

LOVE AT WAR: THE COSMIC CONTROVERSY

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Love is more than an attribute of God—it is His nature. John says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The three Persons of the eternal, self-existent Trinity have always experienced an inner-history of reciprocal love. From eternity to eternity their love for each other never changes (cf. Mal. 3:6). The Father is no less loving than Christ or the Spirit. He is called the “Father of compassion” (2 Cor. 1:3). John exclaims, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Christ said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).¹

THE COSMIC SCOPE OF GOD’S LOVE

It is inexplicable how such a God of love would have a controversy break out against Him when His citizens knew nothing but His love for them.

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David Hume expressed the problem well: “Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?”² Nevertheless, in the midst of this rebellion, God’s response is a warfare of love. God’s love at war responds to Satan’s war against love. The metanarrative of Scripture is the cosmic controversy. It is the ultimate framework in which all the ideas and stories in Scripture are best understood.³

After the cosmic war began, love motivated the Trinitarian mission to save the world. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). “He [Christ] came to his own and his own did not receive him” (John 1:11, NKJV). No wonder he cried out, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing” (Matt. 23:37). The same heart-love for His people is found in the Old Testament. Concerning Ephraim, He says, “‘my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him,’ declares the Lord” (Jer. 31:20).

Does Christ’s mission affect the human race alone, or are there broader dimensions to consider? Is there a cosmic context that needs to be understood? Does the Bible provide a “grand unifying theory”?⁴ Most theologians view Calvary as Christ dying for humans so they can go to heaven.⁵ But there is more. Colossians teaches that Christ created all things in heaven and on earth (Col. 1:16), and that “in him [Christ] all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:19–20). In this passage, Paul clearly indicates that Christ’s

2. See David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X, *The English Philosophers From Bacon to Mill*, ed. Edwin A. Burtt (London: The Modern Library, 1939), 186.

3. Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11/1–2 (2000): 102–119. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 421–453.

4. Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 79.

5. Some of the theologians who move toward a wider metanarrative include Origen, Augustine, John Calvin, John Milton, C. S. Lewis, Gregory Boyd, and Lewis Chafer. For more on this topic, see Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 398–416.

death has cosmic implications that extend beyond the salvation of humans. In some important sense, Calvary reconciles the universe.

This wider mission of Calvary also includes the church, since Paul exclaims: "It seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings" (1 Cor. 4:9). Similarly, Paul points out that God's "intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10–11; cf. 6:12). Why are Calvary and the church of such great interest to the entire universe? Some answers to this question are found in the biblical record of the experiences of Job.

THE TRIALS OF JOB: BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE COSMIC CONFLICT

The book of Job gives an extraordinary look behind the scenes of this world, showing the interaction between God and Satan. The author pulls aside the curtain to reveal the cosmic struggle involving humans and, at the same time, transcending human history.⁶

The book of Job begins at a special meeting convened in the presence of God, somewhere in the universe. "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them" (Job 1:6). This could have been a meeting of different leaders from the inhabited planets throughout the universe. God asked Satan where he came from, and he replied: "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it" (Job 1:7).

This meeting took place long after the fall of humans in Eden, when Satan became the leader of this world and, apparently, represented the planet at this meeting. Later he tempted Christ by offering the kingdoms of this world to Him (Luke 4:5–7). So Christ calls him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11); Paul calls him "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4, ESV); and John says, "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19).⁷

6. Jifi Moskala, "The God of Job and Our Adversary," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15/1 (Spring 2004): 104–117.

7. Because many attended this meeting, it suggests that God has many inhabited

This is the context in which Satan came to the meeting convened by God. Satan was there as representative of earth, having wrenched that position from Adam, who capitulated to him and fell into sin (Gen. 3). At this time, the Lord spoke to Satan, calling attention to His servant Job in the following words: “There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Satan responded with the claim that Job served God because all his wants were supplied (1:9–11). Therefore, God allowed Satan to test Job but forbade him to touch Job’s body (v. 12). Then, “On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him” (2:1). On this occasion, the Lord repeated His former evaluation of Job, adding, “And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason” (2:3). Satan challenged God to “Stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face” (2:5). As at the first meeting, God allowed the test proposed by Satan, this time forbidding him to take Job’s life (2:6).

