

Introduction to the Great Controversy/Cosmic Conflict Motif in the Bible

I think is clear in everybody's mind after what we study last week that we live in a great controversy where God's character was defaced by the satan (I am writing "the satan" [in lowercase], because that is how the Hebrew Bible does it). In order to survive you have to know who you are and where you are. Did you ever consider jaywalking on the front lines of a major conflict, in between to opposing forces? I don't think so. But we do exactly that spiritually speaking when we live without knowing where we stand in this great cosmic conflict.

I want to share with you something that is fantastic: When I did not know any better, when I didn't know God, I fell in love with fiction, war movies, fight, and such... But I did not know back then was that God had called me to another war. The world, the people out there, ignores, and many IN THE CHURCH ignore that there is a much larger war going on, and God calls us to fight this great war with Him. The sad not is that sometimes we have no idea of that reality.

Let's read what Revelation 12:3-4 tells us:

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

In order to know whom we are have to understand very well the context in which we live and the context of this great struggle. Did you ever been to a war zone? If you wander in a war zone, amidst of two sides battling each other, we might as well end-up dead in the crossfire. The whole Bible tells us about this. We find the stories of people from all walks in life, but even when the God's name does not show up (like in the book of Esther) it has to do with this great and fierce battle that every one is involved. We need to know the "Great Controversy". To wholly Bible show the attempts of a kind and lovely God trying to save the human race, his children who can't do a thing on their own. Their only hope is the Grace of God, through Jesus.

We know from the Bible that this great conflict began with Lucifer in heaven. 1/3 of the "stars of heaven", a third of the angels (Rev. 12:9), was deceived by the enemy and thrown out (Greek *diabalo*) from heaven, starting the first and original "Star Wars".

And just to confirm I am not making this up, let's open our Bibles in other very well known biblical text that deals with the Fall of Lucifer. Let's read Isaiah 14:12-14:

12 "How you are fallen from heaven,
O [a]Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
13 For you have said in your heart:
'I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God[i.e., the angels];
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.'

He wanted to be like God, to have all his glory, but without his character. This great conflict is real, started in heaven, with God's stars, his angels, and it reaches the planet Earth.

That's why in the calling of Abram, which we read in Genesis 15:5, God calls Abram out and says: "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can "count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring"". God speaks to Abram and says that its seeds shall be as the stars of heaven. And God was not just talking about numbers, he was telling him that the seed / descendants / offspring of Abraham would be stars in this battle. He says that the children of Abraham are called to be warriors. Abraham may have questioned Why? And God may have said that because a war began in heaven and it came to Earth, and you and your seed are called to be my stars, my warriors. And this, my dear friend, is exactly who you are. You were created in God's image to be his star in this battle.

We know the history. Abraham had sons and they had children. And if we continue following this line of descent, we reach Daniel. In Daniel 8:10 we read: "It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them." Here we see a persecuting power during the Middle Ages who tried to humiliate and crush the stars God. Who are these stars? They are God's people fighting for truth in the great conflict that had come to earth! You and me, my brother or sister, are these stars.

Now we also have the other side. In Jude 1:13 the Bible, speaking of the wicked, says that "They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever." Has anyone read this verse? Here the Bible describes in vivid imagery the men and women who are at the service of the enemy as "Wandering Stars". The enemy also has its stars. And whether they know it or not, they are at war. In the same way God has His stars in your church, in our group, and in other denominations too, the devil has his star warriors too, here and elsewhere. That is why it is so important for you to know who you really are. What matters is not what church you go, if you are vegetarian or not. What really matter is who you are and who you really serve!

