

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – Rebellion in a Perfect Universe – 24-30 September 2022

Christ warns us to beware of the enemy of souls spoken of thus by the prophet Isaiah: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12). Sin originated with Lucifer, who exalted himself above his Creator. Beware of the spirit of self-exaltation.

Sunday: Creation, an Expression of Love – What spirit led the Lesson writer to say: “First, love by its very nature cannot exist closed in itself but must be expressed. (What kind of love is not expressed?) God’s love is shared internally among the Three Persons of the Godhead, and externally in His relationship with all His creatures”? It is spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:22). “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The word ‘love’ in Greek can be rendered as Eros (romantic love) or Storge (familial love) or Philia (friendship love) or Agape (selfless love). Misapplying 1 John 4:7-12, those who ally with Satan to obscure that Christ is the literal begotten Son of God, use Eros mindset to teach that God did not at any point in eternity exist alone before Christ came forth because in order for God to be love He had to express love and had to have other co-eternal persons with whom He bestows love and from whom He receives love. Eros mindset describes God in the context of a love that needs someone else in order to be love, and avers that perfect love is possible only between equals. Eros mindset reduces God to a selfish God, distorting 1 John 4:8 by mixing Eros and Agape!

In verse 8, John defines God as love, demonstrated by sending His Son. Consistency of usage in this text point to the fact that the God mentioned in verse 8 is the same God in verses 9-12. This clearly shows that the God in verse 8 is the Father and that His love is revealed in the giving of His Son to save humanity. Agape love is a love that invests value rather than seeks it. God giving His Son to us invests value in us and is indeed agape. Eros mindset misapplies 1 John 4:8-12 to giving and receiving of love between co-equals and co-eternals, which is not what the text teaches. Eros is the need to serve in reciprocity, but agape serves without reciprocity. Eros is the need for co-equality, but agape is willingness to serve the least worthy. Eros seeks equal, but agape makes equal. Eros mindset asks: if Jesus were begotten in eternity then there would be a time He did not exist and therefore how could He be God? This question only occurs in the domain of Eros love that seeks value rather than invests value. Eros demands equality of status in all areas yet agape does not. Agape accepts that in Christ all the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Col 2:9), “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell” (Col 1:19), Eros thinks to be ‘heir of all things’ (Heb 1:2) and equal with God ‘by inheritance’ (Heb 1:4) is robbery on Christ’s part, but agape thinks ‘it not robbery to be equal with God’ by ‘being in the form of God’ (Phil 2:6).

The mixture of Eros and Agape that teaches that God cannot be love unless Christ is of co-eternal age with God, is contrary to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that clearly teach that Jesus proceeded out of the Father at a distant past time in our human computation we call eternity. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). “The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Proverbs 8:22-23). ‘And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting”’ (EG White, PP 34.1). Christ inherited all that the Father has and is fully divine by inheritance, thus we hear the loving words of the Father who spoke to His Son (Mat 3:17). The words Father and Son only find meaning through inheritance that agape accepts and Eros denies. Through the agape of 1 John 4:8 we can take hold of the words: “... but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). The Father of Jesus is our Father and the God of Jesus is our God, and all this we possess through Christ who is the greatest demonstration of agape the universe can ever behold. ‘God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son’ (8T 268.3).

The Eros mindset that teaches that for God to be love Christ must have been of co-eternal existence with God for both to bestow and receive love from each other, is a satanic mindset, for Satan thought perfect love was only possible between equals, and he demanded equality with his Creator, Christ, in order for him to accept that God is love. 'The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him' (1SP 17.2; SR 13.2). 'When God said to His Son, "Let us make man in our image" [Gen 1:26], Satan was jealous of Jesus' (EW 145.1). In this controversy, Satan seeks to distort the agape love of God, but when this controversy is ended, all will 'declare that God is love' (GC 678.3).

Monday: Free Will, the Basis for Love – What do you say to those who question God creating us with free will? Freedom to do right implies freedom to do wrong. If a man were made so that he could not do wrong, he would have no freedom at all, not even to do right. He would be less than the brutes. There is no virtue in forced obedience, nor would there be any virtue in doing that which is right if it were impossible to do wrong. Moreover, there could be no pleasure or satisfaction in the professed friendship of two persons if one associated with the other just because he could not avoid it. The joy of the Lord in the companionship of His people is that they of their own free-will choose Him above all others. The very ones who rail against God for not preventing the ills that He foresees, would be the very first to charge Him with cruelty if He did arbitrarily interfere with their freedom and make them do that which they do not choose. Such a course would make everybody unhappy and discontented. The wisest thing for us to do is to stop trying to fathom the ways of the Almighty, and accept the fact that whatever the Lord does is right. "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30).

Tuesday: Mysterious Ingratitude – How can we overcome any feelings of ingratitude and self-exaltation? Self-exaltation has been the cause of all the trouble since Lucifer said in heaven, "I will exalt my throne" (Isaiah 14:13). He exalted himself and fell. He persuaded man to join him in his religion of self-conceit and rebellion. To save man, Jesus humbled Himself more than any man. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:9). Not self-exalting but self-humbling is the way of honour; God gives grace to whoever seeks nothing for himself but that he may serve. "Learn of Me," says Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mat. 11:29). Vain man, in his petty pride, must learn humility of his Creator.

Wednesday: The Price of Pride – What far-reaching consequences did Lucifer's pride while in heaven bring to the universe and to this world? Satan was once in heaven. Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." His name was Lucifer, and addressing the king of Babylon who in his pride was exalting himself against God, Isaiah uses terms which must apply to Satan in heaven, when his pride was causing him to rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-14). Ezekiel also describes his beauty and brightness (Ezekiel 28:12-19). He lost war against Christ, he now wars to obscure the Sonship of Christ: "Angels were expelled from heaven ... This fact the [fallen] angels would obscure, that Christ was the only begotten Son of God..." {EG White, TDG 128.2}. Our Church uses Satan's spirit to deny: "Christ is the eternal Son of God ... We are dealing with metaphorical use of the word 'son.' Metaphorical significance: The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father" (see *Adventist World*, Nov. 2015, p 42). "He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). "Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got upon a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth" {25LtMs, Ms 86, 1910, par. 29}. And this warfare was over the fact that Christ is a literal Son of God, over reality and not metaphor.

Thursday: The Spread of Unbelief – How can we escape Satan who is cast down from heaven? We must by faith be in heaven; Christ is seated with God in the heavenly places, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" (Eph. 1:20-21); since we are by faith raised to the heavenly places with Him (Eph. 2:4-6), when we "seek those things which are above" (Col. 3:1-2), we shall escape Satan who is cast from heaven (Rev. 12:7-9).