Here is insight into a struggle between God and Satan over Job as a test case. Both God and Satan seem to have an interest in testing Job; in fact, it was God who called attention to Job in the first place. The fact that this test case was mentioned during major meetings may suggest that the universe is involved in the same question.

Job was unlike Satan and his angels in that he remained faithful to God, “blameless, “upright,” a man of “integrity,” who “shunned evil.” Behind the scenes the debate rages, questioning whether God is worthy of creaturely allegiance. The rebellion of Satan and his angels suggests they thought God was not worthy of their allegiance. Why else would

planets, which means that the cosmic controversy involves much more than just heaven and earth. The fact that only some angels and all humans sinned against God is the reason for the biblical focus on heaven and earth. These are the two levels of creaturely rebellion. However, this does not suggest that there are no other inhabited worlds interested in the cosmic controversy. Christ created worlds (*aionas*, plural, Heb. 1:2, translated “worlds” in KJV and NKJV, and “universe” in Phillips and NIV), and it is likely that He created intelligent beings in these worlds as He did on earth. (See James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament, with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version* [McLean, VA: MacDonald, n.d.], 9.) Given that God is eternal and loves created beings, there could be innumerable populated planets in His vast interconnected universe. The depth of their interest in the cosmic controversy should not be underestimated.

they rebel? But Job remained loyal to God. This indicates that creaturely freedom to choose is gifted to created beings. It also indicates that God does not decide for created beings, but He allows them to decide. God is love, so He didn't create robots. He is a covenant God who longs for a love relationship with all created beings (Deut. 5:29).

ISAIAH 14 AND EZEKIEL 28: REBEL WARRIOR KING

Nearly all contemporary scholars confine Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 to the historical king of Babylon (Isa. 14:4) and historical king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:2, 12).⁸ However, there is a need to reconsider the deeper typological meaning of these chapters.⁹ In examining their full hermeneutical significance (particularly Isa. 14:12–15 and Ezek. 28:13–17), it becomes clear where and why evil began, and the promise of annihilation of its leader. Here insight is gained into the two sides of the cosmic controversy where God's love is at war.

The data in the passages calls for an interpretation that transcends a local application to human kings. For example, the local king of Babylon had never been in heaven at God's throne (Isa. 14:12–13), nor had the local king of Tyre resided in Eden or appeared as a guardian cherub at heaven's throne (Ezek. 28:13–14). In both passages, the kings, because of pride (Isa. 14:13–14; Ezek. 28:17), are cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:16), and in the end will be annihilated (Isa. 14:15–20; Ezek. 28:18). Furthermore, the king of Tyre is said to have been perfect until sin was found in him (Ezek. 28:15), which cannot be said of any human since the Fall (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:16–18). Hence, this refers to a created being who had not yet sinned.

Other than God, Adam, and Eve, the only being mentioned in Scripture as being in Eden is Satan (Gen. 3:1–6; Rev. 12:9). It is his fall into rebellion that is described as follows: "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among

8. For some exceptions and a fuller presentation of the cosmic controversy, see my *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 398–416. Also, see José M. Bertoluci, *The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy between Good and Evil* (ThD diss., Andrews University, 1985), 6–10. This is an in-depth study of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and their contribution to the cosmic controversy. Bertoluci has made a major contribution in determining the divine intent of these two passages.

9. See Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981).

the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you” (Ezek. 28:14–15). “In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god’ . . . you think you are wise, as wise as a god” (Ezek. 28:2; 6). “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” (Ezek. 28:17). “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13–14).

Sin is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4) which is fulfilled by love (Rom. 13:10). Therefore, Satan’s fall into sin was a fall from love. Sin began with Satan’s bad free choice, not with God. Satan wanted to become God in place of God. He was not satisfied with the high honor of being next to God’s throne; he wanted to occupy it. He must have thought he could do a better job than God. To question God was to question His rule, His law, and His government.

