

The 1858 Great Controversy

Chapters 4-6.

Chapter 4. The First Advent of Christ.

Then I was carried down to the time when Jesus was to take upon himself man's nature, humble himself as a man, and suffer the temptations of Satan.

His birth was without worldly grandeur. He was born in a stable, cradled in a manger; yet his birth was honored far above any of the sons of men. Angels from heaven informed the shepherds of the advent of Jesus, while the light and glory from God accompanied their testimony. The heavenly host touched their harps and glorified God. They triumphantly heralded the advent of the Son of God to a fallen world to accomplish the work of redemption, and by his death bring peace, happiness, and everlasting life to man. God honored the advent of his Son. Angels worshiped him.

Angels of God hovered over the scene of his baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended in the shape of a dove, and lighted upon him, and as the people stood greatly amazed, with their eyes fastened upon him, the Father's voice was heard from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

John was not certain that it was the Saviour who came to be baptized of him in Jordan. But God had promised him a sign by which he should know the Lamb of God. That sign was given as the heavenly Dove rested upon Jesus, and the glory of God shone round about him. John reached forth his hand, pointing to Jesus, and with a loud voice cried out, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

John informed his disciples that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world. As his work was closing, he taught his disciples to look to Jesus, and follow him as the great teacher. John's life was without pleasure. It was sorrowful and self-denying. He heralded the first advent of Christ, and then was not permitted to witness the miracles, and enjoy the power manifested by him. He knew that when Jesus should establish himself as a teacher, he must die. His voice was seldom heard, except in the wilderness. His life was lonely. He did not cling to his father's family, to enjoy their society, but left them in order to fulfill his mission. Multitudes left the busy cities and villages, and flocked to the wilderness to hear the words of the wonderful, singular Prophet. John laid the axe at the root of the tree. He reproved sin fearless of consequences, and prepared the way for the Lamb of God.

Herod was affected as he listened to the powerful, pointed testimonies of John. With deep interest he inquired what he must do to become his disciple. John was acquainted with the fact that he was about to marry his brother's wife, while her husband was yet living, and faithfully told Herod that it was not lawful. Herod was not willing to make any sacrifice. He married his brother's wife, and, through her influence, seized John and put him in prison. But Herod intended to release him again. While there confined, John heard through his disciples of the mighty works of Jesus. He could not listen to his gracious words. But the disciples informed him, and comforted him with what they had heard. Soon John was beheaded through the influence of Herod's wife. I saw that the least disciple that followed Jesus, witnessed his miracles, and heard the comforting words which fell from his lips, was greater than John the Baptist. That is, they were more exalted and honored, and had more pleasure in their lives.

John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to proclaim the first advent of Jesus. I was pointed down to the last days, and saw that John was to represent those who should go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to herald the day of wrath, and the second advent of Jesus.

After the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. The Holy Spirit had fitted him for that special scene of fierce temptations. Forty days he was tempted of the Devil, and in those days he ate nothing. Everything around Jesus was unpleasant, from which human nature would be led to shrink. He was with the wild beasts, and the Devil, in a desolate, lonely place. I saw that the Son of God was pale and emaciated through fasting and suffering. But his course was marked out, and he must fulfill the work he came to do.

Satan took advantage of the sufferings of the Son of God, and prepared to beset him with manifold temptations, hoping he should obtain the victory over him, because he had humbled himself as a man. Satan came with this temptation, If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone be made bread. He tempted Jesus to condescend to him, and give him proof of his being the Messiah, by exercising his divine power. Jesus mildly answered him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Satan was seeking a dispute with Jesus concerning his being the Son of God. He referred to his weak, suffering condition, and boastingly affirmed that he was stronger than Jesus. But the word spoken from heaven, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased, was sufficient to sustain Jesus through all his sufferings. I saw that in all his mission he had nothing to do in convincing Satan of his power, and of his being the Saviour of the world. Satan had sufficient evidence of his exalted station and authority. His unwillingness to yield to Jesus' authority, shut him out of heaven.

Satan, to manifest his strength, carried Jesus to Jerusalem, and set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and again tempted him, that if he was the Son of God, to give him evidence of it by casting himself down from the dizzy height upon which he had placed him. Satan came with the words of inspiration. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Satan wished to cause Jesus to presume upon the mercy of his Father, and risk his life before the fulfillment of his mission. He had hoped that the plan of salvation would fail; but I saw that the plan was laid too deep to be thus overthrown, or marred by Satan.

I saw that Christ was the example for all Christians when tempted, or their rights disputed. They should bear it patiently. They should not feel that they have a right to call upon God to display his power, that they may obtain a victory over their enemies, unless there is a special object in view, that God can be directly honored and glorified by it. I saw that if Jesus had cast himself from the pinnacle, it would not have glorified his Father; for none would witness the act but Satan, and the angels of God. And it would be tempting the Lord to display his power to his bitterest foe. It would have been condescending to the one whom Jesus came to conquer.

