

5. The Controversy Continues (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

Biblical material: 1 Sam. 17:43–51, 2 Sam. 11:1–17, 1 Kings 18:21–39, 2 Kings 19:21–34, Esther 3:8–11, Nehemiah 1; 2:18.

Quotes

- God’s plan and purpose of salvation is like himself, it is eternal. *Eric Alexander*
- The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives. *D.L. Moody*
- Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. *Corrie ten Boom*
- I believe that it is better to tell the truth than a lie. I believe it is better to be free than to be a slave. And I believe it is better to know than to be ignorant. *H. L. Mencken*
- God did not create evil. Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God. *Albert Einstein*

Questions

How do these Old Testament stories help us understand the issues in the Great Controversy? In what way does every life show us this cosmic conflict? While we consider these individuals as heroes, what of their flaws? How can we apply the lessons we learn to our own lives?

Bible summary

This study examines the Great Controversy in the lives of David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Esther, and Nehemiah. 1 Sam. 17:43–51 records the story of David defeating Goliath, while 2 Sam. 11:1–17 tells of David and Bathsheba. 1 Kings 18:21–39 shows us Elijah at Mount Carmel. 2 Kings 19:21–34 reveals God’s protection of King Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the Assyrians. Esther 3:8–11 is part of the story of Esther. Nehemiah 1 records Nehemiah’s prayer to return to Jerusalem, and the positive response (Nehemiah 2:18).

Comment

The great controversy is all about God and who he is, and our praise and joy comes from finding out God is not the kind of person the Devil has described, but that he is the source of all that is good and true and loving...

The Bible records God as speaking out repeatedly against the evils of injustice, corruption, and discrimination. The fact that these things exist tells us that the great controversy continues, and that we need to open our eyes to what’s going on. Our conclusion must not be that these things are inevitable, but that these are the results of following the way of Lucifer. He claimed that he was bringing freedom, but instead brought enslavement. His charges against God in reality are descriptions of himself—unjust, unkind, uncaring—yet he persists in targeting God with such accusations.

In the setting of the great controversy the issues raised by Lucifer need to be answered, and this can only be done by transparent demonstration of the truth. Of course, the information in the books is not to inform God, so it must have meaning in a wider context. It only makes sense when others are looking, and this is where the concept of the

great controversy comes in. The information is part of the evidence in settling the issues that have been raised over God's character and the way he governs.

While this study looks at the experience of God in the lives of David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Esther, and Nehemiah, we must look deeper than the actual events. We need to see God working his purposes out through King David, through Elijah and his prophetic message, through the time of the Exile (Esther, even though God is not specifically mentioned!), and in King Hezekiah and the Return under Nehemiah.

Just to pick one specific—what of King Hezekiah and his life—that was extended at his request. Was that a “good” thing? In the light of later history it would seem that Hezekiah's extended life was not for the best...

We should read the Bible to find its Author. Not Bible reading for its own sake, as some have done, but because it's vital to find the God whose nature and character are revealed in his book to us, and to accept his offer of healing salvation. As Jesus himself said, “You are always searching the Scriptures, because you think you will find eternal life in them. But the Scriptures are giving proof about me!”

The primary reason for reading the Bible is to encounter the saving God who wants you as his closest friend. God's intention is to have the deepest relationship with each one of us, and that's why he makes himself known—so we can accept his salvation and live together with him: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Ellen White Comments

The holy inhabitants of other worlds were watching with the deepest interest the events taking place on the earth.... By the facts unfolded in the progress of the great controversy, God will demonstrate the principles of His rules of government, which have been falsified by Satan and by all whom he has deceived. {PP 78-9}

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {Ed 190}

Just before us is the closing struggle of the great controversy when, with “all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,” Satan is to work to misrepresent the character of God, that he may “seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” If there was ever a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called to be the depositaries of His holy law and to vindicate His character before the world. Those to whom has been committed a trust so sacred must be spiritualized, elevated, vitalized, by the truths they profess to believe. {5T 746}