

THE CONTROVERSY OF ZION

“ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion “ Isaiah 34:8.

The great controversy that has been raging for over 6000 years on planet earth is in reality a struggle over who will be king in Zion. In the Scriptures, Zion is described as “. . . the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King “ Psalm 48:1-2. The capital city of Jerusalem in Israel was a type of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God where He sits enthroned “. . . in the sides of the north “ Isaiah 14:13. The controversy of Zion began when Lucifer aspired to become like the Most High and to “. . . sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north “ Isaiah 14:13.

Revelation 12: 7-9 depicts the development of this controversy until it broke out in open warfare. “ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.” Satan was actually playing for high stakes in his defection in heaven. “ God's government included not only the inhabitants of Heaven, but of all the worlds that he had created; **and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of Heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds.** He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great, and by disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood he had gained an advantage. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, or see to what his work was leading “ Great Controversy p. 497. Satan had succeeded in bringing almost one half of the angels in heaven to acknowledge his authority, and he hoped to also extend his jurisdiction over the inhabitants of the other worlds God had created.

After Satan was cast out of heaven, he continued his efforts to replace God as the supreme ruler. By his lying deceptions he was able to wrest from Adam and Eve the dominion of this world. Since then he has worked tirelessly to bring all the human family under his control. He has not succeeded to draw the inhabitants of the other worlds to unite with him in his rebellion but he has had marvelous success on planet earth.

Literal Zion, or Jerusalem as it usually is called, became the capital of the nation of Israel, God's denominated people. Throughout its history as the center of the worship of Jehovah, Jerusalem was attacked again and again by heathen armies who Satan used to attempt its destruction. We read of the many times that God miraculously defended it from the enemy invaders. However, when God's professed people went into apostasy, they forfeited the divine protection, and their enemies were able to plunder the city and kill many of its inhabitants.

We know from Biblical history that Jerusalem eventually fell into the hands of the Romans who plundered the city and destroyed the beautiful temple and the people to tried to take refuge within its precincts. After that, Jerusalem, or Zion became symbolic of God's church on earth. It was no longer localized in a particular geographical location, but was representative of God's people in different parts of the earth to whom He committed the oracles of truth. This is an important point to understand in the light of what we read at the beginning from Isaiah 34:8 about the “controversy of Zion.”

The great controversy over who will be supreme ruler in Zion is about to figure largely in the wind-up of this earth's history. If the watchmen on the walls of Zion are not vigilant, Satan will unobtrusively come into the very midst of the church and work from within to retard the work of God. Inspiration has warned us about what might happen. “ **If the power of Satan can come into the very temple of God, and manipulate things as he pleases, the time of preparation will be prolonged** “ 9 Manuscript Release p. 212.

“ Satan will work his miracles to deceive; **he will set up his power as supreme.** ” 2 Selected Messages p. 380. He will do his utmost to gain the mastery. 7 Bible Commentary p. 983 tells us that “ The present is a solemn, fearful time for the church. The angels are already girded, awaiting the mandate of God to pour their vials of wrath upon the world. Destroying angels are taking up the work of vengeance, for the Spirit of God is gradually withdrawing from the world. **Satan is also mustering his forces of evil, going forth "unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world," to gather them under his banner, to be trained for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Satan is to make most powerful efforts for the mastery in the last great conflict.** Fundamental principles will be brought out, and decisions made in regard to them. Skepticism is prevailing everywhere. Ungodliness abounds. **The faith of individual members of the church will be tested as though there were not another person in the world.** ”

In Zechariah 12:2-3 we read of the hosts of Satan in the end time, surrounding Jerusalem, representing God's people, and laying siege to it. “ Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. **And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.** ” And in 5 Testimonies pp. 472-473, we are given more details on how Satan will besiege God's people in the remnant of time. “ The remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control of the apostate churches. But here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. ”

The prophet Micah depicts this dramatic scene in Micah 4:11. “ Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. ” This is the great, final test that will fully separate the wheat from the tares. However, once the chaff has been separated from the wheat, there will be a dramatic change. Jerusalem will then become an invincible army because “ . . . the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning ” Zechariah 9:14.

As stated in Zechariah 12:2-3, “ Behold, I will make Jerusalem a **cup of trembling unto all the people** round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. **And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people:** all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. ”

And Micah adds this amazing comment: “ The nations shall see and be **confounded at all their might:** they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: **they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee** ” Micah 7:16-17.

These passages depict the mighty power wielded by Jerusalem under the great outpouring of the latter rain, the loud cry of the Third Angel. Early Writings adds this enlightening commentary. “ Servants of God, endowed with power from on high with their faces lighted up, and shining with holy consecration, went forth to proclaim the message from heaven. Souls that were scattered all through the religious bodies answered to the call, and the precious were hurried out of the doomed churches, as Lot was hurried out of Sodom before her destruction. **God's people were strengthened by the excellent glory which rested upon them in rich abundance and prepared them to endure the hour of temptation.** I heard everywhere a multitude of voices saying, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of

Jesus " Early Writings, pp. 272-273.

