

# 1 CHAPTER

## The Cosmic Controversy

When I was just a little lad in England, I was gazing at the sky from my bedroom window and asked my mother, “What is eternity? And how long is it?”

“It’s forever,” Mother replied with a smile.

“How could it be?” I puzzled. “Everything has a beginning and an end. Eternity is impossible!”

That night I dreamed I entered heaven and joined others on a nonstop beltway called eternity. Once on the belt I couldn’t get off. Fear gripped me. Feeling trapped, I yelled, “Let me off!” That cry woke me up and *whew*, what relief! But I was still puzzled.

Is Christ eternal? When Proverbs 8:22 mentions that “the LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,” does this mean that the heavenly Father brought forth His Son in past eternity? If so, Christ had a beginning.

Writing in a magazine article, Ellen G. White referred to Christ’s words “I AM” as signifying an eternal self-existence. She said, “Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God.” She continued, “In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.”<sup>1</sup> Six years later she reiterated that Christ

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“existed from eternity, a distinct person.”<sup>2</sup>

Hence, Christ wasn’t brought forth from the Father. Rather, Christ’s life is “original, unborrowed, underived.”<sup>3</sup> That agrees with the Bible: Christ is “from everlasting” (Micah 5:2, KJV), and He is also called the “Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6).

### Lucifer’s rebellion

The cosmic controversy began in the heart of Lucifer (he is also called *Satan*, which means “the adversary”). As a mere created being, he wanted to replace the eternal Christ. But Christ had an endless eternity of experience as God; Christ had a “glorious high throne from the beginning” (Jeremiah 17:12, KJV). Satan had nothing of the kind.

Christ also “created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space.”<sup>4</sup> How could Lucifer rule the universe when he can’t even create a blade of grass and when he isn’t omnipresent? He’s confined to one place and thus totally unqualified! He wanted to replace his Creator, who created all things (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). What audacity Satan had!

In spite of these issues, “little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation.”<sup>5</sup> “You [Lucifer] have said in your heart, . . . ‘I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; . . . I will be like the Most High’ ” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NKJV). Lucifer “ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator.”<sup>6</sup>

Blind pride goaded Satan’s hatred of Christ. “He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). What does this mean? If possible, he would have killed Christ in heaven. “To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels.”<sup>7</sup> He charged God as “severe and tyrannical.”<sup>8</sup> He denounced God’s law “as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law.” Thus, “the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.”<sup>9</sup>

Just look at Satan’s grandiose plans: “God’s government

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included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he also could carry all the worlds.”<sup>10</sup>

In response, the King of the universe called all the angels together to explain that Christ was equally divine as Himself and that They had created all the worlds together. In this work, Christ had not sought exaltation for Himself.<sup>11</sup>

The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ. . . . Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. . . . The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out, in harmony with the sinless worshippers, in love to the Father and the Son. But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged.<sup>12</sup>

Christ loved Lucifer with infinite love and “yearning pity.”<sup>13</sup> He longed to save him. “Long was he [Satan] retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission.”<sup>14</sup> “Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. . . . He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him.”<sup>15</sup> Finally, he was forced to leave.

After his dismissal from heaven, Lucifer asked for an interview with Christ, and it was granted. He wanted to be reinstated in heaven, and Christ wept at his condition. No doubt his claim in heaven to provide a higher existence of liberty was not what he experienced. He had lost the joy sinless beings had in being united with Christ. Also his rebellion had reached an incurable state.<sup>16</sup> Christ loved His enemy. He shed tears for him, but Lucifer responded with hate.

It was these two sides of the controversy—love and

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hate—that needed to be fully revealed to all created beings in the vast universe. Satan’s rebellion in heaven had been under the guise of loyalty.<sup>17</sup> He needed to be fully unmasked. At the same time, the charges made against Christ needed to be shown as false.

This is why Satan was allowed to live on and not receive the wages of death for his treacherous sin against Christ. If Satan had received those wages, created beings would have wondered whether the claims that God is tyrannical and severe were true. There would be no resolution to the cosmic controversy. Full exposure and full revelation of the two sides of the controversy were the only way to resolve the strife. “For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.”<sup>18</sup>

In heaven, Lucifer’s campaign against Christ was based on change. He claimed he could provide a better future under his leadership than that offered by Christ. Change was the offer made to the angels, and many were deceived by Lucifer. But it was a false promise:

“God is love.” 1 John 4:16. His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. “The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” whose “ways are everlasting,” changeth not. With Him “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Isaiah 57:15; Habakkuk 3:6; James 1:17. . . .

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God’s unchanging love.<sup>19</sup>

God’s unchanging love exposes Lucifer’s false campaign. “God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service

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that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.”<sup>20</sup> What patience, what wisdom, what love God has!

### Seduction in a garden

Think of the differing statements that Christ and Satan made in Eden. Christ said, “Eat, and you will die!” (see Genesis 2:16, 17). Satan blatantly disagreed: “Eat, and you will not die!” (see Genesis 3:4, 5). Lucifer began the cosmic controversy on planet Earth by questioning God’s word and has continued the practice throughout human history.