"And the Devil taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Here Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world. They were presented in the most attractive light. He offered them to Jesus if he would there worship him. He told Jesus that he would relinquish his claims of the possessions of earth. Satan knew that his power must be limited, and finally taken away, if the plan of salvation should be carried out. He knew that if Jesus should die to redeem man, his power would end after a season, and he would be destroyed. Therefore it was his studied plan to prevent, if possible the completion of the great work which had been commenced by the Son of God. If the plan of man's redemption should fail, he would retain the kingdom which he then claimed. And if he should succeed, he flattered himself that he would reign in opposition to the God of heaven.

Satan exulted when Jesus left heaven, and left his power and glory there. He thought that the Son of God was placed in his power. The temptation took so easily with the holy pair in Eden, that he hoped he could with his satanic cunning and power overthrow even the Son of God, and thereby save his life and kingdom. If he could tempt Jesus to depart from the will of his Father, then his object would be gained. Jesus bid Satan get behind him. He was to bow only to his Father. The time was to come when Jesus should redeem the possessions of Satan by his own life, and, after a season, all in heaven and earth should submit to him. Satan claimed the kingdoms of earth as his, and he insinuated to Jesus that all his sufferings might be saved. He need not die to obtain the kingdoms of this world. But he might have the entire possessions of earth, and the glory of reigning over them, if he would worship him. Jesus was steadfast. He chose his life of suffering, his dreadful death, and, in the way appointed by his Father, to become a lawful heir to the kingdoms of earth, and have them given into his hands as an everlasting possession. Satan also will be given into his hands to be destroyed by death, never more to annoy Jesus, or the saints in glory.

Chapter 5. The Ministry of Christ.

After Satan had ended his temptations, he departed from Jesus for a season, and angels prepared him food in the wilderness, and strengthened him, and the blessing of his Father rested upon him. Satan had failed in his fiercest temptations, yet he looked forward to the period of Jesus' ministry, when he should at different times try his cunning against him. He still hoped to prevail against him by stirring up those who would not receive Jesus, to hate and seek to destroy him. Satan held a special counsel with his angels. They were disappointed and enraged that they had prevailed nothing against the Son of God. They decided that they must be more cunning, and use their power to the utmost to inspire unbelief in the minds of his own nation as to his being the Saviour of the world, and in this way discourage Jesus in his mission. No matter how exact the Jews might be in their ceremonies and sacrifices, if they could keep their eyes blinded as to the prophecies, and make them believe that it was a mighty, worldly king who was to fulfill these prophecies, they would keep their minds on the stretch for a Messiah to come.

I was then shown that Satan and his angels were very busy during Christ's ministry, inspiring men with unbelief, hate and scorn. Often when Jesus uttered some cutting truth reproving their sins, they would become enraged. Satan and his angels urged them on to take the life of the Son of God. Once they took up stones to cast at him, but angels guarded him, and bore him away from the angry multitude to a place of safety. Again as the plain truth dropped from his holy lips, the multitude laid hold of him, and led him to the brow of a hill, intending to thrust him down. A contention arose among themselves as to what they should do with him, when the angels again hid him from the sight of the multitude, and he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

Satan still hoped the great plan of salvation would fail. He exerted all his power to make the hearts of all people hard, and their feelings bitter against Jesus. He hoped that the number who would receive him as the Son of God would be so few, that Jesus would consider his sufferings and sacrifice too great to make for so small a company. But I saw that if there had been but two who would have accepted Jesus as the Son of God, to believe in him to the saving of their souls, he would have carried out the plan.

Jesus commenced his work by breaking the power which Satan held over the suffering. He healed those who had suffered by his evil power. He restored the sick to health, healed the lame, and caused them to leap in the gladness of their hearts, and glorify God. He gave sight to the blind, restored to health by his power those who had been infirm and bound by Satan's cruel power many years. The weak, the trembling, and desponding, he comforted with gracious words. He raised the dead to life, and they glorified God for the mighty display of his power. He wrought mightily for all who believed on him. And the feeble suffering ones whom Satan held in triumph. Jesus wrenched from his grasp, and brought to them by his power, soundness of body, and great joy and happiness.

The life of Christ was full of benevolence, sympathy and love. He was ever attentive to listen to, and relieve the woes of those who came to him. Multitudes carried the evidences, in their own persons of his divine power. Yet many of them soon after the work was accomplished were ashamed of the humble, yet mighty teacher. Because the rulers did not believe on him, they were not willing to suffer with Jesus. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But few could endure to be governed by his sober, self-denying life. They wished to enjoy the honor which the world bestows. Many followed the Son of God, and listened to his instructions, feasting upon the words which fell so graciously from his lips. His words were full of meaning, yet so plain that the weakest could understand.

