Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible
Lesson 9: A Brand Plucked From the Fire

Bible Texts: Zechariah 1-3, Rev. 12:10, Exod. 3:2-14, Eph. 2:8-10, John 14:15.

Memory Text: “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:4)

Lesson Outline from the Adult Sabbath School Study Guide
I. Introduction
II. Zealous for Jerusalem
III. The Accuser and the Accused
IV. The Angel of the Lord
V. Change of Clothes
VI. An Effectual Plea
VII. Further Study

Facilitator’s Questions for Discussion
• What is the core of the great controversy—what is the controversy over? Who is accused? Who is doing the accusing?
• What is God’s role in all this?
• What is Satan’s primary goal and what are his methods?
• What does it mean to be “covered in the robe of Christ’s righteousness”? Does your answer make sense and is it consistent with the rest of what you believe?
• How does Christ’s life, death, and resurrection actually make it possible for me—the chief of sinners—to be saved and live in a perfect universe for ever? What is going on here? How does this work?
• The lesson talks about “…the righteousness of Christ imputed…” “rich robes…” and “credited to him…” What does all this dark speech mean?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell
This great controversy arose because Satan questioned God's authority. Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1984 audio Conversations About God 2

The great controversy is not over power, but over who is telling the truth. Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1984 audio Conversations About God 4

Valuable listening references from Graham Maxwell:
Free downloading at pineknoll.org. Choose all audio resources on left menu
1977 Romans series
1978 Galatians series
Now, those who prefer what appears to be quite a revival of reformation theology among us, do not say much about the great controversy in the universe. If they do talk about the great controversy, the controversy is over God’s law, and the issue is “are you going to obey it or not,” rather than the much larger issue, the whole character and government of God Himself, which views the law as really an emergency measure to hold us together until we have a better reason for doing things. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1983 audio Questions People are Asking About the Plan of Salvation*

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(Audience) Why was Christ’s death necessary to establish the relationship, to reestablish trust? Wasn’t there another way?

(Graham) If there had been another way, you can be sure He would have done it. Now, in the trust model, in the great controversy model, the questions are over God’s government and character, which are really one and the same. He runs the universe the way He does because that’s the way He is. In that model, the issue is trust versus distrust and war. The distrust was caused by the adversary, who used to live in the presence of God, circulating insinuations, accusations, questions about God, His character and His government. If one starts out that way, with a war up in Heaven, and the division among the angels before you and I were ever involved in sin, then one becomes caught up in the questions that were presented so persuasively that one-third of the angels bought the devil’s picture of God and His government. And then one asks, if these are the questions, what are the answers? And, why should I believe the answers?... God says, “How can I answer this on authoritative claims, alone? No, I will show you.” And so He set out to demonstrate to the universe the truth about Himself. Now I believe, if we could perceive and enunciate the right questions, then we could interpret the answers that were given. My understanding is that the most important questions of all were answered by the cross; there is absolutely no other way. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1983 audio Questions People are Asking About the Plan of Salvation*

Is there a verse in the Bible that says that when Jesus died, He was given up? Romans 4:25 says Christ was given up for our transgressions. And many versions, with their reformation influence; translate this “Christ was put to death.” There is nothing in there about being put to death; it says He was given up. To tie that in with the issue in the great controversy, God gave up His Son as if He were a sinner. Just as He will give us up, if we are real sinners at the end. Because you can’t force people to trust you, in a free universe, what can you do but give people up. When Jesus was given up, yes, he died.
So I believe there were three questions answered by Gethsemane and the cross. One; who is right, God or the devil? Is God a liar when He says sin results in death? The devil says “Yes, God has lied to you.” . . . “You will not die” is the teaching of the devil. God says, “You will die. But, it is not torture and execution at my hands.” The devil developed the whole doctrine of hell to turn the universe against God. And God says that is not true. And I say, “Well, how do I know how the wicked are going to die?” He says, “Only one person has ever died the death as a result of sin. It’s only happened once in all eternity. I died that death. I wouldn’t ask any of you to prove the truthfulness of my word. This is the meaning of substitutionary death.” Yes, He died in our place, but not for legal reasons. He died because He wouldn’t think of asking anybody else to go through that painful experience to demonstrate the truth. Besides, our death wouldn’t have answered it anyway. Because if our dying would have answered the question, then He might as well have let Lucifer die in the beginning.

But you remember the explanation. Had He left Lucifer to die, the universe would have misunderstood and assumed God had put him to death. So only by God coming: He said “No one takes my life from me. Nobody can kill me. I’m going through this myself. I have arranged this with my Father.” And the universe looking on said the Father isn’t killing the Son; God isn’t killing God. And it was clear enough to them that they could say “Our questions are answered. One--sin does result in death. Two-- it is not torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God. Only one thing left. God, why were you so concerned that we understand this?” God says, “Because if you serve me from fear, it will turn you into rebels--holy rebels.” He says “come to Calvary.” …On Calvary, Jesus was tortured to death. By whom? The most devout, blueprinting Adventists the world has ever known. Absolutely dedicated to God, the scriptures, creation, Sabbath, the Ten Commandments, you name it. Jesus said you even strain gnats out of your goat’s milk. Real health reformers. You couldn’t fault them for a thing. You couldn’t have disfellowshipped one of the people who crucified Christ. Their lives were apparently without blemish.

