

The Great Controversy, I

1. **Rev 12:7-9** is the inspired Biblical record of the great controversy that began in heaven between Michael and Satan a long time ago
2. **Rev 12:7-9** is placed by John in the center of the book of Revelation to teach us that all the events in human history, whether significant or insignificant, whether good or bad, can be explained in the light of the great controversy that began in heaven; in other words, all events in human history are nothing but an outworking of that mighty battle that started in heaven;
 - a. In the KJV, there are **198** verses before **Rev 12:7-9** and **201** verses after it in the book of Revelation; this places Rev 12:7-9 almost at the very center of the book of Revelation
3. The central issue in this long-drawn controversy between Christ and Satan is the Law of God

From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. **GC 582**

- a. Satan hates the Law of God because it condemns him as a transgressor and consigns him to the lake of fire
- b. Satan is bent on making men transgress that Law because he needs to prove his argument that God's law is arbitrary and impossible to keep; if he is successful in doing that, he could present the claim that it would be unfair for God to throw people (including himself) into hell-fire for transgressing a law that cannot be kept in the first place
- c. Hence, the outcome of this controversy determines whether Satan survives or not!

Satan Deceives Men to Make Them Transgressors of God's law

4. **Rev 12:9, 14; Rev 14:8**--Satan embarks on a work of deception to make men transgress the law of God and therefore support his argument that God's law cannot be kept!
 - i. **Rev 13:8-9**--by miracles
 - ii. **Rev 14:8**--by false doctrines

"...**To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God's law**, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same. He that offends "in one point," manifests contempt for the whole law; his influence and example are on the side of transgression; he becomes "guilty of all." James 2:10.

In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, Satan has perverted the doctrines of the Bible, and errors have thus become incorporated into the faith of thousands who profess to believe the Scriptures. The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing

controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering--a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. **GC 582.**

5. Satan's work of deception began with angels in heaven; his deceptive power prevailed over Adam and Eve in their unfallen state; how much more prone are men who are fallen to Satan's deceptive wiles! He hopes to deceive even the very elect!
6. Those who love not the truth will be given a strong delusion that they should believe a lie (**2 Thess 2:8-12**)

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God's work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. **GC 593.**

Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day. He will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasures, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life and the day of trial may come upon them as a thief. **GC 625**

7. Laodicea is not immune to Satan's devices, because he endeavors to deceive even the very elect (**Matt 24:24**)
 - a. The position of many in Laodicea is no different from the Pharisee who was deceived into thinking his condition was better than that of the publican.
 - b. Still, the position of many in Laodicea is no different from the young ruler who thought he had kept the commandments of God from his youth up
8. Laodicea is led to believe that she is rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, when in fact, she is naked, poor and blind and miserable. . .

The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

What **greater deception** can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a **sad deception**, yet honest

in **that deception**. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct. **3T 252**.

9. Many in Laodicea are deceived into making of no effect the testimonies of God's Spirit through the ministry of Ellen White

The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions to mislead, and will mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them.... **2SM 78**.

Satan's Wrath Is Directed towards Commandment Keepers

10. Satan will eliminate anyone who proves a lie, his argument that the Law of God cannot be kept:

". . .The holy life of Abel testified against Satan's claim that it is impossible for man to keep God's law. When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them. . ." **PP 77**.

11. Satan's fury is what fuels the relentless effort by his agents to persecute Christ and His followers of all ages;
- Rev 12:4**—Satan manifests his wrath on Christ as soon as He was born
 - Rev 12:6, 13-16**—Satan directs his wrath on the church for 1260 years
12. **Rev 12:15-16**—the wrath of Satan persecution of the Christian church during the Dark ages is presented under the figure of "flooding"
- Isa 8:7-8**--The Assyrian invasion of Israel depicted in flood symbolism (
 - Isa 46:7-8**--The Egyptian invasion of Judah depicted as a flood
 - Jer 47:2**--The Babylonian incursion into Judah depicted under the symbol of flooding
 - Dan 9:26**--The Roman invasion of Jerusalem in 70 AD as a flood
 - Rev 12:15-16**--The papal persecution of the Christian church in the Dark ages as flood

The Final Struggle

13. **Rev 12:17**—the great controversy climaxes with the dragon warring against the remnant of the woman's seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ

- a. The knowledge of Satan's enmity against the Law of God helps us to understand the real issue behind the Sunday Law crisis; it is Satan's final last ditch effort to make men transgress the commandments God by forcing men to violate the fourth commandment (**James 2:10; GC 582**)
 - b. The dragon's wrath is directed towards those who keep the commandments of God because they prove false his claim that the law cannot be kept. (**PP 77**)
14. **Rev 17:1, 15**—this final war against God's commandment keeping people in the time of the end is nothing but the rekindling of papal persecution, when its deadly is completely healed; it is also portrayed as a flood
- a. **Rev 16:12, Isa 59:19**—God intervenes and dries up the papal flood in the 6th plague to deliver God's people
15. True to the nature of the issue in the great controversy from the very start, the final struggle as recorded in **Rev 12:17** is between the disobedient and the obedient: the obedient are under fire from Satan and his hosts because he cannot tolerate a people who keep the commandments of God, for these make his claim that the Law of God cannot be kept, a lie.

