, in fact we never will, we can only grow in our experience of His love, but there will always be more depths to experience.

Is there anything in the paragraph we just read that didn't seem quite right, that while written with the utmost good intentions, nevertheless introduces subtle distortions that perpetuate lies about God and the Great Controversy?

What about this section, any problem with this?

- “Yes, you've sinned; you sold yourself into the hand of the enemy; yes, in and of yourself you are unworthy of eternal life. But I've paid the ransom to get you back.”

Is there a difference between selling oneself into slavery and being born into slavery?

Adam and Eve certainly chose to go from sinless freedom into the slavery of sin, but what about the rest of us, did we choose that, or for us is it as David wrote in Psalm 51:5 that we are born in sin conceived in iniquity?

We are all born in the slavery of sin. And think about it: doesn't it mean something different in how we understand our problem, our responsibility, our guilt, to believe we individually did this to ourselves, that somehow we didn't have to choose sin but we did, versus the truth that since Adam and Eve sinned none of the rest of us had a choice to not be a sinner?

This is important, the legal model focuses on behavior, on acts, on deeds, and thus will always introduce the idea that our problem is our choice to sin, the sins we have committed, and the idea that we have sold ourselves into sin. But this is a lie. Adam and Eve sold themselves into sin, and because they had been given by God the ability to procreate beings in their image, all of their children are born with this sin condition.

And this is the difference, the legalists believe sin is behavioral, we believe it is a state of being that is out of harmony with God that results in sinful behaviors.

Jesus would support our view, for Jesus in Matthew 5 drew a distinction between the behaviors and the heart condition that leads to the behaviors. He pointed out that sin is the heart condition that leads to the behaviors. And when did each of us get this sinful heart condition, the heart motivation or spirit of fear and selfishness? It is the life we inherited from Adam.

Thus, we are born with a terminal condition we did not choose, dead in trespass and sin, and this terminal condition without remedy results in acts of sin, but we are not born legally guilty. And through Jesus Christ we are each given a choice to surrender the sin-infected, fear-driven life we inherited from Adam, to surrender self, the fear, selfishness, guilt and shame, and receive freely a new life, the life of Jesus, the life of purity, love, truth, freedom, the life of righteousness that Jesus worked out for us, so that it is no longer the old fear-ridden selfish me living but the new loving, trusting, friend of Jesus living. This is the offer God is making through His Son, the only question is will we accept.

And sadly, the penal legal lies have obstructed people from this life transforming experience because it teaches them that they need a legal adjustment in records to pay a debt so they will be declared righteous while they remain unrighteous.

What about the ransom idea how do we understand it? Jesus said

- “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28 NIV84).

So the idea of ransom is very biblical—but what law lens do we understand it through?

What is the function of a ransom? It is the price necessary to free one held in bondage. What holds us in the bondage of sin? The lies about God that we believe that keep us from trusting Him, and our own carnal nature. And what is the price to free us? The truth will set us free—and it is the truth about God that Jesus revealed that wins us from distrust to trust, and in that trust we open our hearts and receive the life of Christ we are reborn with a new heart and right spirit. Thus the ransom price to free us is what reality, built on God’s design law, required—truth and a new righteous life and that price was paid to you and me.

Read the questions at the bottom of the page:

- How did Christ answer Satan’s charges on the cross? In the light of the great controversy between good and evil, what did His death accomplish? (Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 10).

How do you answer these questions?

- Satan said sin does not result in death, he said to Eve you will not surely die. Does Jesus death on the cross, when He who knew no sin was made sin for us, reveal that sin in fact does lead to death?
- And did Satan allege that God must inflict punishment for sin? The Adventist reformers believed that it was Satan’s lie that God is required to punish sin, the reformers who were advancing the design law truth and who were opposed by the legalistic leadership took the position that sin pays its wage of death by separating people from God who is the source of life, but Satan twisted this to allege death comes out from God as punishment and that God is

required to use His power to punish sin or there is no justice. In other words, the Adventist reformers took the position that imposed law and imposed punishments are the lies of Satan. This is described in the book *The Desire of Ages*:

- **In the opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. (*Desire of Ages* 761, emphasis mine).
- And at the cross what is revealed? Did God lay a hand on His Son? Do we see fire raining down to torture Jesus? Or do we have the testimony of Jesus Himself that the Father simply stepped back, let go, and abandoned Jesus—that God did not use any power of any kind upon His Son to harm Jesus. Thus, the charge that God is the source of death, inflicted punishment, the one whom we must be protected from is refuted.
- But have we read in many places where theologians and church leaders today are teaching God’s law and justice require God to punish sin, and therefore God killed Jesus in our place?
- Satan alleged God’s law is arbitrary and requires inflicted punishment, and at the cross do we see the exact opposite, that it is human law that inflicts punishments and God’s law is design law, that people reap what they sow as it says in Galatians 6:8.
- Satan alleged God is selfish and that creatures are required to sacrifice but God wouldn’t sacrifice for His creatures. Do we see in Jesus that God is truly love and that Christ being equal with God didn’t grasp to power but surrendered Himself all the way to death to save His children?
- Do we see that God did not create any manufacturer’s defect in Adam?
- Do we see that though God has all power He is perfectly trustworthy with the power because He will never use the power to force His way, that He will even forgive those who torture and kill Him.
- Others?