Scripture says “God is love” (1 John 4:8–16). Therefore, He is just in all His ways. Thus “The Lord is known by his acts of justice” (Ps. 9:16). This means that all God’s attributes, as well as His rule, and the law on which it is based, reflect His love. Christ, in human history, said the law (i.e., the Torah and the Ten Commandments) is summed up as love to God and to fellow beings (Matt. 22:37–40). The Triune God experience reciprocal love among them. This means that each Person in the Trinity loves God and in so doing loves fellow beings. So the law of love is the very essence of God’s nature as a God of love. Therefore, foundationally, Satan questions the love of God, which includes His justice and mercy. Satan had always known God as a God of love, but for personal gain he launched a campaign to shred the truth about Him.¹⁰

The human kings of Tyre and Babylon are symbols for Satan and for the final destruction of his rebellion against God. Just as Matthew 24 focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (vv. 1–2, 15–20) and the end of the world (vv. 4–14, 22–31), so Isaiah focuses on the destruction of a local and an eschatological or spiritual Babylon.¹¹ Also, in Scripture, Jerusalem

10. We cannot properly judge God’s justice unless He reveals it to us. See E. Edward Zinke and Roland R. Hegstad, *The Certainty of the Second Coming* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).

11. Isaiah ministered in Jerusalem from about 750–700 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was king

(Heb. 12:22–23; Rev. 21:1–3) and Babylon (Dan. 1:1–2; Isa. 21:9; 48:20; cf. Rev. 14:8; 18:1–24) represent the two sides of the cosmic controversy.

Isaiah 14 is surrounded by two prophecies against Babylon (Isa. 13 and 21). In Isaiah 21:9, a lamentation cry goes out: “Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!” This is a type of the ultimate lamentation for spiritual Babylon as portrayed in the final book of Scripture. “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” (Rev. 14:8). “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit” (Rev. 18:2). The first verse shows the global power of spiritual Babylon, the second the demonic power of spiritual Babylon. But God has many people in Babylon who love Him, and His final invitation is to accept His Sabbath and come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:1–4). Armageddon and the plagues (Rev. 16) find love at war climaxed by the Second Advent (Rev. 19:14–21).

The pre-Second Advent end-game of the controversy is a global confrontation between spiritual Babylon and God’s people (Rev. 13–19). The roots of spiritual Babylon are embedded in the tower of Babel, where God divided the human languages in order to thwart a global unity against Him (Gen. 11:1–9). In the pre-advent end time, spiritual Babylon vents its rage against God in a global attack (Rev. 13:1–4). After the millennium, all the wicked throughout human history are raised and join Satan and his angels in their last fight against God. They are destroyed by consuming fire (Rev. 20:7–10; cf. Mal. 4:1–3). It is the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven to the new earth and becomes the home of the redeemed forever (Rev. 21:1–5). Glorious restoration!¹²

of Babylon from 605–562 BC. The city was captured by Cyrus in 539 BC, so Isaiah prophesied nearly 200 years before that time. Ezekiel lived during the Babylonian Captivity of Judah, when literal Babylon was the enemy of God’s people, just as spiritual Babylon will be the final enemy of God’s people (Rev. 14:8; 18:1–24). See Kenneth Mulzac, “The ‘Fall of Babylon’ Motif in Jeremiah and Revelation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1–2 (Spring-Autumn 1997): 137–149.

12. Richard Davidson has identified a chiastic structure of Ezekiel that focuses on the significance of the cosmic controversy in Scripture. Building on, and going beyond, William H. Shea’s pioneering work on literary structure in Ezekiel, Davidson enlarges the chiastic structure study to include the whole book. He concludes that the chiastic apex of Ezekiel is the cosmic judgment on the Fallen Cherub (Ezek. 28:17–18). So the apex of the book, where the

Isaiah presents a powerful contrast between the pride of the rebel (Isa. 14:13–14) and the humility of Christ (Isa. 53). Satan attempts to become God, which is above his status as a created being, while Jesus becomes human, which is below His status as Creator God. Here in stark boldness is epitomized the different strategies of the two sides in the cosmic controversy. This controversy led to Calvary where one killed and the other died. In the crucifixion, the injustice of the rebel and the justice of the Redeemer met head on. Calvary lavishly overflowed with Christ's love for humans (Phil. 2:5–11; 1 John 3:1) and utterly exposed Satan's hatred of Christ (Luke 22:1–6; John 13:21–30).

