

A The winner of the conflict:

❖ **The victory of Jesus.**

- Satan maintains that God's character is that of a tyrant. But what is the character of Satan? He is a deceiver (Rev. 12:9); he is a murderer (John 8:44); he is an accuser (Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3:1-2); he is a usurper (1 John 5:19.)
- Because of his lies, he took away Adam's dominion over the Earth, making him the "prince of this world" (John 14:30.) But Jesus came to take away his dominion (1 John 3:8.)
- By His life, Jesus bore witness to the truth (John 18:37.) By His death, He gained victory over the devil and demonstrated God's love and justice (Rom. 3:25-26; 5:8.) Finally, He will destroy Satan, death, and evil (Rev. 20:10, 14.)
- Thanks to Jesus' victory, our victory is also assured (Rev. 12:11.)

❖ **The meaning of the cross.**

- Colossians 2:13-15 clearly shows us Jesus' work on the cross: "He made you alive [...] by forgiving us all our sins." On what basis did He forgive us? By paying the price for our sin, "blotting out the handwriting of decrees that was against us [...] and nailing it to the cross." At the same time, He "made a public display" of Satan and his angels, "triumphing over them by the cross."
- At the very moment Satan thought he had inflicted a mortal wound on Jesus [in the heel (Gen. 3:15)], he exposed his true character to the universe. The angels were horrified to realize the true meaning and cost of sin. Satan was discredited before the universe, and the character of God was vindicated.
- God did not need to resort to deceitful stratagems; He has always acted with love and justice to obtain victory (Ps. 145:17.)

B What else could I do?

❖ **I expected sweetness and received bitterness.**

- God gave us free will so that we could love Him and enjoy His love. But what have we done with our freedom?
- Isaiah 5:1-7 shows us God's expectations, His efforts to attract us, and the bitter response He has received.
- One question stands out in this parable: "What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4.) God has done everything possible except one thing: to force us to accept Him.
- Therefore, there is an invitation: "judge now between me and my vineyard" (Is. 5:3.) We truly deserve to be "uprooted." But, thanks to Jesus, we still have the opportunity to stop being "stinking" grapes and bear "fruit for eternal life" (Jn. 4:36.)
- How are you going to use your free will? What will your decision be?

❖ **I gave love and received hate.**

- Jesus expanded on Isaiah's parable, showing the behavior of those who were to care for his vineyard (Mt. 21:33-41.)
- Not only did they refuse to give the Lord what was rightfully His, but they mistreated—and even killed—His messengers, the prophets (Mt. 21:34-35.) After a second unsuccessful attempt, the Lord sends His own Son, Jesus Christ (Mt. 21:36-37.)
- God has repeatedly cried out for us to return to Him (Ezek. 33:11.) He has given us His most precious gift, His own Son (John 3:16.) What more could He have done?
- The cross demonstrates that God did everything possible to mitigate and eliminate evil, but without destroying the context necessary for genuine love to flourish.

C The vindication of God's character:

❖ **Judging God.**

- God has chosen to make His judgment a transparent process. Therefore, in a sense, He submits Himself to the judgment of His creatures. He wants everyone to trust in His judgment. In order for evil to be eradicated and not rise again, everyone must trust in the perfect character of the Judge (Nahum 1:9 NIV.)
 - (1) First phase: The Investigative Judgment (Dan. 7:9-10.) Before the angels and the unfallen worlds, God shows all the evidence necessary to save or condemn sinners.
 - (2) Second phase: The millennial judgment (Rev. 20:4.) The redeemed review the evidence used in the Investigative Judgment.
 - (3) Third phase: The Final Judgment (Rev. 20:11-12.) The wicked know the evidence that condemns them.
 - (4) Final phase: All recognize divine justice (Is. 45:23.) "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10.)