

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The Cosmic Controversy – 31 March-6 April 2018

Christ would have us abide in Him to be victorious in this cosmic controversy. We are told of this controversy that is raging: “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” (Revelation 12:17). Our Lesson study this week is taken from the following: Genesis 3:1-7; Ezekiel 28:1-2, 11-17; Romans 8:31-39; Revelation 12:1-17; 14:12.

Sabbath Afternoon – We note what the Lesson writer says, that, “The even better news is that, because of *the completeness of what Jesus did on the cross*, all of us can share in that victory.” If the ‘completeness’ refers to the sacrifice and not to the atonement, then fine. But “let him that readeth understand” that this sounds like a subtle language of ‘new theology’ that changed Christ’s work of atonement in the most holy place (second apartment of heavenly sanctuary), going on only since 22 October 1844, into being a completed and final atonement made at the cross. While the sacrifice was made at the cross, the ‘new theology’ goes further to say that atonement was also completed at the cross: “This sacrifice was completely efficacious. *It provided complete atonement for all mankind*” (*Questions on Doctrine*, p 357); “It is He who justifies them by His grace, *by virtue of His atonement on Calvary*” (*Adventist Review*, January 6, 1993, p 3); and that, “*Atonement has been completed, redemption has been assured*” (*Adventist Review*, February 16, 1984, p 7).

We note, the sacrifice was made at the cross, but atonement is still going on in the heavenly sanctuary. “As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ’s work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended” {GC 421.1}; “Thus those who followed in the light of the prophetic word saw that, instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming” {GC 422.1}; “So when Christ entered the holy of holies to perform the closing work of the atonement, He ceased His ministration of the first apartment ... So Christ had only completed one part of His work as our intercessor, to enter upon another portion of the work, and He still pleaded His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners” {GC 428.3}. “It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf, while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration are not benefited thereby” {GC 430.2}.

Sunday: The Fall of a Perfect Being – There is this strange-looking creature in the deep sea that is called the torch-fish. Its scientific name is *Linophryne Lucifer* (www.fishbase.org/summary/27740 – accessed 1 April 2018). We know that “Lucifer” means “light-bearer.” The torch-fish, instead of using its torch to light up the dark places in the deep sea, so that others may be guided in the right way, it uses the torch to lure smaller fishes to destruction. It turns on light only when it pleases. At mealtime, it lights the torch, small fishes, thinking that it is a phosphorescent insect like the glow-worm, dart for it, and lose themselves in its mouth. That is the way this lucifer-fish uses its light.

Satan, who is the originator of sin and death, was once in heaven. Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Satan’s name was Lucifer, and the prophet Isaiah, addressing the king of Babylon who in his pride was exalting himself against God, uses terms which must apply to Satan in heaven, when his pride was causing him to rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-14). The prophet Ezekiel also describes his beauty and brightness (Ezekiel 28:12-19). He was a beautiful angel in heaven, a light-bearer. Then his light was a blessing to all. But now he has perverted that gift of light, so that when he chooses he “is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14), like the torch-fish, only for the purpose of luring people to destruction. If we are in Christ Jesus, we have nothing to fear; the battle with the hosts of darkness is not ours, but the Lord’s. The cosmic controversy is between Christ and Satan, for the souls of men; but thank God, Christ has conquered at every turn, in every conflict, and we have the victory through Jesus Christ.

All creation has partaken more or less of Satan’s spirit. Men use their intellect to the hurt of their fellow-men. The torch-fish lures small fishes for prey. When earth will be restored, “every creature” shall say, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:13). That will be the time when “there shall be no more death,” for death itself will have been destroyed. If we have allowed Christ to work His own will in us, we shall have eternity to study the wonders of God, and see as we cannot now see.

Monday: More Than Head Knowledge – In Genesis 3:1-7 we find a sad story of how through Adam and Eve we fell into sin. As always, we need more than head knowledge. A person may read all the inspired record of ancient wanderings and conquests and settlements of God’s chosen people, and not know that “to obey is better than sacrifice,” and that justice, mercy, and truth are

the weightier matters of the law. Yet these are the truths which God designs to teach us in His word – not historical truths, but ever living and present truths. The Bible was given to men to be understood, and it can be understood. The only difficulty in the way of its comprehension is the carnal heart. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Let us allow the working of God’s Spirit. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

Truths must be spiritually discerned, and no amount of human wisdom or intellectual keenness can grasp them without that power of discernment which the Spirit gives. But self occupies the heart, instead of the Spirit of God. The two cannot dwell there together; self shuts out spiritual truths. We cannot see through self. It is perfectly opaque. No matter how plain the truth is, we cannot see it if self is in the way. And self is wise in its own conceits. It wants a chance to display its own wisdom, it does not seek for that wisdom which is from above. Spiritual knowledge is not head knowledge, but heart knowledge. It is a part of the life. It is the word of life hid in the believing heart. This is why spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned. They come into the heart only in the form of an experience; and experience cannot come without the working of the Spirit. It cannot come without the entrance of the living Word, which is received by faith. But truth and human wisdom are things altogether distinct from each other. Their testimonies are often contradictory one to the other, and in such a case the latter is always to be discarded. Human wisdom and reasoning have nothing to do with discerning spiritual truths. Receive by faith the Spirit of the Son of God (Galatians 4:6) and His Spirit will help us not wrest Scriptures to destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

Tuesday: War in Heaven and on Earth – Earth is the scene of a cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan; Christ says, “He that is not with Me is against Me” (Matthew 12:30). Although the battle is between Christ and Satan, men cannot be mere spectators. There is no neutral ground where one can be on neither side. Satan succeeded in getting man to join his rebellion against God’s authority, and so he makes of every natural heart a citadel of opposition against God. But God, in His love and mercy, did not leave man when he had chosen the side of Satan. “When we were enemies,” He gave His only begotten Son to bring to us deliverance “from the power of darkness,” and to translate all who desire it “into the kingdom of His dear Son.” And so, He calls to every one, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” Every day each one is making the choice. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).

“Without Me ye can do nothing;” “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (John 15:5; Phil 4:13). With Christ, means His life manifested in mortal flesh; Without Christ means to be against Christ, for the life will inevitably be “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). Every act of disobedience is the direct working of Satan against the truth of God. Every act of obedience is the working of Christ’s power in hearts of those who choose Him. “For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Satan not only works disobedience in men, but he works this “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

Wednesday: With You Always, Even Unto the End – Christ, says, “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). Christ is Omnipresent, that is, Christ is the Holy Spirit in us. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). In other words, “the last Adam [Christ] was made [after His resurrection] a quickening Spirit.” Christ has given His own Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). The Spirit of the Son of God is His own omnipresence. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Thursday: The Law and the Gospel – The conclusion of the whole matter is this: “Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” Fear of God is the fruit of forgiveness of sins, for we read: “If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psalms 130:3-4). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that keep His commandments” (Psalms 111:10). That is, forgiveness of sins precedes and leads to the keeping of the commandments; for the fear of God leads to the keeping of the commandments, and forgiveness of sins begets true fear of God. When the soul was convicted of sin, and turns to God and finds forgiveness, the language is, “O how I love Thy law!” So, rejecting all of our own righteousness, and trusting in Christ, that His obedience to the law may be in us, it may be said of us: “Here is the patience of the saints: here they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).