

# ***Sabbath School Today*** **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

## ***Preparation for the End Time*** **Lesson 1. The Cosmic Controversy**

There have been no new worlds or planets created in the universe since God finished His work of creation. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them," says Genesis 2:1. What has kept God busy since then? The answer: a work of reconciling heaven and earth, because "there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12:7).

When we study about "the cosmic controversy," we don't find much good news there, but we are also studying about the "The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin" (Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 7), and that is good news.

The very first page of the New Testament declares that Jesus came to "save His people from their sins" (not in them; Matt. 1:21). God cannot eradicate sin from His universe until first He eradicates it from human hearts. That is where sin has taken root; the human heart is the last lair where the dragon of sin lurks. Sin's roots go down to our toes. Can sin be overcome, eradicated? The outcome of the great controversy between Christ and Satan depends on the answer.

Some say that sin itself will never be conquered until Christ comes the second time, zaps His saints and gives them holy flesh, removing temptation from them, the implication being that as long as you and I have our "sinful flesh," sin will still win out.

But the Bible is clear: even though we still have sinful flesh or sinful nature, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:13, 14). "Grace did much more abound" than "sin abounded" (Rom. 5:20). In other words, the idea is clear: grace is stronger than sin. If that is not true, the great controversy must end in defeat for God.

This grace of God operates through the revelation of the love of God (*agape*) (2 Cor 5:14, 15). Therefore, "the *agape* of Christ constraineth us ... henceforth" to live not unto self, but "unto Him" who died for us and rose again. The love of self is the very essence of sin, its quintessential element that filled Lucifer's heart in the beginning and which here at the every end of time forces the "church of the Laodiceans" to be lukewarm in heart.

Christ conquered the problem of sin by His sinless life and His sacrifice on the cross (John 12:31-33). In order for the great controversy to come to an end, He must have a

people whose faith demonstrates that such *agape* will “constrain” them also to overcome “even as [He] overcame” (Rev. 3:21).

The bright picture at the end of the Bible is Heaven’s spotlight on a group who stand on “a sea of glass mingled with fire” who have “gotten the victory” over sin, “having the harps of God.” That wasn’t accomplished by zapping them with sinless flesh, but by giving them grace to “overcome” in sinful flesh.

The great controversy has involved the universe as well as this fallen planet. Revelation 12:12 says that because of the victory won in this reconciliation, “Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” Finally, it will be said: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 678).

This blessed harmony will be the result of God’s work on His cosmic Day of Atonement, which means simply, His Day of Reconciliation, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the ending of alienation.

Is your human heart reconciled to God? Are you alert to realize that your natural human heart “is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7), except through the atonement of Christ? Do you still wrestle with a lingering sense that somehow you must make yourself good before He can be reconciled to you, and before He can really accept you and respect you? Do you have that nagging feeling that He cannot truly be your Friend until you are worthy? While you are sitting in the pigsty, do you wish you had a Father who would forgive and accept the prodigal?

If so, you need to know about the Day of Atonement; as never before in world history the world’s attention is directed now to the atoning sacrifice of Christ where “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ... We ... beseech you ... in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”! (2 Cor. 5:19, 20). But you can’t “be” unless you first believe He is reconciled to you! So, “spend a thoughtful hour each day” contemplating the cross where that reconciliation was accomplished (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83).

—Paul E. Penno

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/fUv8egqk71g>

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