But I have to tell you two very important things:

1. Beloved, now that you understand the context, now that you understand that we are at war, we are in crisis, I have to tell you that there is no position of neutrality. Nobody is neutral in this great conflict. Ignoring this reality and not pick a side is to side with the enemy. You are on one side or the other, wherever you acknowledge or not.
2. To be in darkness, you can simply neglect the light. You need not be totally immersed in error, you may even be a nice guy/gal. But is not enough to be a nice guy/gal, you need to live up to the light you have. I'm not talking about things you must do to be saved. Salvation has nothing to do with what we do, but with what Christ did for us. What I'm saying is that God forgives our time of ignorance, but you can not live forever ignoring the voice of your conscience, ignoring the Holy Spirit speaking in your heart. Christ gave His life for you. If you want peace, peace that only Jesus can give you, stop living a double and frivolous life. Open your heart to God, now follow Christ and live according to the light that you possess, and always look for more from Christ. Let him surprise you...

Now that you know the context in which we live and operate, let's dig deeper and know who we are in the context of this great cosmic conflict. But first let's understand what the conflict is about. Let us open our Bibles in Ezekiel chapter 28 (and focus on the verses 11-19), for another text speaking about the origin of the sin. Pay attention because we have a lot to discover from the Bible today. In Ezekiel 28, the text starts talking about the prince/ruler (*nagiyd*, Heb. Word who denotes an earthly and territorial ruler who is a vassal of somebody else) of Tyre and then, starting on verse 11, shifts to talk about the king (*melech*, a Heb. Word which denotes a king, specially a suzerain king) of Tyre. It is the same contrast we see in the book of 1 Samuel, when we see the people demanding "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations". God then say fine, but when God finally says to Samuel to do it He says "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him *nagiyd* [different versions translate differently as a prince, ruler, and even a king] over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines." This play of words here in Samuel indicates God was the supreme King of Israel and Saul was His human vassal, anointed to do His bidding (which he failed by the way...). In Ezekiel we see the same tension where the prince (*nagiyd*) of Tyre is just the human vassal of the king (*melech*) of Tyre, the cosmic ruler to which he is subject.

I want you to read now verses 14-15. Follow the reading: "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God [God's heavenly temple, his command center]; you walked among the fiery stones. (15) You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created [so, God created the Devil?: NO. The Bible says he was created perfect. God did not created evil. All that God does is good] till wickedness was found in you."

Iniquity was found where? At Lucifer's heart. What is iniquity? It is a sin. And what is sin? It is transgression of the Law And where was Lucifer? (in heaven). Did the Law existed in Heaven? There was the Decalogue (10 Commandments) in heaven? The Bible tells us that the God 's Law is eternal. I ask you, there was God 's Law in heaven? What law? The Law of Love, demonstrated by His character.

There were the 10 commandments in Heaven? "Thou Shall Not Kill," "Do not commit adultery"... Can you imagine adultery among Angels? In heaven, God's law was summarized by one statement: His holy character, Love / Justice / Goodness. The law existed in a way that showed the perfect character of God to the heavenly beings. God's law was, is and always will be an expression of God's character. That is why Jesus summarized it in two statements: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)

The Decalogue are God's law as it existed in heaven, and was introduced to the man after the fall. It is as if God were to write a book called "Justice / Righteousness for Dummies" to explain step by step, how to reflect the God's character, because with the fall we lost our discernment.

The Decalogue, just as the Law of God in Heaven, reflects the character of God. The Decalogue teaches about a God who is love, goodness, justice, etc., and who wants His character to be "imprinted" over the character of His children. A God who cares for His children. A God who is honest, not adulterous or resorts to falsehood. The God who at the same time hates sin, loves and welcomes the sinner who seeks Him.... Otherwise none of us would survive. This is the character that He wants us to reflect.

Another interesting aspect about the Decalogue is that the way it is written in Hebrew, the 10 commandments can be translated not only as a law like "do this" or "do not do that". It Can Be

translated the Promises of what God would do for us if we walk His walk (and believe that is the right way to read it and we will learn more about that later). If we Surrender the self to Him, he will make you little by little, be in his likeness through His Holy Spirit: A work to be completed only in eternity.

Now I want to show you something else. Let's read verse 16 of chapter 28 of Ezekiel: "Through your widespread trade [rekullah, Hebrew for gossip, slander, specially going door to door to gossip about somebody] you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones."