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- To state it very simply, Jesus presents us before the universe as clothed in His righteousness, saved by His death, and redeemed through His blood. Everything we should have been, He was. In Christ there is no condemnation for the sins of our past. In Christ our guilt is gone, and through His mighty intercession, the grip of sin on our lives is broken. The chains that bind us are loosed, and we are free. (*Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2024, The Great Controversy p. 11*).

Are you encouraged by such words? Beautiful imagery, but the question is what does it mean?

The robe of righteousness, redeemed by His blood, chains that bind us are all figures of speech, images, metaphors that require us to interpret them to understand objective reality. Remember, our God is the God of reality, the Creator. He is real. He built a real universe. There is a real enemy, a real sin problem, and Jesus is our very real Savior, who has provided a very real solution, that resolves the sin problem in us.

So, how do we understand these metaphors—do they become real for us, or do they remain mystical, almost magical? Do we teach them in a way that instead of leading our minds to greater understanding of reality we create fantasies that obstruct our growth in truth, in reality?

For instance—here are two ways to understand the robe of righteousness metaphor, do both teach the same thing? Are both enlightening the mind? Are both teaching reality or is one creating a fantasy that obstructs reality?

- The robe of Christ righteousness represents the perfect sinless and righteous life and character developed by Jesus as our substitute. When we accept Jesus as our Savior by faith, His righteous life is legally accounted to our record in heaven, and figuratively we are covered by the robe of His righteousness so in the judgment when the Father looks at us, He does not see our unrighteous and sinful characters, He sees the perfect character of His Son which covers over our unrighteous character as we receive the legal application Jesus' righteous life by faith.

Or

- The robe of Christ's righteousness represents the perfect sinless and righteous life and character developed by Jesus as our substitute. When we by faith accept Jesus as our Savior we open our hearts and minds to Him, He, via His representative the Holy Spirit, enters into our hearts and minds and recreates us in righteousness, our thoughts, attitudes, desires, motives are changed to be that of Jesus, we end up living righteously just as Jesus is righteous because we have become partakers of the divine nature, it is no longer our sinful selves but Christ lives within us—we are actually cleansed, renewed, reborn, recreated to be the righteousness of God. So when God looks upon us in the judgment He sees the righteousness of Christ because we are in fact righteous.

Do both of these teach the same thing? No! One is fantasy, false, a lie, which one? The first one, and what is that lie based upon? The lie that God's law functions like human law and justification is legal adjustment so the metaphor of the robe gets misconstrued into a legal fiction that obstructs people from experiencing genuine healing.

Here is another quote from the Adventist reformers who were rejected by the Adventist leadership, this author was shipped to Australia after the 1888 GC in which design law was rejected. She wrote this while in Australia and it is found in Christ's Object Lessons:

- This **robe**, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us...

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. (Christ's Object Lessons 311, emphasis mine).

So, why does God see the robe of Christ's righteousness when He looks at the saved? Because we have been partakers of the divine nature and have the righteousness of Christ reproduced within us! In other words, it is real, not pretend as the legalists teach.

What about the blood—what does that mean? There are two views of the blood, that it represents the death of Jesus, the legal death penalty paid, or that it represents the life of Jesus, the righteous sinless life given as a gift to us.

What is the truth? Leviticus 17:11 tells us the life of the animal is in the blood, not the death of the animal. Jesus said in John 6 that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood—what does that mean? Is He saying we must take death into ourselves from Jesus—or are we already dead in trespass and sin and we need a new life, that we must surrender our old terminal sin-life and receive a new life through faith and it is metaphorically taught as drinking the blood or the sinless life of Jesus?

What are the chains that bind us and how is the grip of sin broken? The chains are the chains of lies, fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and habits. These chains are broken by receiving the truth which destroys lies and wins us to trust. In trust we open the heart and experience the love of God, and His love casts out our fear, and we receive the righteousness of Jesus and live new lives. We in love choose to do what is right instead of what is wrong and that is called right living or righteousness and over the course of time, because our hearts constantly focus upon Jesus, because we choose to trust Him, because we choose to respond to His love, because we choose to grow in truth we receive ever increasing insight, understanding, and power and we grow, mature, and develop from children/babes into mature Christians growing up into the full stature of Christ Jesus.

Where is Jesus interceding for us? Is Jesus interceding with His Father? Is the Father against us? Is Jesus interceding with the Holy Spirit? Who is against us? What are the chains that bind us? Jesus intercedes in our hearts and minds; He intercedes with the powers of darkness to protect. He intercedes in events on Earth, but Jesus does not intercede with His Father because His Father loves us Himself, in Jesus' own words:

- I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you (John 16:26-27 NIV84).