

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

### Lesson 9 "The Cosmic Conflict"

#### Read for this week's study

Matthew 13:24–27; Genesis 1:31; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Isaiah 14:12–15; Matthew 4:1–11; John 8:44, 45.

#### 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).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. An Enemy Has Done This
- III. The Origin of the Controversy on Earth
- IV. The Origin of the Controversy in Heaven
- V. If You Worship Me
- VI. The Nature of the Cosmic Conflict
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week, we will address how the two following questions might be answered according to some crucial biblical passages: (1) Where does Scripture teach that there is a cosmic conflict between God and Satan? (2) According to Scripture, what is the nature of the conflict? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. How does the answer of Jesus, “an enemy has done this,” help to answer the question often asked today concerning the problem of evil: “If God created the world entirely good, why is there evil in it?” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. The servants asked, “Do you want us then to go and gather up the tares?” “No,” the master replies, “lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest” (Matt. 13:29, 30; cf. Mark 4:29). (Sunday’s lesson) How does this attitude help with the zealous desire to have a ‘pure’ church? How can good intentions bring disastrous effects?
4. How do Genesis 1:31 and 3:1-7 help us to understand the dynamics of the cosmic conflict? (Monday’s lesson) The serpent has managed to turn a statement of reality

- into a statement of threat. Your response depends on what you believe about the character of the one making the prohibition. Are prohibitions necessary in life?
5. How do the texts of Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15 help us understand the bigger picture beyond the historical personages of this world? (Tuesday's lesson) How do these two narratives help us understand that one does not need an outside temptation to fall? How does this influence the obsession of some to escape miles from any known sin into splendid isolation?
  6. Wednesday's lesson focuses on Christ's temptations (Matthew 4:1-11). What does this teach us about the reality of the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan?
  7. What is the nature of the cosmic conflict? (Thursday's lesson) What 'rules of engagement' must God abide by (Revelation 12:7-9 cf. John 8:44-45)? How does this influence the tools and timing that God has available? If God wants to win, why would he limit himself? What does it teach us about the battles we are fighting?
  8. To explain this first sin means justifying it (saying Lucifer had a reason to rebel). How can we deal with the issue without excusing it? Why is it so important to understand that the conflict between God and Satan is not one of sheer power, but a conflict of character?
  9. If sin does not have a reason in the macrocosm, why do we expect it will always have a reason or purpose in our own microcosmos? How can we remain gracious and kind even when our character is misunderstood? How would the world change if we were imitators of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1)?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Who would dare to question the integrity of God? Who would dare suggest that God cannot be trusted? Yet with this incredible accusation, the Biblical account of human history begins.

The one who raised this charge had not always been God's enemy. He is pictured first as highly honored, standing in the very presence of our heavenly Father. As God's trusted spokesman he went out among his fellow angels bearing light and truth. He was called "the Light Bearer"—sometimes translated "Lucifer" or "Morning Star"—a name belonging also to the Son of God himself (see Ezekiel 28:14; Isaiah 14:12; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16).

But Jesus later called him "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The last book in the Bible describes him as "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

"Of course you will not die," the serpent said to Eve. "God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing both good and evil" (Genesis 3:4, 5, NEB, margin). "God has no respect for your freedom and dignity as intelligent individuals,"

Satan argued. “In selfish tyranny he is depriving you of knowledge and experience that are rightfully yours. He has lied and is not worthy of your trust.”

With such falsehoods Satan had already led one third of the angels to side with him against God. Though he is a created being, he had come to think of himself as divine. “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Insane pride led him later even to ask Jesus, his Creator, to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8–10).

To set himself up as God he first must undermine confidence in the One he wished to supplant, and he sought to do this by destroying God’s reputation. Since he could find no fault in God, he must resort to deceit.

So began that long struggle for the loyalty of God’s free, intelligent creatures. Who was right—God or the brilliant Light Bearer? Could it be true that God was arbitrary and severe, unworthy of the love and trust of the beings he had made? What kind of god would allow his character to be so challenged? Was it strength or weakness that led him to permit such long debate, to allow this controversy to spread throughout his universe?

Finally Satan and his followers even ventured into open revolt. Then God, in his farsighted plan for the best good of all concerned, expelled the rebels from his presence, and the great controversy was extended to the planet on which we live.

As described in the frequently symbolic language of the Book of Revelation, “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left them in heaven. So the great dragon was thrown down, that serpent of old that led the whole world astray, whose name is Satan, or the Devil—thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him. . . . But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, knowing that his time is short!” (Revelation 12:7–9, 12, NEB).

Someday soon, before Christ returns, Satan will make a last, desperate attempt to win us all to his side. He will appear as an angel of light—the Light Bearer again; Lucifer, the Morning Star (see 2 Corinthians 11:14). He will even proclaim himself to be God. Just as he tried to persuade Christ to worship him in the wilderness of temptation, so he will seek to win our worship now.

