

# Rules of Engagement

Sabbath Afternoon, March 1

Outwardly bold and defiant, but with terror in their guilty hearts, the false priests prepare their altar, laying on the wood and the victim; and then they begin their incantations. Their shrill cries echo and re-echo through the forests and the surrounding heights, as they call on the name of their god, saying, "O Baal, hear us." The priests gather about their altar, and with leaping and writhing and screaming, with tearing of hair and cutting of flesh, they beseech their god to help them. . . .

Gladly would Satan have come to the help of those whom he had deceived, and who were devoted to his service. Gladly would he have sent the lightning to kindle their sacrifice. But Jehovah has set Satan's bounds, restrained his power, and not all the enemy's devices can convey one spark to Baal's altar. —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 149, 150.

Modern spiritualism and the forms of ancient witchcraft and idol worship—all having communion with the dead as their vital principle—are founded upon that first lie by which Satan beguiled Eve in Eden: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, . . . ye shall be as gods." Genesis 3:4, 5. Alike based upon falsehood and perpetuating the same, they are alike from the father of lies. . . .

The "familiar spirits" [are] not the spirits of the dead, but evil angels, the messengers of Satan. Ancient idolatry, which, as we have seen, comprises both worship of the dead and pretended communion with them, is declared by the Bible to have been demon worship. The apostle Paul, in warning his brethren against participating, in any manner, in the idolatry of their heathen neighbors, says, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." 1 Corinthians 10:20. . . . In their supposed worship of dead men they were in reality worshiping demons. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 685, 686.

Satan, the chief of the fallen angels, once had an exalted position in heaven. He was next in honor to Christ. The knowledge which he, as well as the angels who fell with him, had of the character of God, of His goodness, His mercy, wisdom, and excellent glory, made their guilt unpardonable. . . .

The principles of Satan's working in heaven are the same principles by which he works through human agents in this world. It is through these corrupting principles that every earthly empire and the churches have been increasingly corrupted. It is by the working out of these principles that Satan deceives and corrupts the whole world from the beginning to the ending. He is continuing this same policy-working, originally begun in the heavenly universe. He is energizing the whole world with his violence with which he corrupted the world in the days of Noah. —*Ellen G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1163.

Sunday, March 2

# An Angel Delayed

We have before us in the Word of God instances of heavenly agencies working on the minds of kings and rulers, while at the same time satanic agencies were also at work on their minds. No human eloquence, in strongly set forth human opinions, can change the working of satanic agencies. Satan seeks continually to block the way, so that the truth shall be bound about by human devising; and those who have light and knowledge are in the greatest danger unless they constantly consecrate themselves to God, humiliating self, and realizing the peril of the times.

Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 370.

As a people we do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Evil angels are constantly at work, planning their line of attack, controlling as commanders, kings, and rulers, the disloyal human forces. . . . Do not indulge in fanciful speculations. The Written Word is our only safety. We must pray as did Daniel, that we may be guarded by heavenly intelligences. As ministering spirits angels are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Pray, my brethren, pray as you have never prayed before. We are not prepared for the Lord's coming. We need to make thorough work for eternity. —*Ellen G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1173.

It was by the display of supernatural power, in making the serpent his medium, that Satan caused the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden. Before the close of time he will work still greater wonders. So far as his power extends, he will perform actual miracles. Says the Scripture: "He . . . deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do," not merely those which he pretends to do. Something more than mere impostures is brought to view in this scripture. But there is a limit beyond which Satan cannot go, and here he calls deception to his aid and counterfeits the work which he has not power actually to perform. In the last days he will appear in such a manner as to make men believe him to be Christ come the second time into the world. He will indeed transform himself into an angel of light. But . . . it will deceive none but those who, like Pharaoh, are seeking to resist the truth. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 698.

Monday, March 3

# The Dragon of Revelation

Under the symbols of a great red dragon, a leopardlike beast, and a beast with lamblike horns, the earthly governments which would especially engage in trampling upon God's law and persecuting His people, were presented to John. The war is carried on till the close of time. The people of God, symbolized by a holy woman and her children, were represented as greatly in the minority. In the last days only a remnant still existed. Of these John speaks as they "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." . . .

Satan and his army of confederates have been the avowed enemies of God in our world, continually warring against the cause of truth and righteousness. Satan has continued to present to men, as he presented to the angels, his false representations of Christ and of God, and he has won the world to his side. Even the professedly Christian churches have taken sides with the great apostate. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 972, 973.

We are in constant danger of becoming self-sufficient, relying upon our own wisdom, and not making God our strength. Nothing disturbs Satan so much as our not being ignorant of his devices. If we feel our dangers, we shall feel the need of prayer as did Nehemiah, and, like him, we shall obtain that sure defense that will give us security in peril. If we are careless and indifferent, we shall surely be overcome by Satan's devices. We must be vigilant. While, like Nehemiah, we resort to prayer, taking all our perplexities and burdens to God, we should not feel that we have nothing to do. We are to watch as well as pray. We should watch the work of our adversaries, lest they gain advantage in deceiving souls. We should, in the wisdom of Christ, make efforts to defeat their purposes, while, at the same time, we do not suffer them to call us from our great work. Truth is stronger than error. Righteousness will prevail over wrong. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1138.