REVELATION 12: WAR IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, describes how the cosmic conflict begins, develops, and ends (Rev. 12). The two main combatants are also identified (12:7). The angel Lucifer (later called Satan) launched the cosmic controversy against God in heaven. As a rebel, he is known as the

most important fact is presented, and to which the rest is germane, is the final judgment on Satan. Here is another evidence of the cosmic importance of Ezekiel 28. That same judgment is given in Isaiah 14:12, 15. See Richard M. Davidson, "The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel," *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University, 1997), 71–93; William H. Shea, "The Investigative Judgment of Judah: Ezekiel 1–10," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 283–291.

Ranko Stefanovic sees in the book of Revelation a chiastic structure which also centers in the cosmic controversy.

- A. Prologue (1:1–8)
 - B. Promise to the overcomer (1:9–3:22)
 - C. God's work for humanity's salvation (4:1–8:1)
 - D. God's wrath mixed with mercy (8:2–9:21)
 - E. Commissioning John to prophesy (10:1–11:18)
 - F. Great controversy between Christ and Satan (11:19–13:18)
 - E'. Church proclaims the end-time gospel (14:1–20)
 - D'. God's final wrath unmixed with mercy (15:1–18:24)
 - C'. God's work for humanity's salvation completed (19:1–21:4)
 - B'. Fulfillment of the promises to the overcomer (21:5–22:5)
 - A'. Epilogue (22:6–21)

Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 36–37.

devil, and the Greek διαβάλλω means to “accuse, bring charges with hostile intent”; the word *Satan* in the Greek (Σατάν) means “adversary, or “slanderer.” The “widespread trade” of Ezekiel 28:16a is from the Hebrew word *rekylah* which has a wide semantic range but is best translated in this context as “gossip or slander”¹³ (cf. 2 Pet. 2:10). Satan slandered God to ruin His character.¹⁴

The other combatant, Michael, is mentioned five times in Scripture (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).¹⁵ Comparison of these references indicates that Michael is the fully divine Christ in His roles as Ruler of angels and the One who resurrects the dead. Scripture says, “The archangel Michael . . . was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses” (Jude 9; cf. Deut. 34:1–8). This seems to be at the time when Moses was resurrected since he appeared at Christ’s transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–3). Christ’s role in resurrection is also evident when Paul writes: “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with *the voice of the archangel* and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). John makes the same point: “Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). As such, Michael is Christ who is “very God of very God, of the same substance as the Father,—coequal, coexistent, and coeternal with God the Father. We believe that there never was a

13. See Robert H. O’Connell, “*rākīl*” in *New International Dictionary of Theology & Exegesis*, gen. ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1115. My analysis is as follows: Satan’s slander of God is his widespread dissemination of disinformation about God, which is altogether different from the secular trade of the king of Tyre on the local level.

14. For an examination of distorted views about God promoted by Satan in the cosmic controversy and answered by Scripture, see Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity*.

15. The angel said to Daniel, “Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me” as the Persian prince had resisted him twenty-one days (Dan. 10:13). In other words Michael was able to succeed where the angel had not. The angel called Michael “your prince” (Dan. 10:21) and “the great prince who protects your people” (Dan. 12:1). In the Hebrew language, *Mikha’el* is *Micha*, “one who is like”; and *el*, “God.” This title “does not in any way conflict with our belief in His full deity and eternal pre-existence.” *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 71.

time when Christ was not. He is God forever more, His life being 'original, unborrowed, underived.'"¹⁶

In Revelation 12, the first eight verses are an introduction explaining how Christ's war is motivated by His love for His church, which is represented as a woman (Rev. 12:1; cf. Jer. 6:2). She wears a crown of victory (taken from the Greek: *stephanos*, a laurel wreath worn by a victor in the Olympic Games). In the various battles in the war of love, God will take care of His church (Rev. 12:6).

The first battle of the war was before humans were created. "War broke out in heaven" between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels (Rev. 12:7). Satan and his angels were defeated and forced to leave heaven (Rev. 12:4). The book of Revelation describes how in the end, "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent [serpent in Eden, tempting Eve, Gen. 3:1–6] called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Rev. 12:9).¹⁷

The second battle takes place on earth. Satan became the "prince" (John 12:31), or "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), when he usurped the dominion from Adam and Eve in their fall (Gen. 1–3). That's why Satan in Old Testament times evidently represented this world when different leaders met together with Christ somewhere in the universe outside of heaven. Satan showed his colors by being critical of Job and God (Job 1–2). Again after the return of Judah from captivity, Satan accuses Joshua the high priest, whereas the pre-incarnate Christ rebuked Satan (Zech. 3:1–2).