There are only two parties upon this earth--those who stand under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ and those who stand under the black banner of rebellion. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation is represented the great conflict between the obedient and the disobedient [Revelation 12:17; 13:11-17 quoted] (MS 16, 1900). **7BC 974.**

The Protagonists in the Great Controversy Identified by Badges

16. **Rev 13:18**--How are the **Obedient** and the **Disobedient** identified and distinguished from each other in the Bible? The Bible employs a system of numbering so that the obedient are stamped with the number "7", whereas disobedient are stamped with the number "6"!
17. **The Obedient**-- Seven-fold description of the 144,000 who attain to perfection of character; this is significant considering that God's perfect character is described in a seven-fold manner as well in **Exo 34**:
- 1. **Verse 1**: they stand with the Lamb on mount Zion having the father's name on their foreheads
 - 2. **Verse 2-3**: have harps and sing a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and the elders
 - 3. **Verse 3**: redeemed from the earth
 - 4. **Verse 4**: not defiled with women for they are virgins
 - 5. **Verse 4**: they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth
 - 6. **Verse 4**: redeemed from among men being first fruits unto God and to the Lamb
 - 7. **Verse 5**: in their mouth was found no guile for they are without fault before the throne of God

18. Seven-fold description of the character of God (**Exo 34:6-7**)

1. Merciful and gracious
2. Longsuffering
3. Abundant in goodness and truth
4. Keeping mercy for thousands
5. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin
6. And that by no means clear the guilty
7. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation

19. **The Disobedient**--The number "6" is stamped on the disobedient and imperfect, those who characters remain filthy forever; the three beast powers of **Revelation 12** and **13** are each stamped with the number "6"

- a. The beast of **Revelation 12** (the great red dragon) which primarily represents Satan and secondarily Rome (**GC 438**) does 6 things in opposition to God and His people
 1. **verse 4**: his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth
 2. **verse 4**: stood before the woman to devour the child as soon as it was born
 3. **verse 7**: the dragon and his angels fought against Michael and his angels
 4. **verse 13**: he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child
 5. **verse 15**: the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood to carry the woman away in the flood
 6. **verse 17**: the dragon. . .went to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed
- b. The beast rising out of the sea which represent the Papacy in **Revelation 13 (GC 439)** is given 6 things:
 1. **verse 2**: the dragon **gave** him his power, his seat and great authority
 2. **verse 5**: it was **given** unto him a mouth speaking great things
 3. **verse 5**: power **given** him to continue forty and two months
 4. **verse 7**: it was **given** him to make war with the saints
 5. **verse 7**: power was **given** him over kindred, and tongues and nations
 6. **verse 15**: life **given** to the beast in the process of the image of the beast receiving life from the two-horned beast
- c. The beast coming out of the earth in **Revelation 13** which represents apostate Protestantism in the United States (**GC 439-440**) is also stamped with the number "6"; it does 6 things to compel men to obey men's laws in defiance of God's Law:
 1. **verse 12**: exercises all the power of the first beast before him
 2. **verse 12**: causes men to worship the first beast
 3. **verses 13-14**: performs great wonders and miracles to deceive them that dwell on the earth
 4. **verses 14-15**: makes an image to the beast

5. **verse 15:** causes as many as will not worship the image to the beast to be killed
6. **verse 16-17:** causes all to receive the mark of the beast in the forehead or in the hand

Conclusion

20. The big question is, which group will we be found in the final struggle?

21. The idea being circulated in Adventism that men will continue sinning until Jesus comes supports Satan's claim that the Law cannot be kept and is one of Satan's key **deception**; we need to steer clear of this delusion, if we are to be found on the right side of the controversy:

“. . .If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would make haste to confess their sins and to put them away. **Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome.** But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him: "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12:9. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:29, 30. Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them." **GC 489**

a. "Make haste to confess our sins and put them away. . . "

22. To believe that God approves of us while we violate His commandments is not the faith of Jesus but presumption, the counterfeit of faith (**DA 126**)

23. If we are not being purified daily from sin by living out the three angels messages, then we can be sure, we will be classed among the disobedient and the disloyal in the final struggle. . .

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