

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Conflict Behind All Conflicts – 18-24 October 2025

Christ would have us know that God who created the heavens and the earth by Him is able to defeat all the enemies of His people even through a miracle. This is seen in the miracle that at the prayer of Joshua the sun stood still for about a whole day until all the enemies of Israel were defeated (see Joshua 10). “Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.” “So the sun stood still in the midst of the heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.” Some, in their eagerness to overthrow the Sabbath of the Lord, have found in this occurrence a loss of time. But there was no time lost. It was simply a lengthening of the day. If such a miracle should occur on the Sabbath, it would simply lengthen the Sabbath. Two days were not combined in one, but it was one long day. “And there was no day like that before it or after it” (Joshua 10:14).

The lesson writer says this reality of God helping Israel to defeat their enemies raises the unavoidable questions: “how can we understand that God’s chosen people carried out such practices in Old Testament times? How is it possible to reconcile the image of a “warlike” God with His character of love (for example, Exod. 34:6, Ps. 86:15, Ps. 103:8, Ps. 108:4) without diluting the credibility, authority, and historicity of the Old Testament?” We are told:

“God’s love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psalm 50:21). They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God would do as they imagine they would do” {3LTM, Ms 5, 1876, par. 11}. “God’s goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refused to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for man — a criminal against God’s holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless — to dictate to God” {par. 12}. “In no kingdom or government is it left to the lawbreakers to say what punishment is to be executed against those who have broken the law. All we have, all the bounties of His grace which we possess, we owe to God. The aggravating character of sin against such a God cannot be estimated any more than the heavens can be measured with a span. God is a moral governor as well as a Father. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force” {par. 13}. “The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him, but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law, but God would do it in strict justice” {par. 14}. “Who will say God will not do what He says He will do? Let God be true and every man a liar. The Lord is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those sinners who know not God and obey not His gospel” {3LTM, Ms 5, 1876, par. 15}.

Sunday: Commander of the Army of the Lord – Read Joshua 5:13-15; what lesson do we learn? The conquest of Canaan was not to be wholly dependent upon the efforts of Israel, nor yet was it to be attained without their co-operation. The promised land was just before them; but their inheritance was still in the possession of the Canaanites. They still had to exercise faith and put forth effort in obedience to God’s command. But as they advanced, an unseen host went before them, and the “Angel of His presence” directed their steps. The people of God were co-warriors with Christ and His angels. And as human faith and effort united with divine power, Jordan parted, Jericho fell, and the Canaanites were vanquished.

In all their marches and battles, Israel was borne on, and buoyed up, by an unseen Deliverer. There was no place for pride in their conquests, for it was evident that the Captain of the Lord’s host wrought for them, and the shout of the song of Israel was one of praise to him who giveth the victory. Israel’s experience is full of suggestion to the Christian. We have

been delivered from the cruel bondage of “lords many, and gods many” (1 Cor 8:5). In the victory that must be achieved in banishing the Canaanites of heart, divine power must accompany human effort. We must have the Captain of the Lord’s host to go before us, that our enemies may be subdued and vanquished. We must render our hearts in an unswerving and consecrated service to our God, that there may be a complete government of God established in our hearts. Like Israel of old, we have not availed ourselves of our exalted privileges; we have been too easily satisfied with small attainments, with half conquests, and because of unsubdued enemies we have been led into idolatry and sin; but the desire of the Lord has been expressed in the words of the psalm: “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.... He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them” (Psalms 81:13-16).

Monday: War in Heaven – Read Joshua Rev 12:7-9; Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:11-19; Dan 10:12-14; did Joshua understand that the battle was part of a larger conflict? Yes, for he would have read in the book of Job that was written by Moses. “The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time” {St February 19, 1880, Art. A, par. 14}. As Joshua read the book of Job with the deepest interest, he understood that Satan was the adversary, and Joshua was given to understand the wider conflict in a vision recorded by Zechariah “... Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him” and Joshua saw the Lord rebuke “the adversary” (Zechariah 3:1-2).

We know that Lucifer started the war in heaven, but why did Lucifer go to war, what did he want? “Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and Lucifer, that glorious angel, got up a warfare over the matter, until he had to be thrust down to the earth” {25LrMs, Ms 86, 1910, par. 29}. Here we are told explicitly that the “matter” that Lucifer went to war over was that Christ was “the only begotten Son of God.” Therefore, it behoves us to understand this matter ourselves if we would be on the right side of the great conflict, on the side of Christ.

Tuesday: The Lord Is a Warrior – Read Exodus 2:23-25; 12:12-13; 15:3-11; what does it mean that God is a warrior? As we gain deliverance, we would know without a doubt that “The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name” (Exodus 15:3), and we would sing as did Moses commemorating that great deliverance. Our daily victories point us to the final victory. The prophet of Patmos beholds the white-robed multitude that have “gotten the victory,” standing on the “sea of glass mingled with fire,” having “the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Revelation 15:2-3).

Wednesday: The Lord Will Fight for You – Read Exodus 14; what was God’s plan for conquering the enemies of the children of Israel leading up to the promised land? When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, they were asked to exercise faith (verses 13-14). Nothing is hard for God, and no enemy can withstand Him. Knowing this, Jehoshaphat could say, “Art not Thou our God?”; for since God was his, all who came against him came also against God; and their overthrow was assured. When Jehoshaphat prayed, the assurance came, “Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you” (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17). To God belongs victory; “His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory” (Psalm 98:1). When by faith we claim Him as ours, we prove it is “victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Thursday: The Second-Best Option – Read Exodus 17:7-13; Joshua 6:15-20; what do we learn? “This act of Moses, in reaching up his hands toward heaven, was to teach Israel that while they made God their trust, and exalted his throne, he would fight for them, and subdue their enemies. But when they should let go their hold upon his strength, and should trust to their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God, and their enemies would prevail against them” {ST April 15, 1880, par. 17}. The first option for Israel was to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. When they went to war, not standing still, their second-best option was to trust that it was the Lord fighting for them.