The champion for humanity in this battle is Christ/Michael. Satan was ready to "devour" Him as soon as He was born (Rev. 12:4; cf. Matt. 2:13–17) and tried to defeat Him throughout His life. Satan worked through Judas to betray Christ so He would be crucified (John 13:21–27). Yet, Calvary was the decisive victory by Christ over Satan! At Calvary Christ won

16. *Questions on Doctrines*, 83.

17. From its inception, the controversy has been primarily Satan's warring against Christ. Scripture does not tell us why Satan opposed Christ, nor is the fact that sin could arise in such a perfect environment explained. The hatred of Satan toward Christ can be documented from his schemes to kill Him from His very incarnation (Rev. 12:4–5, 9) to crucifixion (John 13:21–27). It is a window through which believers can look beyond the mere emphasis on human salvation to the cosmic battle that lies behind it. See Steven Grabiner, "The Cosmic Conflict: Revelation's Undercurrent," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 26/1 (Spring 2015): 38–56.

back the right, as the second or last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45–47), to be the leader of this world. In this way “the great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth” (Rev. 12:9). In contrast, the resurrected Christ ascended to the heavenly sanctuary as the only qualified Person to intercede for sinners on the basis of His life (Heb. 2:18; 4:15–16) and His death (Heb. 9:12; 10:11–14). Christ “became the source of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9) and the only mediator between God and humans (1 Tim. 2:5).

The third battle described in Revelation 12 involves the defeated Satan venting his wrath against Christ’s church. But Christ takes care of His church during the 1,260 days (representing years) of persecution (Rev. 12:14). One of the ways Christ cares for the church is through the religious freedoms promoted in the United States (12:15–16). This brought a lessening of the trials described in the book of Daniel as follows: “This horn [counterfeit system] had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully” (Dan. 7:8). Daniel says, “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Dan. 7:21–22; cf. vv. 25–27).¹⁸ This time will fully be realized at the Second Advent of Christ.¹⁹

A fourth and final battle is described in Revelation 12. In response to Christ’s protection of His people, the devil becomes angry and wages war

18. Norman R. Gulley, “Daniel’s Pre-Advent Judgment in Its Biblical Context,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 2/2 (Autumn 1991): 35–66.

19. Sin brings death (Rom. 6:23). Christ upheld His law of love by paying the death penalty for humans. God really loves us. If God’s law could be changed, then Christ’s death was meaningless. The cosmic controversy is law-breaking, based on a broken relationship with the Lawgiver (Isa. 59:2). Redemption includes restoration of the broken relationship between God and humans, which includes law-keeping as love for redemption (see John 14:15; Phil. 1:6).

Satan’s controversy is against God whose rule is based on His law of love. During the cosmic controversy God prophesied that a power would try to change the time in the law (Dan. 7:25). The Aramaic word for “time” is *zeman*, or “set point of time.” The Aramaic text uses the plural *zimmin*, meaning “a recurring set time in the law,” or the weekly seventh-day Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11). By contrast the saints are persecuted for a span of time, and the Aramaic word for “time” is now *iddan* (Dan. 7:25). See William H. Shea, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: A Practical Guide to Abundant Christian Living in the Book of Daniel 7–12*, gen. ed. George R. Knight (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 139.

against God's people in the end time, against those "who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17, ESV). The fourth battle continues throughout Revelation 13–20.²⁰

After the millennium the wicked are raised so they can see that their destiny is just. Christ promised, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32, ESV). This began to be fulfilled at Calvary and will continue to be the case for eternity. On the last judgment day, even those who are lost will see that Calvary included them (cf. 1 John 2:2), and all will bow to God admitting He was right in the controversy (Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10–11; Rev. 5:13; 15:3; 19:1–6). But at that point, the wicked demonstrate that they have not been changed by God's love. They join Satan and his angels in their last fight against God and those in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 20:7–9). Then in defense of the saints, and as an act of love, God brings an end to the rebellion as fire consumes the wicked (20:10; cf. Mal. 4:1–3). The New Jerusalem on the new earth becomes the home of God and the redeemed forever (Rev. 21:1–5). God really loves humanity!