However, in spite of being repeatedly defeated in his attempts to make his power supreme in Zion,, Satan will continue his relentless efforts to gain control. Under the mighty power of the latter rain, Satan and his forces will be held at bay, unable to counterwork the message of the loud cry. But after the close of probation, during the time of Jacob's trouble, he will marshal his world-wide forces to completely eliminate God's people from the earth. Worldlings, apostate Christianity, heathen nations and former Adventists who have given up the faith, will be inspired by Satan to attack God's faithful people. His final attack comes during the time of the seven last plagues. Inspiration describes this terrible ordeal "

" I saw the nominal church and nominal Adventists, like Judas, would betray us to the Catholics to obtain their influence to come against the truth. **The saints then will be an obscure people, little known to the Catholics;** but the churches and nominal Adventists who know of our faith and customs (for they hated us on account of the Sabbath, for they could not refute it) will betray the saints and report them to the Catholics as those who disregard the institutions of the people; that is, that they keep the Sabbath and disregard Sunday.

Then the Catholics bid the Protestants to go forward, and issue a decree that all who will not observe the first day of the week, instead of the seventh day, shall be slain. And the Catholics, whose numbers are large, will stand by the Protestants. The Catholics will give their power to the image of the beast. And the Protestants will work as their mother worked before them to destroy the saints " Spalding Magan Collection, p.2.

This is also the time when the antitypical scape goat is being away to a land not inhabited. It happens at the close of Christ's ministry in the sanctuary. " Then I saw that Jesus' work in the sanctuary will soon be finished. And after His work there is finished, He will come to the door of the first apartment, and confess the sins of Israel upon the head of the Scape Goat. Then He will put on the garments of vengeance. Then the plagues will come upon the wicked, and they do not come till Jesus puts on that garment, and takes His place upon the great white cloud. **Then while the plagues are falling, the Scape Goat is being led away. He makes a mighty struggle to escape, but he is held fast by the hand that leads him. If he should effect his escape, Israel would lose their lives.** I saw that it would take time to lead away the Scape Goat into the land of forgetfulness after the sins were put on his head " Ibid p. 2.

This passage portrays another episode in the controversy of Zion which takes place during the time of trouble. The scape goat, representing Satan, is being led to his final doom and he makes a mighty effort to escape, but is held fast by the hand that leads him. Here we see the fulfillment of the symbolism of the 'fit man' in the ancient sanctuary service who was brought forward at the end of the day of atonement to lay hold of the scape goat and lead him to his destruction in the wilderness. The hand that leads the scape goat away during the time of trouble is the 144,000 fully redeemed and empowered saints. Satan does his utmost to cause them to lose their faith and trust in God during the time of Jacob's trouble. If he could cause even one of them to sin, he would escape from the hand that leads him, and God's name and His law would be greatly dishonored before the universe. Satan's charges that God's law cannot be kept would be validated. However, the mighty demonstration of loyalty by the saints exposes the lies of Satan and helps to secure the universe against another apostasy.

The final act in the controversy of Zion comes at the end of the 1000 years when Satan makes one last effort to take possession of the New Jerusalem and seat himself on the "mount of the congregation on the sides of the north." Great Controversy pp. 663-664 pictures Satan's supreme effort in rallying the vast wicked throng who have been resurrected before their final destruction.

“ Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power, and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised, and **he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy.** He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner, and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan's captives. In rejecting Christ they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to receive his suggestions and to do his bidding. Yet, true to his early cunning, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He claims to be the Prince who is the rightful owner of the world, and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him. He represents himself to his deluded subjects as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves, and that he is about to rescue them from the most cruel tyranny. The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claims. He makes the weak strong, and inspires all with his own spirit and energy. He proposes to lead them against the camp of the saints, and to take possession of the city of God. **With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead, and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city, and regain his throne and his kingdom.**

Satan consults with his angels, and then with these kings and conquerors and mighty men. They look upon the strength and numbers on their side, and declare that the army within the city is small in comparison with theirs, and that it can be overcome. **They lay their plans to take possession of the riches and glory of the New Jerusalem.** All immediately begin to prepare for battle. Skillful artisans construct implements of war. Military leaders, famed for their success, marshal the throngs of warlike men into companies and divisions.

At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on, — an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision, the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the city of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and **the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset.** “

We know the rest of the story. After Satan and all the wicked are given a graphic, panoramic view of the great controversy and the part that each one has played in their rebellion against God, they with one accord bow before God and confess that God is just and fair in His dealings with His created beings. Even Satan acknowledges that God is just. Thus God's character and the laws of His government stands vindicated before the whole universe. Then Satan and his followers will be destroyed and the controversy of Zion will come to an end. “ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. **And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch** “ Isaiah 34: 8-9. God will finally have a secure universe where “Affliction shall not rise up the second time “ Nahum 1:9.