Unlike Satan, Christ loved Adam and Eve. To protect them from Satan’s scheming, Christ sent two angels to warn them about Satan and to tell them “that they could obey the law of God and be inexpressibly happy, or disobey and lose their high estate and be plunged into hopeless despair.”<sup>21</sup>

Adam and Eve said they would never disobey God’s command, “for it was their highest pleasure to do His will.”<sup>22</sup> God promised that “if necessary, every angel from heaven would come to their help rather than that he [Satan] should in any way do them harm.”<sup>23</sup>

But Satan was crafty. In those days, serpents flew through the air and had a dazzling appearance. Satan took the form of a beautiful serpent in order to deceive Adam and Eve. While in the shape of a serpent, he “took his position in the tree of knowledge and commenced leisurely eating of the fruit.”<sup>24</sup>

What a setup Satan created! He was eating the forbidden fruit. But Christ had said to Adam, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:16, 17). And “the angels [had] cautioned Eve not to separate from her husband.”<sup>25</sup> Yet when she realized she had separated herself from him, “she thought herself secure, even if she did not remain close by the side of her husband. She had wisdom and strength to know if evil came, and to meet it.”<sup>26</sup> She had not only moved away from

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Adam's side but also from Christ's presence. She was in grave danger. Her self-dependence was already disobedience, even prior to transgressing Christ's warning that she would die if she ate the fruit from the forbidden tree.

Eve came to the forbidden tree, gazed at the fruit with "curiosity and admiration," and wondered "why God had so decidedly prohibited their eating and touching it."<sup>27</sup> After all, the serpent was eating the fruit and was very much alive. The serpent also claimed it was able to speak because it ate the fruit.<sup>28</sup>

Note Satan's trap: Eve believed what she saw more than what she had been told. Seeing is believing! Eve considered the serpent speaking human language and not dying from eating the fruit to be compelling empirical evidence. The serpent also "extolled her beauty and exceeding loveliness, which was not displeasing to Eve."<sup>29</sup> What flattery Satan employs!

Eve listened. She must have thought, *If a serpent can speak my human language through eating the fruit, think of what I will become—I will become as God* (see Genesis 3:5). Heady stuff, indeed! It seemed that God was keeping her back from her full potential. In other words, the snake appeared to be more interested in helping her than was Christ, her Creator.

By this point, Eve's mind had been invaded by deception. Thus, "Eve was not horror-stricken to hear the holy and supreme God thus falsely accused. If she had turned her thoughts toward God . . . and remembered all the tokens of his love, . . . she might have been saved. . . . One word in vindication of her Creator would have caused the accuser to flee."<sup>30</sup> Instead, Eve "saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Genesis 3:6).

Eve believed in a stranger who had given her nothing and disbelieved her Creator who had given her everything. "Eve was beguiled, flattered, infatuated."<sup>31</sup> That's the power of "seeing is believing." Eve should have remembered Christ's words, "Eat, and you will die." Believing Christ's words would have given her discernment to distrust the deception. For believing God's Word

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would have helped her to see through the counterfeit.

### Battleground in the human mind

The cosmic controversy on planet Earth takes place in the mind, just as it did in heaven. The fact that the angels and Adam and Eve were victims of this battle proves that deception can have a powerful influence on perfect minds. How much more powerful deception must be on imperfect, fallen minds!

As previously noted, “seeing is believing” is a powerful tool among Satan’s methods of deception because what we look at makes an impression on our minds. Impure television shows, films, and novels can corrupt our minds and thus feed our fallen nature. We must choose wisely, for feeding the mind with poison is just as damaging as feeding poison to the body. We reap what we sow (see Galatians 6:7).

Yet we have reason for hope! Our ticket for heaven was paid by Christ at Calvary. It was the highest price that Christ could pay. No one else could pay such a price. It is available for us, and it is free. When we choose Jesus, His power becomes ours. The clever deceiver is no match for a heart protected by the Son of God. Jesus provides the power to choose wisely and foil the temptations of Satan. In a fallen world, Satan gives us failure and guilt, whereas Christ gives us His powerful presence to receive freedom and salvation.

The Elder Brother [Christ] of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. . . .

. . . Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who

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accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.<sup>32</sup>

Paul pointed to the ultimate focus for our minds: “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV). By continuing to behold Christ, we are continually being changed to be like Him, so that “when he appears we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2, ESV).

The cosmic controversy rages on and neutrality is not an option. Every human must make their choice, a choice that centers on accepting Jesus Christ as a personal savior. Now is the perfect time to strengthen your heart and mind with God’s Word. “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.”<sup>33</sup>

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1. Ellen G. White, “Resistance to Light, No. 3,” *Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900, 2, 3.
  2. Ellen G. White, “The Word Made Flesh,” *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906, 8.
  3. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 530.
  4. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 651.
  5. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1890), 35. See also Ezekiel 28:17.
  6. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 35.
  7. *Ibid.*, 36.
  8. White, *The Great Controversy*, 500.
  9. *Ibid.*, 499.
  10. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 41.
  11. *Ibid.*, 36, 37.
  12. *Ibid.*
  13. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.
  14. White, *The Great Controversy*, 496.
  15. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.
  16. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Pub. Assn., 1947), 26.
  17. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 38.



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18. White, *The Great Controversy*, 499.
19. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.
20. Ibid., 34.
21. White, *The Story of Redemption*, 29, 30.
22. Ibid., 31.
23. Ibid., 30.
24. Ibid., 32.
25. Ibid., 31.
26. Ibid., 32.
27. Ibid.
28. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1903), 24.
29. White, *The Story of Redemption*, 33.
30. Ellen G. White, "God's Requirement in Grace, the Same as in Paradise," *Signs of the Times*, May 12, 1890, 274.
31. White, *The Story of Redemption*, 33.
32. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 329, 330.
33. White, *The Great Controversy*, 593, 594.