Not only because of his pride and envy of a murderer, but because of his gossip, libel, slander, Lucifer was expelled in disgrace from the heavens and stripped of his position. Some wonder, as I have asked myself, why is that. If God said it would destroy Lucifer for his sin, why He did not at that time, right there, on the spot? Why God did not Destroyed him when Lucifer began talking about how God was evil and unfair, how God was a tyrant. If you read your Bible, especially this chapter, along with Isaiah 14, you will see that this was the argument of Lucifer. Did you ever thought why he was not destroyed on the spot?

Have you ever stopped to think that he (the satan) deceived one third of the angels of heaven, which were pure, intelligent and holy? How many of you think that Lucifer said: "Hey, angels, I wanna be evil and create some havoc! What about you, wan to be Evil too?" He did not say so, nobody would fall for it. Remember that the enemy is the father of deception and lies (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9). The angels would not have fallen into this conversation. The argument Lucifer was deeper and misleading. In the future I will talk to you about this first deception of Lucifer, but just want to forward to you the most effective deceptions of the enemy are well disguised.

Now back to the point of why God did not destroy Lucifer at that very moment. First of all, the Bible says across the board that God is love and justice. The Bible also is the written revelation of God's will. All the Bible, not only his 10 commandments, unveils his Character and show us by example how God is like and model His character to us.

With that in mind, let's see what the Bible says in Deuteronomy 19:16-19. Here God conveyed His principles of justice that ought to be practiced by his people: "If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, ¹⁷ the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the Lord before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. ¹⁸ The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, ¹⁹ then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you."

What is the principle established by God here? There should be a neutral party to judge between the two conflicting parties, so justice must be carried and the problem of evil is properly dealt with. God's intention, which is very well documented on the Bible, is to do away with sin and suffering once and for all at the end of this legal proceedings we call the great controversy (Revelation 21:4-5). That was precisely the goal of the law given in Deut. 19, that if the law was carried rightly, the people would "never again do such an evil thing among you." (Deut. 19:20, NASB). I ask again, why God did not destroy Lucifer there at that moment in heaven? According to this principle of Deut. 19, Lucifer was the malicious witness, he was accusing God. But who, throughout the universe, nobody was impartial and neutral. Deuteronomy 19 (alongside with Revelation 21 and other texts) teach us that God's greatest goal when he does what he does in the plan of salvation is that the evil will never rise again.

Since the great controversy is a dispute about God's character, this dispute cannot be won by cheer power alone. **God has to demonstrate to the universe that He is love and His rulership is just.**

There was a big impasse/standoff/deadlock, in heaven and there was no one to judge. But I want to show you something here that should have made Lucifer scratch his head. Let's read Ezekiel 28, 18 and then 17: “¹⁸ By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching [lit. in Hebrew: Judging. Looking to make a decision].” ... “¹⁷ Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze[or judge. Same root as before] at you.”

Lucifer must have scratched his head here. Who will judge me ?????? Who are these kings? Do you know who are these kings? Do you know who you are?

You and I are these kings. It is no coincidence that the Morning Stars, the Angels of God, sang with joy to see the creation of Earth and Man. This is what we read in the Book of Job (Job 38: 7). We were Created as the crown of creation and were meant to rule the Earth. Let us read Psalm 8: 4-6 (Note: Some translations say "a little lower than the angels" but the word translated angels in these translations is Elohim, which can also be translated God or gods. God made us special, in His image, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27; cf. Genesis 5:1-2; James 3:9; etc.) because you and I were created with a purpose. When our first parents fell for the satan's lies, God put the plan of redemption in motion so we can be restored to our original state and purpose.

Let's do some fact checking on the Bible, shall we? Let's read Revelation 1:5 e 6 to check: “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed[a] us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” God made us kings and queens, and also ministers before Him.