With pity and compassion, with tender yearning, the Lord is looking upon His tempted and tried people. For a time the oppressors will be permitted to triumph over those who know God's holy commandments. All are given the same opportunity that was granted to the first great rebel to demonstrate the spirit that moves them to action. It is God's purpose that everyone shall be tested and proved, to see whether he will be loyal or disloyal to the laws which govern the kingdom of heaven. To the last God permits Satan to reveal his character as a liar, an accuser, and a murderer. Thus the final triumph of his people is made more marked, more glorious, more full and complete.

The people of God should be wide awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but wholly in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 414.

Tuesday, March 4

## The Case of Job

It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. . . .

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:9, 10. The agency by which God protects His people is presented in the words of the psalmist: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. . . . The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence.

Thus God's people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels. Nor is such assurance given without need. If God has granted to His children promise of grace and protection, it is because there are mighty agencies of evil to be met—agencies numerous, determined, and untiring, of whose malignity and power none can safely be ignorant or unheeding. —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 512, 513.

The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Satan was permitted to tempt the too-confident Peter, as he had been permitted to tempt Job; but when that work was done he had to retire. Had Satan been suffered to have his way, there would have been no hope. . . . He would have made complete shipwreck of faith. But the enemy dare not go one hairbreadth beyond his appointed sphere. There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God. —*My Life Today*, p. 316.

Wednesday, March 5

# The (Temporary) Ruler of This World

When Christ came to this world, He found that Satan had everything as he wanted it. The adversary of God and man thought that he was indeed the prince of the earth, but Jesus laid hold of the world to take it out of the power of Satan. He came to redeem it from the curse of sin and the penalty of transgression, that the transgressor might be forgiven. He planted the cross between earth and heaven, and between divinity and humanity; and as the Father beheld the cross, He was satisfied. . . . [In the cross] "mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." —Ellen G. White *Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1137.*

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him.

Mighty issues for the world were at stake in the conflict between the Prince of light and the leader of the kingdom of darkness. After tempting man to sin, Satan claimed the earth as his, and styled himself the prince of this world. Having conformed to his own nature the father and mother of our race, he thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. Christ had come to disprove Satan's claim. As the Son of man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free. The dominion that Adam had lost through sin would be recovered. —*The Desire of Ages, p. 114.*

[Jesus] gave Satan no advantage. When the last steps of Christ's humiliation were to be taken, when the deepest sorrow was closing about His soul, He said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." "The prince of this world is judged." Now shall he be cast out. John 14:30; 16:11; 12:31. With prophetic eye Christ traced the scenes to take place in His last great conflict. He knew that when He should exclaim, "It is finished," all heaven would triumph. His ear caught the distant music and the shouts of victory in the heavenly courts. He knew that the knell of Satan's empire would then be sounded, and the name of Christ would be heralded from world to world throughout the universe. —*The Desire of Ages, pp. 678, 679.*

Thursday, March 6

## Limits and Rules

In the divine arrangement God does nothing without the cooperation of man. He compels no man's will. That must be given to the Lord completely, else the Lord is not able to accomplish His divine work that He would do through the human agency. Jesus declared that in a certain place He could not do many mighty works among the people because of their unbelief. He wanted to do for them in that place just what He knew that they needed to have done, but He could not because unbelief barred the way. The potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in his hands. The Christian life is one of daily surrender, submission, and continual overcoming, gaining fresh victories every day. This is the growing up into Christ, fashioning the life into the divine Model. —*That I May Know Him*, p. 55.

Some poor souls who have been fascinated with the eloquent words of the teachers of spiritualism, and have yielded to its influence, afterward find out its deadly character, and would renounce and flee from it, but cannot. Satan holds them by his power, and is not willing to let them go free. He knows that they are surely his while he has them under his special control, but that if they once free themselves from his power, he can never bring them again to believe in spiritualism, and to place themselves so directly under his control.

The only way for such poor souls to overcome Satan, is to discern between pure Bible truth and fables. As they acknowledge the claims of truth, they place themselves where they can be helped. They should entreat those who have had a religious experience, and who have faith in the promises of God, to plead with the mighty Deliverer in their behalf. It will be a close conflict. Satan will reinforce his evil angels who have controlled these persons; but if the saints of God with deep humility fast and pray, their prayers will prevail. Jesus will commission holy angels to resist Satan, and he will be driven back and his power broken from off the afflicted ones. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 343.

There are toils and conflicts and self-denials for us all. Not one will escape them. We must tread the path where Jesus leads the way. It may be in tears, in trials, in bereavements, in sorrow for sins, or in seeking for the mastery over depraved desires, unbalanced characters, and unholy tempers. It requires earnest effort to present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. It takes the entire being. There is no chamber of the mind where Satan can hold sway and carry out his devices. Self must be crucified. Consecration, submission, and sacrifices must be made that will seem like taking the very lifeblood from the heart.

Will it make you sad to be buffeted, despised, derided, maligned of the world? It ought not, for Jesus told us just how it would be. "If the world hate you," He says, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). The apostle Paul, the great hero of faith, testifies: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). —*That I May Know Him*, p. 280.

**Friday, March 7**

## **For Further Reading**

*In Heavenly Places*, "Heaven's Honor Roll," p. 271;  
*God's Amazing Grace*, "Incomparable Temptations," p. 162.