

7. Jesus' Teachings and the Great Controversy (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

Biblical material: Matt. 11:28, 29; Rom. 4:1–6; Matt. 13:3–8, 18–23; Matt. 7:21–27; James 2:17; Matt. 7:1–5.

Quotes

- The character and rule of God is manifested when instead of employing violence against his enemies to crush them, Jesus loves his enemies in order to redeem them. *Greg Boyd*
- For Christians, the Bible's highest value is in revealing Jesus, who gives us the highest, deepest, and most mature view of the character of the living God. *Brian McLaren*
- Not only do we not know God except through Jesus Christ; we do not even know ourselves except through Jesus Christ. *Blaise Pascal*
- Apart from special, saving revelation—the revelation that centers upon the Lord Jesus Christ—we do not and cannot know God. *J.I. Packer*
- The need of the world is to listen to God. *Albert Einstein*
- The Lord did not come to make a display. He came to heal and to teach suffering men. For one who wanted to make a display the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders. But for Him Who came to heal and to teach the way was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not vitiating the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it. *thanasius of Alexandria*

Questions

Why didn't Jesus speak more directly about the Great Controversy? What can we infer from his life and teachings regarding the issues in the conflict? How do we decide who is telling the truth—and what are the consequences of our decision? How do we see God revealed in Jesus, and how does this fit the picture of God we have identified?

Bible summary

Jesus invites all to come to him, to find rest, and an easy yoke (Matt. 11:28, 29). Abraham is counted as right because he trusted God (Rom. 4:1–6). Jesus tells the parable of the sower and explains it in Matt. 13:3–8, 18–23. Wise and foolish disciples are illustrated by the builders mentioned by Jesus in Matt. 7:21–27: those who built on rock, and those who built on sand. Without action, trust is meaningless (James 2:17). Don't judge, says Jesus, and don't try and take a speck out of your brother's eye if you have a plank in your own eye! (Matt. 7:1–5).

Comment

In the life and teachings of Jesus we have a far wider and deeper explanation of the problems caused by Satan and God's ways of answering—through practical demonstration that involves our redemption too. In all of Jesus' words and actions we see God at work.

God was in Christ, revealing himself to the world. The gospels explain just how Jesus revealed the character of God to the world. God truly is love and has shown himself to us in Jesus. He explains to us what the great controversy is all about. He further explains that the whole universe is involved in God's answers to the charges of Satan the Accuser. And through the revelation of Scripture we see so clearly how God has answered these questions about his character. For if we do not know God then we can never rightly relate to him, never love him as he truly is, never understand his incredible gift of himself to us.

Why did Jesus come? So many answers--but the one Jesus keeps on referring to is the essential one. To show us the Father. This is the essence of our belief. We have seen God revealed in Jesus, and in response we love and trust such a God eternally. God is our loving Father. Jesus is God's self-expression. The on-looking universe sees as well—for the plan of salvation is not just about us! So we should talk about this light of the world that reveals God. Talk about the goodness of God. We are not to remain in Satan's shadow. We are to talk Jesus.

God is not an enemy. God is not hostile. He is our loving Father and friend who wishes all of us to come to him. He says, "If I be lifted up... I will draw all unto me." He is "long suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." What do you say to such an incredibly loving Lord?

Ellen White Comments

A crisis had arrived in the government of God. The earth was filled with transgression. The voices of those who had been sacrificed to human envy and hatred were crying beneath the altar for retribution. All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction.

The heavenly intelligences were prepared for a fearful manifestation of Almighty power. Every move was watched with intense anxiety. The exercise of justice was expected. The angels looked for God to punish the inhabitants of the earth. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "I will send my beloved Son," he said. "It may be they will reverence him." Amazing grace! Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save the world. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The heavenly universe was amazed at God's patience and love. To save fallen humanity the Son of God took humanity upon himself, laying aside his kingly crown and royal robe. He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. One with God, he alone was capable of accomplishing the work of redemption, and he consented to an actual union with man. {RH, July 17, 1900}

The unfallen worlds watched with intense interest to see Jehovah arise and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth, and Satan boasted that if God did do this, he would complete his plans and secure for himself the allegiance of unfallen worlds. He had arguments ready by which to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the world's above; but at this crisis, instead of destroying the world, God sent his Son to save it. {ST, February 5, 1894}

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