

Perspective Digest

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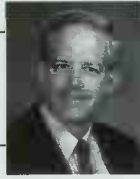
The Great Controversy - Can We Count On It? (Perspective on the Word Logos)

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P E R S P E C T I V E O N T H E W O R D

ΛΟΓΟΣ



LOGOS

Bruce Norman*

Adventists have long maintained that a great controversy rages between Christ and Satan for the loyalty of the universe. At its center is Earth, the one rebel world in God’s creation. Some, however, now question whether this world view is relevant for today’s sophisticated mind set. While Adventists can “prove” this theme from the writings of Ellen G. White, they say, it is not so clear in Scripture.

To the contrary: The Bible highlights the struggle going on between Satan and his forces of evil and God and the hosts of heaven. In fact, nearly every book in the Bible mentions the Great Controversy.¹ One evidence of such thinking is found in the Pauline phraseology “in the heavenlies/heavens and on the earth” (*epouranois/ouranois epi tes ges*). The phrase is used most frequently in Colossians and Ephesians

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but is not limited to those two books.²

The term “heavenlies/heavens” (plural) designates the universe over against the Earth (singular).³ The Greek makes it clear that Paul is not simply writing about two places but *one place that is different from all others in the universe!*

Further, the grammar indicates that Earth is different from the rest of the universe (*epouranois/ouranois*) not only in location but also in quality. What is the significance of this distinction?

We need not search far for the answer. Scripture reveals that Earth differs from the rest of the universe because of sin (see, for example, Romans 5:12-21; 8:18-27; and He-

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brews 1:10-14). Earth is the only place outside of heaven itself where God's creatures participated in Lucifer's rebellion against God. Thus, the very language used to describe the universe in the New Testament points us to what Adventists call the Great Controversy.

The Stake

Though the sin plague has been quarantined to Earth, its insidious character has impacted the unity of the "heavens/heavenlies," giving not only Earth but also the universe as a whole a stake in the resolution of the controversy. With what awe must the universe have viewed the birth pains of Bethlehem, where the Creator linked Himself forever to His fallen creation! With what emotion must they have viewed Calvary, where the Creator died for His fallen creation! With what wonder must they have learned that Earth, the headquarters of Satan's rebellion against God (Matt. 4:8-10; John 12:31; 14:30; Eph. 2:1, 2) is to become the capital of the reunited universe! (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:1-6).

However, the cosmic warfare will not end without a climactic battle for this world and its inhabitants, as well as for the universe itself (Rev. 12:4-12, 17). Even now the appeal for recruits intensifies, and humankind pledge their allegiance to one commander or the other.

General Lucifer promises potential recruits, as he once did to the Son of God Himself, "all the kingdoms of the world" and the glory of them. General Michael, the name under which Jesus wars with the evil forces, offers all that is His; if we "share in [his] suffering," He promises, "we share his glory" (Rom. 8:17, TEV).

There can be no declaration of neutrality in the Great Controversy. As Jesus extends His nail-pierced hands to us in invitation to link our future with His, we would do well to remember who inspired humanity to drive the nails. . . . □

REFERENCES

¹For example, Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1, 2; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah 3:1-10; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 10:18; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 6:11-17; Hebrews 1:10-14; Revelation 12:4-9.

²See *Computer-Konkordanz zum Novum Testamentum Graece* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), pp. 1406-1411, 678 for all occurrences of the phrase.

³The terminology "in the heavenlies/heavens" appears most frequently in the locative plural and "the earth" in the genitive singular preceded by the preposition *epi*. The "heavenlies/heavens" (plural) designates the universe over against the Earth (singular). *Epi* with the genitive often stresses the quality of a place rather than its physical location (in contrast with the locative, which emphasizes location or spatial orientation). See James Brooks and Carlton Winberry, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 12, 38.