Satan and his angels were busy. They blinded the eyes and darkened the understanding of the Jews. Satan stirred up the chief of the people and the rulers to take his life. They sent officers to bring Jesus unto them, and as they came near where he was, they were greatly amazed. They saw Jesus stirred to sympathy and compassion, as he witnessed human woe. They saw him in love and tenderness speak encouragingly to the weak and afflicted. They also heard him, in a voice of authority, rebuke the power of Satan, and bid the captives held by him, go free. They listened to the words of wisdom that fell from his lips, and they were captivated. They could not lay hands on him. They returned to the priests and elders without Jesus. They inquired of the officers, Why have ye not brought him? They related what they had witnessed of his miracles, and the holy words of wisdom, love and knowledge which they had heard, and ended with saying, Never man spake like this man. The chief priests accused them of being also deceived. Some were ashamed that they had not brought him. The chief priests inquired in a ridiculing manner if any of the rulers had believed on him. I saw that many of the magistrates and elders did believe on Jesus. But Satan kept them from acknowledging it. They feared the reproach of the people more than they feared God.

Thus far the cunning and hatred of Satan had not broken up the plan of salvation. The time for the accomplishment of the object for which Jesus came into the world was drawing on. Satan and his angels consulted together, and decided to inspire Christ's own nation to cry eagerly for his blood, and invent cruelty and scorn to be heaped upon him. He hoped that Jesus would resent such treatment, and not maintain his humility and meekness.

While Satan was laying his plans, Jesus was carefully opening to his disciples the sufferings he must pass through. That he should be crucified, and that he would rise again the third day. But their understanding seemed dull. They could not comprehend what he told them.

Chapter 6. The Transfiguration.

I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration. God chose to give the followers of Jesus strong proof that he was the promised Messiah, that in their bitter sorrow and disappointment they should not entirely cast away their confidence. At the transfiguration the Lord sent Moses and Elias to talk with Jesus concerning his sufferings and death. Instead of choosing angels to converse with his Son, God chose those who had an experience in the trials of earth. A few of his followers were permitted to be with him and behold his face lighted up with divine glory, and witness his raiment white and glistening, and hear the voice of God, in fearful majesty, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

Elijah had walked with God. His work had not been pleasant. God, through him, had reproved sin. He was a prophet of God, and had to flee from place to place to save his life. He was hunted like the wild beasts that they might destroy him. God translated Elijah. Angels bore him in glory and triumph to heaven.

Moses had been a man greatly honored of God. He was greater than any who had lived before him. He was privileged to talk with God face to face as a man speaketh with a friend. He was permitted to see the bright light and excellent glory that enshrouded the Father. Through Moses the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Moses was a mediator for the children of Israel. He often stood between them and the wrath of God. When the wrath of God was greatly kindled against Israel for their unbelief, their murmurings, and their grievous sins, Moses love for them was tested. God promised him that if he would let Israel go, let them be destroyed, he would make of him a mighty nation. Moses showed his love for Israel by his earnest pleading. In his distress he prayed God to turn from his fierce anger, and forgive Israel, or blot his name out of his book.

When Israel murmured against God and against Moses, because they could get no water, they accused him of leading them out to kill them and their children. God heard their murmurings, and bade Moses smite the rock, that the children of Israel might have water. Moses smote the rock in wrath, and took the glory to himself. The continual waywardness and murmuring of the children of Israel had caused him the keenest sorrow, and for a little he forgot how much God had borne with them, and that their murmuring was not against Moses, but against God. He thought only of himself, how deeply he was wronged, and how little gratitude they manifested in return, for his deep love for them.

As Moses smote the rock, he failed to honor God, and magnify him before the children of Israel, that they might glorify God. And the Lord was displeased with Moses, and said that he should not enter the promised land. It was God's plan to often prove Israel by bringing them into strait places, and then in their great necessity exhibit his power, that he might live in their memory, and they glorify him.

When Moses came down from the mount with the two tables of stone, and saw Israel worshiping the golden calf, his anger was greatly kindled, and he threw down the tables of stone, and broke them. I saw that Moses did not sin in this. He was wroth for God, jealous for his glory. But when he yielded to the natural feelings of the heart, and took glory to himself, which was due to God, he sinned, and for that sin, God would not suffer him to enter the promised land.

Satan had been trying to find something wherewith to accuse Moses before the angels. Satan triumphed in that he had caused him to displease God, and he exulted, and told the angels that when the Saviour of the world should come to redeem man, he could overcome him. For this transgression Moses came under the power of Satan--the dominion of death. Had he remained steadfast, and not sinned in taking glory to himself, the Lord would have brought him to the promised land, and then translated him to heaven without seeing death.

I saw that Moses passed through death, but Michael came down and gave him life before he saw corruption. Satan claimed the body as his, but Michael resurrected Moses, and took him to heaven. The Devil tried to hold his body, and railed out bitterly against God, denounced him as unjust, in taking from him his prey. But Michael did not rebuke the Devil, although it was through his temptation and power that God's servant had fallen. Christ meekly referred him to his Father, saying, The Lord rebuke thee.

Jesus told his disciples that there were some standing with him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The fashion of Jesus' countenance was changed, and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present, and represented those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elias, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ's second coming, and without seeing death will be translated to heaven. The disciples beheld with fear and astonishment the excellent majesty of Jesus, and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty; saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.