

“Rulers and Authorities”



SABBATH—JUNE 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S STUDY: Psalm 51:1-4; Zechariah 3:1-4; Matthew 22:11, 12; Romans 3:4; Ephesians 3:10; Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 13:12; Revelation 12:7-13.

MEMORY VERSE: “We have been made a show for the whole creation to see. Angels and people are staring at us” (1 Corinthians 4:9, NIV).

ONE OF THE MOST SURPRISING DISCOVERIES OF THE PAST 100 YEARS HAS BEEN MADE. We have learned that billions of galaxies are in the universe. New galaxies are being discovered every day, but the latest guess is that there are about 125 billion galaxies. Each galaxy contains billions of stars. These stars could have planets circling them. It’s not hard to understand why some people believe there must be life elsewhere in the universe.

People use expensive and sensitive radio telescopes to search for other life in the universe. When we think of the size of the universe and the number of stars scattered through it, surely we are not alone.

But, as Christians, we do not need radio telescopes to learn about life outside our earthly borders. The Bible and Ellen White tell us that other beings live in the universe and that they are interested in what is happening on earth. In fact, the entire universe is involved in the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan. The results of this war will go far beyond our little planet.

This week, we will go where the greatest telescopes cannot go. We will go into the heart of the great moral¹ questions that face all people and all of God’s creation.

¹ moral—knowing the difference between right and wrong.

SUNDAY—JUNE 25**“THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER” (Job 38:7)**

The Bible is filled with beings from other worlds. The Bible speaks of smart people who are not of the earth. In Genesis 1, God creates the world. He says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26, NIV). In this way, God shows there were others before us in the universe. We are just latecomers.

We know that the Godhead² had to come before us in order to create us. But the Bible also talks about other lives in the universe, too.

What do the following verses tell us about these other lives that are not human? Job 1:6; Job 38:4-8; Daniel 9:21; Acts 12:7; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; Hebrews 13:2.



Angels are all around us.

Scientists try to find out whether there is other life elsewhere. The Bible tells us there is. The Bible also tells us that this life is with us. Some of the above verses show these beings³ working with humans, rescuing them, giving them knowledge, et cetera. These verses show just a small example of the close connection between humans and these beings from another part of God’s creation. We cannot always see them. But it is not important to see them. There are all kinds of things we cannot see. The important points are (1) We are not alone in the universe. There are other smart beings in the universe. (2) These beings are not separated from us. Several of these beings are involved with humans.

The Bible clearly paints a picture of real beings not accepted by most modern thinking. There are in the universe spiritual beings who are closely tied with humans on earth.

What are some of your favorite angel stories from the Bible? If you have had some personal experiences with angels, be prepared to share your story with the class. How does it comfort you to know that angels are real?

² the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit are the Godhead.

³ beings—nonhumans such as angels, et cetera.

MONDAY—JUNE 26**THE DEVIL'S ANGER
(Revelation 12:7-13)**

"There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon wasn't strong enough. He and his angels lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him. The dragon is that old serpent called the devil, or Satan. He leads the whole world down the wrong path" (Revelation 12:7-9, NIV; see also, verses 10-13).

The Bible is clear that there are spiritual beings. Not all of these beings are friendly toward us.

Based on Revelation 12:7-13, answer the following questions:

1. Where does trouble begin? _____

2. Where does this battle end up being fought? _____

3. What three things is the devil doing against us? _____

4. The devil is angry because he

⁴ brethren—our fellow Christians.

has "but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). What does that mean? (Matthew 25:41). _____

5. How do God's people overcome the devil's attacks? _____

These verses show how real the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan is. The battle began in heaven. It is now being fought on earth. These verses show that we are involved in this battle. But the devil will not succeed against Michael and His angels (Revelation 12:8). So he is now fighting against us.

How do you experience the great controversy every day? How does your understanding of this controversy help you handle your personal problems?

TUESDAY—JUNE 27**"THE ACCUSER [BLAMER] OF
OUR BRETHREN"
(Revelation 12:10)**

Yesterday we looked at the beginning of the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan. We saw that Satan was also "the accuser of our brethren⁴ . . . which accused [blamed] them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

Revelation 12:10 does not say what Satan was blaming the brethren of doing. But we know about the condition of humanity.⁵ So what answer makes sense? What verses can you find to back up your answer? Read, for example, Romans 3:10-19.

There is a great controversy going on between Christ and Satan. But we are in the middle of it. Satan is attacking both God and us. This idea is in the book of Genesis. The serpent, Satan (Revelation 12:9), was cast out of heaven to earth. On the earth, Satan caused the fall of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve caused the fall of the whole human race along with all its terrible results (Romans 5:12). Satan is now taking advantage of what happened to us. Among the things he does is to accuse (blame) us of our sins. If we were perfect, what would Satan have to accuse us of? Because we are sinners, he has much to say against us.



Satan caused the fall of Adam and Eve.

Read Zechariah 3:1-4. The Hebrew verb translated in verse 1 as “resist,” “oppose,” “accuse,” or “blame” comes from the same word for “Satan.” How does this fit in with what we understand about the great controversy?

We see in Zechariah that Satan works against us. But we also see in Zechariah that God works for us. What hope can you find in Zechariah 3:1-4 that God is working for us?