In Revelation 20:4 we read about this great resurrection which will happen at the second coming, and what is the very first thing Jesus do??? There we read that “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” - The power to judge is given to those who follow Jesus. Later we will study how that Judgment will proceed during this thousand years.

And to complete the idea, let's read 1 Corinthians 6:3: “Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” We shall judge angels....

Beloved, the satan know who you are for sure. Now, do you realize who you are and to what end you were created? When God created mankind, He created us to judge, to be a neutral party to judge Lucifer and his angels in order to His Justice to vindicated. What a wonderful calling!

I know who you are! God knows who you are! The devil knows who you are! And now you know who you are.... you are part of this great conflict, created at God's image and to vindicate His Name.

Genesis 1:26 says we were created to rule over the Earth (we are kings, remember?). In Genesis 2, mankind is not only put in charge of the Earth, but ruling from the Garden of Eden. The word for

garden here in Genesis 2:15 is the Hebrew *gan*, which means a walled garden of a palace or temple. That word is used in the old testament (54 times outside of Genesis) and always means a garden for a king (in a palace) or for God (in His temple). Genesis 2:10 talks about a river that sprung from the garden to water it, and it flowed to four directions and watered all the land (Genesis 2:11-14). It is interesting to note that the garden of Eden was in a mount/elevated place so the river could flow to four different directions from the same original stream. The language in Genesis is abundantly clear (with more evidence than I have the time to list here) that mankind was create to be co-regents with God and that Eden was a miniature of the Heavenly temple (Ezek. 28:13), the mount of God (Ezek. 28:14). They were indubitably the kings God was talking about.

In the fall of Man in Genesis 3, the serpent starts by misrepresenting God as a stingy being by asking “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” (v.1), implying God want to restrict their dominion and was saving things only for Himself. Then, after the woman replies, he goes further by saying “for God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing[JUDGING] good and evil.” (v.5). From the starts he bluntly accuse God of being a tyrant, niggling, unfair, and unjust. The same slander he perfected in heaven.

The lie of the enemy was and still is that you do not need to listen to God to know what is right. You can decide and judge between good and evil. Today he does the same. It is very common to hear “these Christians think they know everything” or “Forget this old stories”,... Even inside the church we sometimes hear “This book is an old and outdated.” However, the amazing thing is that, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they had lost the very thing they thought would win: They have lost the ability to discern between good and evil.

The Rules of Engagement

The Bible evinces many (not all) of the rules of engagement in this cosmic conflict we are all part of. Here we will list a few of them. Since this conflict is all about God’s character (and satan’s), the allegations from the satan require rules of engagement that provide parameters that could be tested (or in other words, rules that provide ways that such egregious allegations could be proven or falsified by demonstration). So, in order to clear his name and act justly, God covenant Himself to such laws, acting or refraining to act according with such rules (from which we just know some that are made evident from the biblical data). He still all-powerful, but he morally restrict himself to act according His covenant (his own laws) in a very transparent manner to the heavenly council (and, on the future, on the thousand years we will rule with Him in heaven, that will be make available to us as well).

Because the fall, Satan got the temporary dominion/rulership over Earth. To understand it better, let's read Deuteronomy 32:8-9 (NRSV), which says:

When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods [Some variants say “Children of God”, which same translations translate as children of Israel]

[but] the Lord’s own portion was his people,

Jacob his allotted share.

[the but is in the Hebrew text and some Bibles translated as for, which is OK]

The biblical reference seems to indicate that the original number of nations was according to the number **(or order)** of gods. In other words, in the great controversy arrangement, the nations are

assigned to their patron deities while God retained ultimate hegemony over all nations”. Just to clarify the point, Deuteronomy 32:17 clearly states that such gods, the gods with whom Israel frequently prostituted itself with, were actually daemons:

*They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.*

The same arrangement also allowed God to have complete jurisdiction to elect a raise a people as His portion (Deuteronomy 32:9, cf with Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 10-11). Since the great controversy is a dispute about God’s character, this dispute cannot be won by cheer power alone. God has to demonstrate to the universe that He is love and His rulership is just. **That is why we see the constant pattern of God always rescuing a people from the kingdom of darkness through history. He needed to have one individual, one family, one people to which he could model to the universe the result of His rulership and contrast with the satan’s government.** The mutual love and fidelity that God desired to have in the relationship with His people within His covenant with Israel was the focal point of the Old testament (see Genesis 12:1-3 and Deuteronomy 32:16-17,21,37-39). On the New Testament, the same covenantal love became the medium for the scandal of the cross to bring redemption to all people, nations, tribes, and tongues—starting the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and his decedents (e.g. Matthew 28:19; Revelation 7:9; 14:6).

This paints a clean portrait of the conflict that show that while God is reclaiming the world via Israel (and now, according Galatians 3:7, Israel also means God’s people from all nations, who choose to be sons and daughters of Abraham and to abide in Him). Daemons are attempting to steal away Israel from God, leaving Him without inheritance in the attempt to halt or to slow down His plan to rescue the world. The conflict on heaven relates to the events on Earth since the world (and our minds) are the battleground for this conflict.

The aforementioned territorial rulership notion is the first rule of engagement that jumped on me as I studied the subject. The New testament paints the picture in which Satan is the ruler behind the rulers of this world (John 12:31; Luke 4:6; Revelation 12:9; 13:2). Or as 1 John 5:19 says, “*the whole Earth lies in the power of the evil one.*” Acts 26:18 makes clear that the satan’s dominion is in direct opposition to God’s dominion: “*to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.*” Colossians 1:13-14 reinforces the assertion that, if we truly wish, by the merits of Jesus, we can be delivered from the Kingdom of the satan to the kingdom of God.

That conflict of two kingdoms is clear on the Gospels and on the rest of the NT, but the good news are that “the God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Romans 16:20; cf Gen. 3:15). John add that “*because the ruler of this world has been condemned*” and that he “*will be driven out*” (John 16:11 and 12:31). Ultimately the Bible tell us that the satan and his works will be destroyed because of Christ’s victory on the cross (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

In this great controversy, God’s character attacked in two ways:

1. He is portrait as not a good guy—not a loving and lovable God.
2. Because of the above, His laws are hard/ironclad and not just.

Both accusations are implied in both Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. However, the same attacks are abundantly clear in the actions of the devil in the Bible, especially in his first attack against humanity (please read Genesis 3:1-5). Why that is important? Because only when we know that we can understand what is at stake and what are the good news the cross brought us: because of the cross, God's love became evident and the first accusation was disproved. The second accusation was severely weaken and will be totally destroyed on the judgment.

Another good news is that, because of the cross, the satan lost his status of the representative of the earth and lost his access to heaven (John 13:31; Revelation 12:10; Luke 10:18; cf Revelations 4-5). However, the satan and his angels still have significant jurisdiction over earth. That is illustrated in the episode where the satan “demand permission to sift” the disciples (Peter) like wheat (see Luke 22:31; compare with Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33). Peter fell despite Jesus warnings and he came back, as prayed, and strengthened his brothers (Luke 22:32).

Another good news is that, according to Christ, He gave limited jurisdiction over the satan and his angels to His followers that are acting in His name (i.e., character) and authority. Such provisions including, among others, casting out demons (Mark 3:15; Matthew 10:1).

Some passages make clear that the satan and his cronies cannot attack us at their will (like the one we briefly mentioned on the paragraph above). However, I want to call you attention to Luke's account of the temptation of Christ in the desert. Luke 4:1 informs us that Jesus was full of the Spirit and was led by the Spirit to the wilderness. After He defeated the satan, the enemy left and the Bible says “he departed from him until an opportune **time**” (Luke 4:13). The Greek word translated as time here is *kairos*, which means appointed time. **That evinces the comforting rule that the enemy cannot tempt us at will, just in the appointed times of the providence**—when it is allowed by the rules of engagement and “notarized” before the heavenly council. That is why the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, says:

*¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it.*

That is also why Paul says, in Romans 8:28-30 says God only allows something to befall us when it promotes our eternal good and salvation.

