

## Truth For the Final Generation

### Midday Message

#### “In Whose Image?”

**Opening Hymn:** 533 NH “O For A Faith”

**Reading:** 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

#### Introduction:

Last time we saw that the real issues at stake in the Great Controversy is really the Character of God. Or that as a result of the perversion of freedom the universe is flung into a contest of opposing principles. The scriptures are clear that we read last time. We will review and continue by God’s grace.

*It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law, and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God, so that they regard him with fear and hate, rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion, and expressed in modes of worship. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity; and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. GC88 568.4*

.... Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. *Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator.* Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving. Thus he drew

men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world. DA 21.3

### **The Desire for Self-exaltation:**

In *Genesis 3:1-6* the scriptures noted how Eve accepted the lies of satan and saw what previously was forbidden as “...*pleasant to the eyes and something to be desired.*” Let’s look again at how God is pictured.

*<sup>4</sup>And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: <sup>5</sup>For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:4. 5*

Satan was saying that God is trying to keep His position on top by keeping you down. What is statement a reflection of? Earthly systems rule, especially those that refuse freedom, by oppression. The enemy has so crafted religion that, to men, it appears that God is no better than the autocratic forms of government that have existed and exist today!

Remember:

*The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator ... GC88 568.4*

*Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator ... DA 21.3*

### **Satan’s Constant Effort**

*It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God ... GC88 568.4, How does He do this? What is his most effective means of misrepresenting God to men?*

He [satan] is seeking to overcome men today, as he overcame our first parents, by shaking their confidence in their Creator, and leading them to doubt the wisdom of his government and the justice of his laws. Satan and his emissaries represent God as even

worse than themselves, in order to justify their own malignity and rebellion. *The great deceiver endeavors to shift his own horrible cruelty of character upon our heavenly Father*, that he may cause himself to appear as one greatly wronged by his expulsion from Heaven because he would not submit to so unjust a governor. He presents before the world the liberty which they may enjoy under his mild sway, in contrast with the bondage imposed by the stern decrees of Jehovah. Thus he succeeds in luring souls away from their allegiance to God. GC88 534.3

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. *When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels.* GC88 536.2

The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abominations of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. [Revelation 14:8; 17:2.] That ministers of Christ should have accepted this heresy and proclaimed it from the sacred desk, is indeed a mystery. They received it from Rome, as they received the false sabbath. True, it has been taught by great and good men; but the light on this subject had not come to them as it has come to us. They were responsible only for the light which shone in their time; we are accountable for that which shines in our day. *If we turn from the testimony of God's Word, and accept false doctrines because our fathers taught them, we fall under the condemnation pronounced upon Babylon; we are drinking of the wine of her abominations.* GC88 536.3

A large class to whom the doctrine of eternal torment is revolting, are driven to the opposite error. *They see that the Scriptures represent God as a being of love and compassion, and they cannot believe that he will consign his creatures to the fires of an eternally burning hell. But, holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they see no alternative but to conclude that all mankind will finally be saved.* Many regard the threatenings of the Bible as designed merely to frighten men into obedience, and not to be literally fulfilled. Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God, and yet expect to be finally received into his favor. Such a doctrine, presuming upon God's mercy, but *ignoring his justice*, pleases the carnal heart, and emboldens the wicked in their iniquity. GC88 537.1

In the teachings or doctrines or interpretations of the bible itself through error and false doctrine satan has maligned the character of God. This is his constant effort!

### **Changed into the Image of God:**

*<sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. <sup>18</sup>But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:17,18*

*... The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. DA 24.2*

*In stooping to take upon Himself humanity, Christ revealed a character the opposite of the character of Satan. But He stepped still lower in the path of humiliation. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross..." Philippians 2:8. DA 25.1*

*Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed." DA 25.2*

*<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. <sup>2</sup>Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup>And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John 3:1-3*

**Closing Hymn:** 265 Breathe On Me Breath of God

Yours in Our Master's Service

Elder Ryan Griffith

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