God works for us by giving us Jesus' holiness.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 28

“THE LORD CORRECT YOU [SATAN]!” (Zechariah 3:2, NlrV)

Satan blamed Joshua, who had been dressed in dirty garments (clothes). But it was Satan God corrected. Why? Because of the plan of salvation. In this plan, Christ defeats Satan and his lies. The language of Zechariah, with filthy garments and

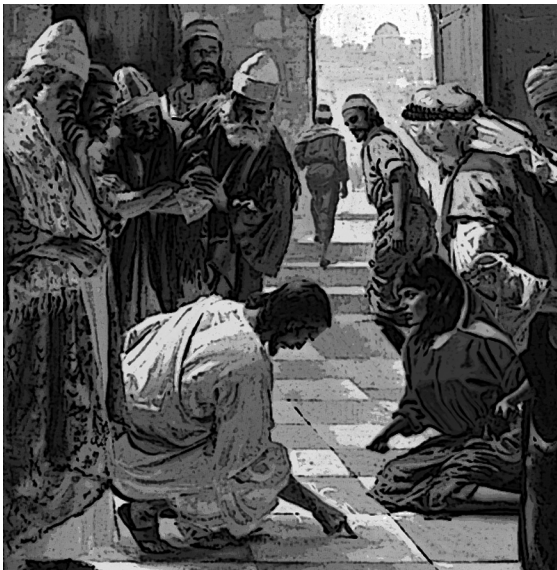
⁵humanity—all the people in the world.

a change of garments, is gospel language. This language points to the plan of salvation. It points to what Christ does for His fallen people.

How do the following verses help us understand the gospel as a symbol in Zechariah 3? Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11, 12; Revelation 3:18.

When Satan fell from heaven, he brought the great controversy (war) to the earth. Through Adam and Eve’s fall, Satan brought all people into the war. Through the plan of salvation, God saves us from the final results of the Fall. He also defeats Satan.

How does Hebrews 2:14 help us understand the connection between what Christ did on earth and Satan’s defeat?



Jesus came to this earth so He could destroy sin and Satan.

The plan of salvation is bigger than just saving us from sin. Sin did not begin here. Sin began somewhere else in the universe (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:15; Revelation 12:7). We are in the middle of the great controversy. But the great controversy is not limited to the earth.

What are some questions in your community that are small parts of greater questions? How does this help you understand how the questions in the great controversy are greater than just our personal salvation?

THURSDAY—JUNE 29

THE “JUSTIFICATION”⁶ OF GOD (Romans 3:25, 26)

Read Romans 3:25, 26. These verses show that whatever Christ did at the Cross, He also showed God’s justice.

This leads to an important word for us to understand. The word is *theodicy*. *Theodicy* means “the justification of God.” This does not mean that we are justified (pardoned from sin). *Theodicy* means vindication.⁷ *Theodicy* is the vindication of God’s goodness and justice, even when evil is all around. The basis of the great controversy (war) is to show God’s goodness and justice to all of the universe.

⁶justification—God proving Himself as righteous (holy) and fair.

⁷vindication—proving that God is holy and fair.

How do the following verses show the idea of theodicy? Psalm 51:1-4; Romans 3:4; Ephesians 3:10; Revelation 19:1, 2.

The great controversy and the final vindication of God is a wonderful basis for the plan of salvation. The great controversy does not answer everything, but it answers many questions: (1) Why did Jesus have to die? (2) Why are we still here so long after the Cross? (3) Why is there still evil around us?

The idea of theodicy helps us understand the background for the pre-Advent judgment.⁸ It helps us understand why God even has this judgment.

In short, there are other beings in the universe. Through the great controversy these “rulers and authorities” will also learn that God is fair and just in His judgment.

FRIDAY—JUNE 30

ADDITIONAL STUDY: *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, pp. 498, 499; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 22, 116; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 69.

The plan of salvation had a wider and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for man’s sal-

vation alone that Christ came to the earth. It was not for the people on the earth to obey the law of God only. The plan of salvation was to vindicate God’s character in front of the whole universe. Jesus looked forward to the result of His great sacrifice and to its influence on all beings and on all men. Before His crucifixion, He said: “Now is the time for the world to be judged. Now the prince of this world [Satan] will be thrown out. But I am going to be lifted up from the earth. When I am come, I will bring all people to myself” (John 12:31, 32, NIV). Christ’s death for man’s salvation would make heaven reachable to men. Christ’s death would prove that God and His Son were fair in dealing with Satan’s rebellion. It would establish the fact that God’s law was eternal.⁹ “And, it would show the nature and the results of sin.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 69.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Think about the ministry (work) of angels in your own life.
2. Many people don’t believe in a real battle between unseen beings. What other examples are there of unseen “beings” around us (for example, germs, radio waves, et cetera)? How could you use

⁸pre-Advent judgment—the judgment that will take place before Jesus’ second coming. Adventists believe that God’s judgment comes in three parts. The first part began in 1844 and is continuing until Jesus’ return to the earth. This is the pre-Advent judgment. The pre-Advent judgment is also called the investigative judgment.

⁹eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

some of these examples to help someone who doubts the great controversy (war)?

3. Think about the idea of *theodicy*. How does the Ellen White quote alone help you to understand

theodicy? Why is *theodicy* so important?

4. Do you know someone who is suffering from the great controversy right now? What can you do to bring that person comfort and hope?