Another thing that is evident as we read the whole Bible is that, in order to demonstrate His justice and Love, there is a body that oversees and documents God's rulings, not because God's needs a nudge to be upright, but because the whole universe has to see by themselves if God's rules are just and are a good description of His character (the second charge, which still standing). Satan, one of the celestial beings that was closer to God, with his sophisms, said that God was not worthy of being worshiped because he was not what He says He is (Love and Justice), so a heavenly body with representative of angels and people from all created worlds audit God's decisions. That is what is commonly refereed to as the heavenly council.

References to the heavenly council are abundant in the Bible. For example, Psalm 29 (NRSV) says, where they are called (in Hebrew) benei 'elim (the same way they are identified in the Book of Job, chapter 1 and 2):

¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings [Heb. benei 'elim],
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendor.

Psalm 89 asserts that God (YHWH) is the only God and none of the elohim (literary, gods in Hebrew, but that can be translated as heavenly beings in this context) are not even close to him, although they seat in His heavenly council:

⁵ The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.

⁶ For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord?
Who among the sons of the mighty[Heb. benei 'elim] is like the Lord,

⁷ A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,
And awesome above all those who are around Him?

This Psalm not only describe the God as superior to all the components of this heavenly council but also is one of the biblical passages which depicts God as a warrior defeating pagan gods and cosmic forces in the great controversy (Ps 89:9-10).

There is a magnificent depiction of this holy assembly in the Psalm 82. In this Psalm, God has taken His seat as the King and convenor of the heavenly assembly (v.1). **The conceptual framework of the psalm rests on the idea that the Earth is ruled by unjust and unrighteous celestial beings (remember Deuteronomy 32?) and He comes to judge those “gods” as the council gathers to make decisions about the world. He chastises these heavenly beings (fallen angels) for judging unjustly (v.2) and steers the attention to His mercy and His way of doing things giving justice to the weak, maintaining the right of the destitute, and deliver the weak from the hands of the wicked (vv. 3-5).** Those wicked beings are warned that they will be destroyed because of their wickedness and unjust ruling (vv. 6-7; cf Ezekiel 28:18-19) and finally YHWH will be praised as the ruler of all the earth (v. 8).

Perhaps the most explicit scene of the heavenly council is painted on the chapters 1 and 2 of the book of Job. Here God convene the council and the satan show up introducing himself as the one who comes “from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” (Job 1:7). That formula is repeated in Job 2:2, seems to indicate that this a procedural step to indicate the satan was attesting to the council as Earth’s representative. **In a way he was asserting his dominion and rulership over the Earth, which would guarantee his place on the council. From this point on the narrative, evinces a prior dispute between God and the satan, who claims ownership of the Earth and defiantly tries to expose God as unjust.** In this conceptual framework, God show to the satan something he does not want to acknowledge: **this world is not entirely His because God still have His people there (who constantly expose the satanic fallacies) and the satan can’t stand it. The satan came defying God’s authority and God pointed out to the reality He still in control.**

Not satisfied, the usurper distill more of his lies. The satan's answer implies that God was a corrupt mobster that give protection for those who pay or that are close/loyal to him. He insinuates Job's faithfulness is nothing more than retribution for the blessings and protection he received and that he would not be faithful if he was death broke and lost everything (vv. 9-11). God respond by allowing Satan to test his theory but curbing the satan's control by forbidding him to cause personal harm to him (v. 12). On Chapter two, after the devilish attempts fail, the whole process starts again, but now the satan plead for being allowed to cause personal harm to Job (Job 2:3-6). God allows it once more to disprove the enemy's false claims about God and his character. **Throughout the book Job's constant faithfulness falsifies the satanic claims.**

The aforementioned scenes help us to have a small sneak peek of the behind-the-scenes of the great controversy and how God vindicates our character and His against the false charges from our enemy and accuser. **These scenes evinces another rule: the preestablished rules of engagement can be changed before the heavenly council if both parties agree.**