But they hated Him; they hated His picture of God. They killed Him to silence His unbiblical heresy. And the angels looking on said “We thought, by sending Your Son to Palestine, you did that to get a good running start with people who already agreed with you. We didn’t realize you sent Him there to prove this costly point, that if we obey you for the wrong reason, because we don’t really know you, we could turn into your worst enemies in the middle of our Sabbath-keeping and our tithe-paying and our health-reforming.” And that’s why I think the biggest mistake the Adventist church could make in these last days is to have one tremendous revival in reformation, get out the blueprint, straighten out our lives, without spending much more time on the picture of God. Because if we do the right things for the wrong reason, we’ll do what some of the Jews did, and become His enemies.

So I believe the cross was the only way to answer the questions. Without answers to the questions, there would be no peace, no freedom, no security throughout the universe. So it was
for these specific reasons. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1983 audio Questions People are Asking About the Plan of Salvation*

The good news is that God is not the kind of person Satan has made Him out to be: arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. On the contrary, He is the kind of person His own son made Him out to be. For living the life that He did, and treating sinners with such incredible respect and grace said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” And the issue in the great controversy is over this, “What is God like?” *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1978 audio Galatians pt 1*

Thinking for many, many years of the best way to approach this, you remember the counsel that we’re to take the Bible as a whole and relate it to the one central theme. And if you do that, you see the whole great controversy over the character of God running through the 66 books. We see the charges that Satan has leveled against God; of being a legalist, arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. And then we see how so many have accepted these charges, and we have distrusted God. And left to ourselves we have become sinful, rebellious, untrustworthy, self-indulgent individuals, who’ve reaped all the consequences of this disorderliness; physically, mentally, and spiritually. And yet God, our Heavenly Father, remains gracious. He is not arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. He wishes to be seen as the father of the prodigal son. And He offers to do for us whatever needs to be done. . . .Is there anything wrong that needs to be set right? In the order of things, what’s the most important thing that needs to be set right? What went wrong first? And what might have to be the first thing to be set right?

Was it not a growing distrust of God among the members of His family, ‘til one-third of the brilliant angels agreed with Satan that God could not be trusted. And the first thing that was mentioned to the human race was that God was a selfish liar. He cannot be trusted. Then if the damage done is to be restored, would not the first step be winning us back to trust? In fact, knowing God to be the infinitely powerful Creator of the whole vast universe, if only we could trust Him, couldn’t He most readily restore whatever damage has been done? Couldn’t He do it? It’s in that light that Ellen White’s statement right after the Minneapolis general conference, I think, becomes very, very significant… (See her explanation of why Jesus came to this world to do what He did, which she describes as “setting us right.”) *In Signs of the Times, January 20, 1890* *Graham Maxwell, excerpts from 1978 audio Galatians pt 3*

God has been on trial in the great controversy, and Christ died to demonstrate the righteousness, the justice, the fairness of God in doing what He has done. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1978 audio Galatians pt 4*

The controversy is about God. Likewise, the good news is not about us. The good news is about God; that He has won His case. And the universe has conceded that He has won His case. And only here on this little planet way out in space are there any people foolish enough, and ungrateful enough, or blind enough, Paul would even say stupid enough, to turn from this good
news and believe Satan’s lies about God. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1977 audio Romans ch. 3*

The last book in the Bible describes how this great controversy has been going on far longer than this earth has existed and has involved the whole vast universe. Angels have been tempted to believe that God cannot be trusted. And one-third, almost a half of these brilliant beings we trust as our guardian angels, sided with Satan against God and agreed with him that God could not be trusted. *Graham Maxwell, excerpt from 1977 audio Romans ch 4*


**Study with Ellen White**

The controversy in heaven began with selfish strife for position, a desire on the part of Lucifer to be equal with God. The disaffection of Satan in entertaining the thought that he should stand as head of the heavenly order at first seemed a small thing, but by dwelling upon this thought, it was strengthened. Step by step he miscalculated the position that had been assigned him by God, to be maintained only in God, until he finally came to look with enmity upon everything coming from Jesus Christ. Satan rebelled against the laws governing the heavenly intelligences; and by representing these in a deceptive light, by his unbelief and complaints, he drew others with him into rebellion. *RH, May 30, 1899 par. 3*

Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving. Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world. *DA 21.3*

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." *Malachi 4:2. DA 22.1*
Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The arch apostate 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. \textit{DA 758.3}

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. \textit{DA 759.1}

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. \textit{DA 761.3}

Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. \textit{DA 761.5}