

James Rafferty Q1-L9-2025-An Enemy Has Done This-Feb 23

Lesson 9

**February 22–28*

NEXT WEEK- LESSON 10-RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Cosmic Conflict

Sabbath Afternoon

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 13:24–27; Gen. 1:31; Ezek. 28:12–19; Isa. 14:12–15; Matt. 4:1–11; John 8:44, 45.*

Memory Text: “ ‘**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel’ ”**
(Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

C

entral to biblical theology is the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Although the idea of a cosmic conflict between God and celestial creatures who have fallen and rebelled against God is a prominent motif of Scripture (*Matt. 13:24–30, 37–39; Rev. 12:7–10*) and also is prevalent in much of Christian tradition, many Christians have rejected or neglected the whole idea.

From a biblical perspective, however, the theme of a cosmic conflict, in which the kingdom of God is opposed by the devil

and his angels, is not one that we can neglect without missing a great deal of what the biblical narratives are about. The Gospels alone are filled with references to the devil and demons who oppose God.

To begin with this week, we will address how the two following questions might be answered according to some crucial biblical passages:

- (1) Where does Scripture teach that there is a cosmic conflict between God and Satan?
- (2) According to Scripture, what is the nature of the conflict?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 1.*

SE-1Q-2025, *God's Love and Justice*, by John C. Peckham

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Lesson 9: The Cosmic Conflict (Sunday)

February 22-28

Sunday *February 23*

An Enemy Has Done This

Read Matthew 13:24–27. How does the parable help us understand evil in our world?

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Jesus tells the story of a landowner who sows only good seeds in his field. However, tares spring up among the wheat. Upon seeing this, the servants of the owner ask him, “ ‘ “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” ’ ” (*Matt. 13:27, NKJV*). This is similar to the question often asked today concerning the problem of evil: If God created the world entirely good, why is there evil in it?

Read Matthew 13:28–30 in light of Christ’s explanation in Matthew 13:37–40.

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

LATER THE DISCIPLES ASK ABOUT THIS PARABLE:

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

How does this also shed light on the nature of the cosmic conflict?

The master replies to his servant's question: “ ‘ “An enemy has done this” ’ ” (*Matt. 13:28, NKJV*). Jesus later identifies the one “ ‘who sows the good seed’ ” as “ ‘the Son of Man,’ ” who is Jesus Himself (*Matt. 13:37, NKJV*), and explains that “the field is the world” (*Matt. 13:38*), and the “ ‘enemy who sowed’ ” the tares is “ ‘the devil’ ” (*Matt. 13:39, NKJV*), explicitly depicting a cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. Why is there evil in the world? Evil is the result of the enemy (the devil) who opposes the master. “ ‘An enemy has done this’ ” (*Matt. 13:28, NKJV*).

This answer, however, provokes the follow-up question, “ ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ ” In other words, why not uproot the evil immediately? “ ‘ “No, ” ’ ” the master replies, “ ‘ “lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest” ’ ” (*Matt. 13:29, 30, NKJV; compare with Mark 4:29*). According

to the parable, God will finally put an end to evil, but uprooting it prematurely would result in irreversible collateral damage that harms the good.

What are some of the dangers in seeking to uproot the tares from the wheat now? At the same time, why does this not mean simply ignoring the evil that we encounter?

-WE CANNOT READ HEARTS

-THERE IS STILL TIME FOR CHANGE

-ONLOOKERS ARE IMPACTED BY ACTIONS

AGAINST EVIL

SE-1Q-2025, *God's Love and Justice*, by John C. Peckham