The book of Job and scenes like in Zechariah 3, show God judging under the watch of the council. In Zechariah 3, we see another instance of such investigative judgment, where Joshua, the High-Priest, is being slandered and attacked by the satan (v.1). **God rebukes** (the Hebrew word ga'ar, which means "to scream" and denotes somebody cursing vehemently) the satan, who is standing in opposition to God and His plan by falsely accusing one of His servants (v. 2). **Joshua is acquitted of the false allegations, the satan is proven wrong before the council and rightfully scourged while God orders other member of the council to change Joshua's garments in the same way He declare Joshua's iniquities removed (vv. 2-5).** Through this type of investigative judgment, God acquits us from our guilt/wrong doings and free us from the actions of the satan and his angels. That is why is so important to always confess our sins directly to God and enter through prayer on the Holy of Hollies, before God's throne, by the new way that is made available to us through Jesus' s atonement for us and by His ministration on the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19-23). What becomes evident in such scenes is the fact that such judgments and rulings before the heavenly council are not necessary for God, but are temporary required so the whole universe (including ourselves in the thousand years we spend in heaven, prior the New Earth) to see how God is good and just, how He does not play favorites, positively and definitively falsifying the satan's accusations. That is why Revelation is full of eschatological references to the future proclamation throughout the universe of God's righteousness once the great controversy is over (Revelation 15:3-4; 19-1-2), which echoes what the whole Bible, starting with Moses, said all along:

For I proclaim the name of the Lord:
Ascribe greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

If is not clear enough until now, Daniel 4 show that, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, all human affairs are decided by God in the heavenly council with one specific purpose: to prove that God is just in His sovereignty. Let's read Daniel 4:17:

The sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers,
the decision is given by order of the holy ones [in both underlined expression, the meaning is the heavenly council],

in order that all who live may know

that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals;
he gives it to whom he will
and sets over it the lowliest of human beings.’

Another very self-evident rule is that there time parameters preestablished (which are unknown to the creatures but the celestial beings have a vague idea of the major milestones). For example, the Gadarenes demoniacs, while Jesus was approaching them, shouted: “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29).

Another rule evinced from the Gospels is that there are things that God cannot legally (by his covenant) do without impinging in our free will. A good illustration of that is the episode in Nazareth, where Jesus was frustrated because “*He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*” (Mark 6:5). **In this episode it is clear that in order to God to act and change us miraculously we need to have faith and actively allow it through prayer (Mark 6:6; cf 9:23-24, 28-29 [the story of the demon-possessed boy and his father incredulity/little faith]).** Although the Bible does not explain clearly how faith and prayer work it is evident that, among other factors, when we believe and pray we actively give Him jurisdiction, granting Him permission to act within the rules of engagement—thus effectively demonstrating He would not be impinging our own personal free-will. Although, there are documented cases on Scripture (and on our lives too...) where people did all that but it did not change the outcome (eg. Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:32).

In summary, in the aforementioned framework of the great controversy and its rules of engagement, God covenanted Himself to His own covenant and such rules apparently prevent him to do or prevent what he otherwise would choose to do or prevent. Such rules can be summarized by saying that God, in faithfulness with His covenant of love, will refrain to act or refrain to prevent evil to happen if His actions **(a) are against the preestablished rules of engagement, (b) would encroach in the free will of the creatures involved, or (c) they would result in far greater evil or would cause less flourishing of love in His creatures.**

The aforementioned statements are perfectly consistent with the Idea advocated by the Scripture that if God’s goal is to eradicate evil for ever and inoculate the universe against its resurgence (Deut. 19:20; Ezek. 28:19; Nah 1:9; Rev. 21:3-4), He is the only one who is capable, through His omniscience, to perfectly figure out what is sufficient and best to achieve this end.

Just keep in mind, He loves you. He is crazy about you. In fact, He died for you!