

The Cross and the Great Controversy¹ (War)



SABBATH—MARCH 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 1; Job 2; Job 42; Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 4:1; John 12:31-33; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; Revelation 5:11-14; Revelation 12:7-19.

MEMORY VERSE: “Now it is time for the world to be judged. Now the prince of this world [Satan] will be thrown out. But I [Jesus] am going to be lifted up from the earth. When I am, I will bring all people to myself” (John 12:31, 32, NlrV).

OUR SALVATION WAS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE CROSS. But we would greatly limit our understanding of the Cross if we limit the Cross's message to just our salvation. Only when we think about the great controversy theme can we fully understand why Jesus had to die on the cross. There are other worlds that have never sinned. These worlds have questions about sin, salvation, God's law, and His love. So God chose to show to humans on earth and to these sinless worlds exactly what He is like. By showing what He is like, He shows what Satan is like. The Cross is the main thing God shows us and the sinless worlds to help us understand what He is like.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: How does the Bible show the great controversy? What questions does the great controversy answer? What did Jesus experience at the Cross? In what way was Jesus' suffering so much greater than any suffering we will ever experience? How does the Cross answer the questions the great controversy causes us to ask?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 26.

¹the great controversy—the war between Jesus and Satan over what God is really like.

SUNDAY—MARCH 20

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY (Isaiah 14:12-15).

What do the following verses teach us about the great controversy? **Genesis 3:15; Job 1:6-12; Isaiah 14:12-15; Zechariah 3:1-10; Matthew 4:1; Matthew 25:41; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; Revelation 12:7-17.**



The Bible gives us a lot of information about the great controversy. The verses you just read are only a few examples of what the Bible says about the great controversy. It is a real war that began in another part of the universe and is now going on in our world.

We see examples of the great controversy from the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible. The Bible begins by showing Satan and humanity² as enemies, and how

²humanity—all the people of the world.

God planted this hate for Satan in human hearts (Genesis 3:15). The book of Revelation tells of Satan's anger at the end of time against people who "keep the commandments of God" (Revelation 12:17).

But the great news is that the result of the great controversy was known from the beginning of the world (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8). The question was not whether God was able to defeat Satan. The question was how God was going to defeat Satan and what it would cost Him. The Cross shows what that cost to God really was.

How do you experience the great controversy in your life? How should the knowledge that God is always in control help you to be strong?

MONDAY—MARCH 21

THE CROSS AND SATAN'S DEFEAT (John 12:31-33).

How do the following verses connect the Cross to Satan's being destroyed in the great controversy? John 12:31-33; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

At the Cross, the most important moment in the great controversy arrives. Satan has been "cast [thrown] out." His evil character was

shown. In vision, John heard “a loud voice in heaven. It said, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God have come. The authority [power] of his Christ has come. Satan, who brings charges against our brothers and sisters, has been thrown down. He [Satan] brings charges against them [our brothers and sisters] before our God day and night’ ” (Revelation 12:10, NIV). The Savior died “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Then God could announce that salvation has now come. At the Cross, God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 became real.

How do we connect Jesus’ sacrifice to the great controversy?

Jesus was sinless. But He died under God’s punishment as the One who accepted our sins (Isaiah 53:6, 11, 12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18). At the Cross, God accepted His own punishment for sin. The Creator’s life was more than equal to the lives of all people. For this reason, He became a human to die as payment for the sins of all people on earth. In this way, Jesus’ death supported God’s law and showed that God could be both just (fair) and merciful.³ Paul explained how the Cross is very important in the great controversy. “God [the Father] gave Him [Jesus] as a sacrifice to pay for sins. So he [God] forgives the sins of those people who

have faith in his [Jesus’] blood. God did all of that to prove [to all people and unfallen worlds] that he is fair. Because of his [God’s] mercy he did not punish people for the sins they had committed [done] before Jesus died for them. God did that to prove in our own time that he is fair. He proved that he is right. He also made right with himself those who believe in Jesus” (Romans 3:25, 26, NIV).

At the cross, Jesus showed that God’s law was still good. If the law were no longer good, He would not have had to die. As our Substitute,⁴ He gave a sacrifice that was enough for every sinner. This way, He showed Satan’s true character to the universe. Satan says that God’s law is not fair. Satan also says that God does not love us. And yet He gave everyone a way to be saved. What does all this mean to us as people involved in the great controversy? Which one of Jesus’ actions do you believe is the most important? Why?

TUESDAY—MARCH 22

THE CROSS AND HUMAN SUFFERING—PART 1 (Revelation 5:11-14).