CALVARY: THE DECISIVE BATTLE

Sin is breaking the law (1 John 3:4). In dying for sin, Christ demonstrated the immutability of His law, as unchangeable as God. If God's law could be changed, then Christ's death was an utter waste. The essence of the cosmic controversy is law-breaking, based on a broken relationship with the Law-giver (Isa. 59:2). Redemption includes restoration of the broken relationship between God and humans. Resolution of the cosmic controversy includes a return to the pre-Fall state in Eden. In the cosmic controversy, Christ's work is the restoration of God's creation. Satan's work is its destruction.²¹

20. Attack against God is a theme in Daniel and in Revelation. Pagan nations like Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome were infused with and used by Satan in his war against God. The last four are mentioned in Daniel 2 and 7. Pagan Rome divided into ten, and the little horn "came up among them" (Dan. 7:8), replacing pagan Rome when the civil capital moved to Constantinople in 330 AD. See Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).

21. See Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

Even though millions starve at the same time, one person can only experience his or her own starvation, never the starvation of others. Not so with Calvary. "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). With explosive force, stunned, the universe is mightily moved by Christ's death for every sinner, including the most horrendous.

On the cross, with arms open wide, Christ hugged the world, while the devil, like a roaring lion, seeks "whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8, NKJV). Calvary is the hermeneutical context to understand predestination. Not the other way round, as traditionally proposed. Calvary reveals that God predestined all humans to be saved. In that death, Christ elected all and rejected none. "God does not show favoritism" (Rom. 2:11). This is unconditional election. Christ provided the gift of eternal life for everyone. It is up to humans to either elect or reject their salvation (John 3:16). This turns the traditional priority of predestination on its head. Calvary is the ultimate or determining battle in the cosmic controversy. No need for an eternal decree hidden in mystery that is off limits to humans, so they must accept God's sovereign decision whether they like it or not, whether understood or not, whether fair or not. This is shattered by the greatest revelation of God's awesome love on the cross, which fully demonstrates His justice and mercy.

The cosmic controversy is about God's justice and mercy. Is He a God of love or not? Satan claims that He is not a God of love. Misunderstandings of predestination unwittingly aid Satan's claim. How can God choose or elect a few, dump the rest as worthless rejects, mere throw-aways? How can God give the elect irresistible grace so they cannot fail but refuse to help the rest? Then, as if this is not enough, God casts the rejects into eternal hell to suffer unspeakable anguish forever. Such behavior fully demonstrates Satan's charge that God is not love. Eternal hell would provide unending evidence that Satan's charge is legitimate. Then Satan's chances of winning the universe to his side would be guaranteed. In time, the anguish of eternal hell would define God rather than Calvary. In fact, the memory of Calvary would be smothered by the horrible and wretched suffering in an endless fiery furnace. Eternal hell overlooks the fact that there is no

redemption without resolution to the cosmic controversy. If hell is forever, the cosmic controversy is never resolved.²²

Calvary resolved the cosmic controversy. Calvary demolished Satan's charges. The mask was wrenched from that wicked wretch. His deceptive charges against God stood utterly exposed at the cross. Like roaring thunder comes from Calvary the shout "God is love!" Human destiny depends upon accepting or rejecting Calvary during human history, not upon a Sovereign God's eternal decree that is incompatible with Calvary. It is the God of Calvary who does not change (Mal. 3:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

Throughout eternity it will be seen that Calvary is the greatest revelation of God's love. Created beings will never fathom the depths of God's awesome love revealed at the cross. In utter amazement they contemplate the anguish Christ endured, allowing created beings to vent satanic rage upon their Creator. Overwhelmed by Calvary-love, in ever deepening gratitude, they will love, adore, and worship God. They realize that Christ's death was the outpouring of the Godhead for undeserving humans, and they will forever be impacted by this wondrous gift. In this context, God's love can never be questioned again (cf. Nah. 1:9).²³

22. See Christopher M. Date and Ron Highfield, eds., *A Consuming Passion: Essays on Hell and Immortality in Honor of Edward Fudge* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

23. See Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1961).