The Bible predicts that his efforts will seem to be completely successful. The whole world will worship him—except for a few, “the remnant” (KJV), who will not be deceived. On the contrary, they will take their stand with the loyal angels and maintain their trust in God (see Revelation 12:17; 13:1–8; 14:12). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 13-15. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-02>

Lou: There is a question that ties in with the matter of the war. You have this one who seems to start the war—Day Star, Lucifer. “If God knew that there would be all this trouble, and that Lucifer would be at the center of it, why did He create Lucifer?” It’s sort of similar to the first question but goes back behind it a bit.

Graham: I think very much related to it. And of course, it raises the question as to whether God **does** know everything in the future. And there are good saints who wonder about that. I would rather find an explanation that would allow me to say God can see the end from the beginning. The past, the present, and the future; they’re all alike to Him. And yet I’m still free. My understanding would be that when God created Lucifer, He knew what Lucifer would do. And yet He went ahead anyway. He knew what it would cost Him. He knew what it would cost His children. And yet He went ahead. And when you think of the history of the anguish that has been involved in solving this problem and settling this war, there must be something of infinite value at stake, or God would not have done this.

Because He had other options you know, some rather easy ones. When Lucifer began to entertain these rebellious thoughts, He could have eliminated him right there and then. What damage would that have done? Well, we might say the angels looking on would think, “I’d better not have bad thoughts or I might get eliminated, too.” But after eliminating Lucifer, God could then have blotted out all memory of the elimination and no one would know. And He could do that an infinite number of times; no one would know but our God.

Now why didn’t He do it? Is it He couldn’t live with the fact He was doing that? Or is it that He wants us to know what He **did** do? What He did do was not to take a shortcut. He allowed Lucifer to develop these thoughts, and to spread them among the angels, knowing what it would cost Him and cost His friends on this planet. We’ve all participated a little, it’s an honor to do so, in the larger view. But knowing the thousands of years it would take, and all the misunderstanding and the anguish, God said, “I will go ahead this way.” And the angels understand this and tell Him, “You did this magnificently. And we’re with you for the rest of eternity.” So what was at stake? That’s the big thing.

Lou: This perspective that you’re sharing with us this evening (and will develop through our twenty weeks here), this perspective includes a war, a crisis of distrust, and whether God can be trusted!

Graham: See, it’s not over power; that’s the big thing. If it were over God’s power, who has more power?

Lou: It would be easy.

Graham: He could do that in a second. And when you stop to think of it, why preach about God’s power, since even the Devil is already convinced? You remember James says that when the Devil thinks about the power of the One who hung the whole vast universe in space, it

scares him. He shudders with fear. So I don't think we should spend too much time arguing about God's power. ***Of course*** He's infinite in majesty and power.

Lou: But you've said that the issue has to do with trust, and who's telling the truth.

Graham: That's right. The conflict is not over ***who has the power***, but over ***who's telling the truth***. God has been accused of the abuse of power. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1 with Lou Venden, "The Conflict in God's Family" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

There is in the Saviour's words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast. {COL 72.1}

The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. 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 him. 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. {UL 77.5}

Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil. He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than let any be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one, for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. {UL 77.6}

Christ came to reveal to a fallen race the love of God. He, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of the brightness of His divinity, and came to live on this earth as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time, except as He is revealed through Christ. {UL 334.5}

Heaven, looking down and seeing the delusions into which men were led, knew that a divine Instructor must come to the earth. Through the misrepresentations of the enemy, many were so deceived that they worshiped a false god, clothed with the attributes of the satanic character. Those in ignorance and moral darkness must have light, spiritual light; for the world knew not God, and He must be revealed to their understanding. Truth looked down from

heaven and saw not the reflection of her image; for dense clouds of spiritual darkness and gloom enveloped the world. The Lord Jesus alone was able to roll back the clouds; for He is the light of the world. By His presence He could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God.—First published Nov. 17, 1891. {CT 28.1}

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. 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 and His law 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 intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments. {GC 499.1}

God speaks to us in nature. It is His voice we hear as we gaze upon the beauty and richness of the natural world. We view His glory in the beautiful things His hand has made. We stand and behold His works without a veil between. God has given us these things that in beholding the works of His hands, we may learn of Him. {TDG 241.2}

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. {PP 55.2}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. {5T 738.1}

Ever since the fall of man, Satan has been sowing the seeds of error. It was by a lie that he first gained control over men, and thus he still works to overthrow God's kingdom in the earth and to bring men under his power. A sower from a higher world, Christ came to sow the seeds of truth. He who had stood in the councils of God, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, could bring to men the pure principles of truth. Ever since the fall of man, Christ had been the Revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed, "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," is communicated to men. 1 Peter 1:23. In that first promise spoken to our fallen race in Eden, Christ was sowing the gospel seed. But it is to His personal

ministry among men and to the work which He thus established that the parable of the sower especially applies. {COL 37.1}

Holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve concerning their employment and also taught them concerning the rebellion and fall of Satan. The angels warned them of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. The angels also enjoined upon them to follow closely the directions God had given them, for in perfect obedience only were they safe. Then this fallen foe could have no power over them. {EW 147.1}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. {1SM 43.2}

He maintained his disguise till he had interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to an intelligent faith in his life, his character, his mission to earth, and his death and resurrection. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, **not** because it was supported by his personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of his life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth. (Emphasis supplied) {3SP 214.2}

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. {DA 759.1}

God desired that a change take place, and that the work of Satan be brought out in its genuine aspect. But the exalted angel standing next to Christ was opposed to the Son of God. The underworking was so subtle that it could not be made to appear before the heavenly host as the thing that it really was; and so there was war in heaven, and Satan was expelled with all who would not stand on the side of loyalty to God's government. The Lord God stood forth as Supreme Ruler. {4BC 1143.2}

This condition of things had existed a long period of time before Satan was unmasked and the evil ones expelled (Letter 162, 1906). {4BC 1143.3}

God in His wisdom permitted Satan to carry forward his work, until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He

had created; and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great, and by disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood he had gained an advantage. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. {GC 497.1}

Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which flesh is heir. He has represented Him as a God who delights in the sufferings of His creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone human reason. {CT 27.2}

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. {DA 758.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758.3}

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe. {DA 759.2}

Satan led men into sin, and the plan of redemption was put in operation. For four thousand years, Christ was working for man's uplifting, and Satan for his ruin and degradation. And the heavenly universe beheld it all. {DA 759.3}

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom. {GC 504.1}

At the Saviour's baptism, Satan was among the witnesses. He saw the Father's glory overshadowing His Son. He heard the voice of Jehovah testifying to the divinity of Jesus. Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the



intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity through Christ; now He communicated with humanity in Christ. Satan had hoped that God’s abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored. {DA 116.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. {GC 510.3}

The heavenly universe had witnessed the weapons that were chosen by the Prince of life—the words of Scripture, “It is written”; and the weapons used by the prince of the world—falsehood and deception. They had seen the Prince of life deal in straightforward lines of truth, honesty, and integrity, while the prince of the world exercised his power of cunning, artful secrecy, intrigue, enmity, and revenge. They had seen the One who bore the banner of truth sacrifice everything, even His life, to maintain truth, while the one who bore the banner of rebellion continued to strengthen his accusations against the God of truth. {RC 60.5}

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. {DA 761.2}

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan’s existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the

contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve. {DA 761.3}

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of heaven. He had claimed that the transgression of God's law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation. {GC 502.1}

Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death. {GC 502.2}

Christ came to this earth in human form that He might stand as the Captain of our salvation, so that we should not be overcome by Satan's power. And when the enemy has seemed to be gaining a signal victory over righteousness, God has been working in mercy and power to counteract his designs. {TDG 308.4}

Determined to efface the image of God in man, Satan works with an intensity of effort to hide God from view. Not openly does he work, but secretly, mingling the human and the divine, the spurious and the genuine, so seeking to bring confusion and distress. But in proportionate power divine mercy is revealed to counteract this wicked working, and bring to light the enemy's hidden purposes. {TDG 308.5}

Satan's position in heaven had been next to the Son of God. He was first among the angels. His power had been debasing, but God could not reveal it in its true light and carry all heaven in harmony with Him in removing him with his evil influences. His power was increasing, but the evil was yet unrecognized. It was a deadly power to the universe, but for the security of the worlds and the government of heaven, it was necessary that it should develop and be revealed in its true light. {1SM 341.4}

Satan could not be presented to the universe at once in his real character. His crooked course must be allowed to continue until he should reveal himself as an accuser, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer. In the latter act, Satan uprooted himself from the affection of the loyal universe. In the death of the Son of God the deceiver was unmasked.—*Letter 16a*, 1892. {CTr 11.7}

It was difficult to uproot Satan from the affection of the angels in heaven. He took the position that the law of God was against the heavenly intelligences, and the warfare and controversy between Christ and Satan was started in heaven and is going on in the earth to the present day. The controversy between Christ and Satan was witnessed not only by the heavenly intelligences but by all the worlds that God had created. {CTr 216.4}

God in His wisdom did not use measures of force to suppress Satan's rebellion. Such measures would have aroused sympathy for Satan, strengthening his rebellion rather than changing his principles. If God had summarily punished him, many would have looked upon him as one who had been dealt with unjustly, and he would have carried a much larger number with him in his apostasy. {CTr 289.4}

It was necessary to give Satan time to develop his principles. He has had every opportunity to present his side of the question. He has been artful. As often as his position has been seen in its true light, he has changed to some other position. By making false charges, and by misstating the purposes and declared will of God, he has secured sympathizers. {CTr 289.5}