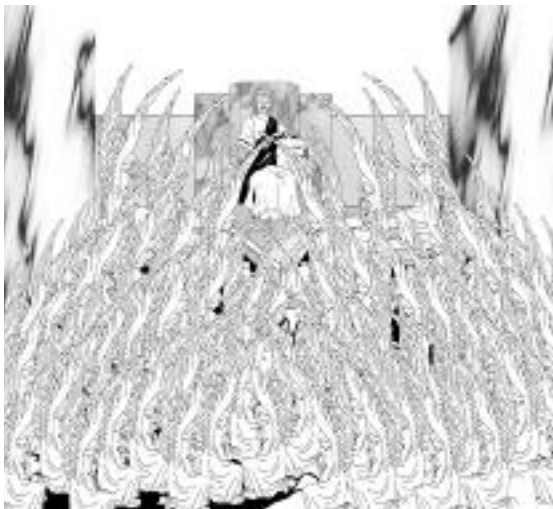
The cross and the salvation offered by the cross are important to

³merciful—full of mercy. Mercy is kindness we do not deserve.

⁴substitute—a person who takes the place of another person. Jesus took our place on the cross.

the great controversy. The Cross did two things: (1) It proved that God's law is still good. (2) It saved people who had broken that law. These two things were important in answering Satan's charges against Jesus before the sinless worlds. The sinless worlds also depend on the final result of the great controversy (Romans 8:22).

Read Revelation 5:11-14. Where is this scene taking place? Who is involved? Whom are they praising, and why? How do these verses show why the Cross is important to the great controversy?



“ ‘The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy!’ ” (Revelation 5:12, NlrV).

The universe is very interested and involved in the Cross and the great controversy. But we must never forget that salvation was done here on earth, for our sake. Jesus

took upon Himself a human nature (Hebrews 2:14). For this reason, He came to save humans. Without the Cross, all people on earth would face only eternal⁵ loss.

In John 12:32, Jesus talked about His death drawing (pulling) all people toward Him. How does the Cross draw us to Jesus?

Jesus' acceptance of human nature was important to the plan of salvation. But it was not enough to save people. According to God's eternal plan (2 Timothy 1:9), Jesus would die for the world as both God and human. He would accept on Himself the sins of the world. He also would accept all the guilt and suffering coming from those sins. Every sin became Jesus' sin at the Cross. What a wonderful example to the universe, to see the sinless Jesus suffering for a fallen race! The main purpose of the Cross was to save us. But the Cross also shows God's character to the universe.

All our suffering comes from sin. Paul said, “Christ didn't [did not] have any sin. But God made him become sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NlrV). What do Paul's words tell us about Jesus' suffering on the cross for our sake? How does this knowledge help draw (pull) us toward Jesus?

⁵eternal—forever; without beginning or end.

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 23

**THE CROSS AND HUMAN
SUFFERING—PART 2
(Job 1; Job 2; Job 42).**

One of the great challenges for all Christians is the question of suffering. If God is all-powerful and loving, why is there so much suffering around us? Who among us has not asked that question?



Why do people suffer?

The great controversy helps us understand why people suffer. We know, too, that one day suffering will end. But the question of suffering continues to bother us. This is because there are no real answers.

How do Job 1, 2, and 42 help us understand that suffering is part of the great controversy? But what about Job's sufferings still does not make sense?

If we look at Job's suffering, we must remember one point. All suffering is individual (personal) suffer-

ing. Whether we are crying for ourselves or for other people, we are really crying for ourselves. We can never get inside another person to feel his or her pain or sorrow. All we can ever know is our own pain.

How does the end of Job's story give us hope, even though we suffer? Job 42:7-12.

THURSDAY—MARCH 24

**THE CROSS AND HUMAN
SUFFERING—PART 3
(Isaiah 53:4).**

What does Isaiah 53:1-12 tell us about how God suffers in the great controversy?

We learned yesterday that we know only our own pain, only our own suffering. But, at the Cross, God knew everyone's sufferings at once! At the Cross, God suffered our pain!

When the great controversy is over, no person will ever be able to say that he or she suffered more than God suffered. At the Cross, God showed all the worlds that He Himself was willing to suffer more than any sinner ever suffered. By suffering more than anyone, God could deal with the problems raised by Satan in a just, fair, and merciful manner.

Who can even begin to understand what Jesus has done for all of

us through His suffering and sacrifice? No wonder the universe looks upon the Cross with praise and wonder (Revelation 5:11-14).

How does the idea that God in Christ suffered worse than any human ever could, help us understand the greatness of His suffering?

FRIDAY—MARCH 25

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “People will see that God in His great wisdom could not develop a plan for our salvation without the great sacrifice of His Son. The reward for this sacrifice is the joy of filling the earth with happy, saved people who will live forever. The result of the Savior’s war with Satan and his helpers is joy to saved people praising God throughout eternity. The value of one person is so great that the Father is satisfied with the price paid. Jesus Himself, seeing people who are saved, is satisfied.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 652.

“Satan saw that his government

was exposed to the unfallen angels and to the universe. Satan had shown himself to be a murderer. By making the blood of the Son of God flow, he had destroyed the sympathies of heavenly beings.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between humans suffering and the suffering of Jesus for all people? What does Jesus’ suffering tell us about God’s character?
2. How should the idea of Jesus suffering for us influence how we treat other people? How does the idea of accepting “one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2) show what Jesus did for us at the Cross?
3. Many people who believe in the Bible try to understand sin, suffering, and salvation without understanding the great controversy. How does the great controversy help us understand sin, suffering, and salvation?

