

Crisis¹ in Heaven



SABBATH—DECEMBER 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 14:4, 12–15; Ezekiel 28:2, 12–19; John 12:31; Revelation 12:7–16; Luke 10:1–21.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ ” (Revelation 7:10, NKJV).

“THE LAW OF LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. If all people obeyed its principles [important rules] of righteousness [right living], they would be happy. God wants all His people to serve Him lovingly out of an appreciation of His character [thoughts; feelings; actions]. God takes no pleasure in a forced obedience. To all people He gives freedom of will. In that way they may give Him willing and voluntary service.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Forefathers and Leaders] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 34.

If all people would accept the truth that they owed God their loyalty and love, there would be perfect peace throughout the universe. But it took only one to spoil everything. Lucifer² thought that he could do a better job than God did. He wanted God's position and the glory (praise) and honor that went with it.

Satan's desire for power led to a “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7). He tricked Adam and Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Eden. That brought the war to earth. And we have been living with the results of that war ever since. The plan of salvation is God's way of dealing with the rebellion (war against God) and bringing back the order and peace that Satan has taken away.

DEFINITIONS

1. crisis—a time of great trouble and hardship.

2. Lucifer—Satan's name before he rebelled (turned) against God in heaven.

THE FALL IN HEAVEN (Isaiah 14:4, 12–15)

Read Isaiah 14:4, 12–15. What descriptions of the king of Babylon show that Isaiah is speaking of someone much greater than just a human ruler?

No earthly king has ever fallen from heaven. So this means that verses 12–15 are talking about someone bigger than the king, even of Babylon. What is more, the verses describe an individual (person) going to heaven—an individual who has a job that is above the angels, an individual in charge of a group of other individuals on the mountain in the far north. These are all really descriptions of the power that gods were believed to have had in the Near East in Bible times. Satan’s ambitions are really shown in this kind of prophecy (special message from God to His people).

Jesus uses the same method of comparison³ in His description of how Jerusalem will be destroyed (Matthew 24). The disciples ask about the destruction of the temple. But, in His reply, Jesus describes both the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 and the end of the world. In the same way, Isaiah describes an earthly king but really uses that description to explain something much bigger than just a human king.

Read Ezekiel 28:2, 12–19. How is Satan described here?

Ezekiel 28:13 describes a perfect being (person) in “the Garden of God” (NKJV). He is decorated with valuable stones. These stones later are found on the breastplate of the high priest. And this perfect being is described as one who served as a covering cherub (angel) at the throne of God. But the perfect being became evil because he was proud of his “beauty.”

By using human models, these examples let us better understand heavenly beings. Such examples help to explain something deeper that might be hard for us to understand. What happens in heaven may be difficult for us on earth to understand. But we are all able to understand the results of the negative and selfish ambitions of earthly rulers. Isaiah and Ezekiel give us a better understanding of how God’s beautiful and perfect order was spoiled by destructive ambition.

Lucifer, a perfect being, created by a perfect God, in a perfect place, messed himself up because of pride. What should that tell us sinners about how deadly pride is when we let it control us?



But the perfect being became evil because he was proud of his beauty.

DEFINITIONS

3. comparison—the act of showing how two or more things are the same or different.

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD (John 12:31)

Read John 12:31; John 14:30; and John 16:11. Why does Jesus call Satan the prince of this world?

When God first created Adam and Eve, He put them in the Garden of Eden. He let them manage the Garden (Genesis 2:8, 15). They cared for all living things in the waters, in the skies, and upon the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). When Adam named all the animals, he showed his stewardship (management) over them. Usually, the one with authority over something can give it a name. So, by naming all the creatures, Adam was clearly showing his authority as the ruler of the world.

When Adam lost that authority, Satan very quickly took over. But humankind was rescued by Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. Then saved people will be given Adam and Eve's honor of reigning with God for the rest of eternity as "kings and priests" (Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10).

The opening chapters of the book of Job reveal to us just how great Adam's loss was. When we read about the throne room of the universe, we also can understand how much we humans have been under the control of nature since the Fall.



By naming the creatures, Adam showed his authority as the ruler of this world.

Read Job 1:6, 7 and Job 2:1, 2. Why does Satan introduce himself at the meeting place of the sons of God as the one walking to and fro on the earth?

"Walking to and fro" or "walking back and forth" is not just the act of a visitor. In the Bible, it is a sign of ownership. When God gave the land to Abraham, He told him to walk its length and width (Genesis 13:17). He said the same to Moses and Joshua (Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:3). Satan is, in this way, boasting that he is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The introduction of Satan in the first two chapters of Job is a lot like what happens in Genesis 3. Satan starts trouble and then leaves the humans to suffer after he has finished his work.

What proof can we find of Satan's work in this world? How can you receive hope from the promise that one day this whole mess will be over?

WAR IN HEAVEN (Revelation 12:7–16)

We have no idea what war in heaven means. We do not know what kind of physical battles were fought besides the fact that Satan and his angels were kicked out of heaven. The fact is, the Bible does not say anything about the destruction caused by this war in heaven. But it focuses on the spiritual results here on earth.

Read Revelation 12:7–16. What does it tell us about the great controversy (war) as it happened in heaven and then on earth?

Note the positive way that John talks about the continuing war between the “accuser [Satan] of our brethren” and the overcomers.⁴ John connects it with salvation and the coming of the kingdom of God (Revelation 12:10, 11). This positive theme is continued throughout the chapter and is an important part of the great controversy.

It is important that we study the main idea of chapter 12. Three great threats are described there.

For example, a dragon (Satan; Revelation 12:3, 9) prepares to eat a baby (Jesus) about to be born. What baby could survive that? But He does and is caught up to the throne of God.

The dragon then tries to attack the woman (a symbol of the people of God; read Revelation 12:13). How much can a woman who has just given birth defend herself against a dragon? But she also escapes through a miracle (Revelation 12:14).

The dragon tries to destroy God’s chosen people a third time. This time the dragon causes a flood to rush out after the woman (Revelation 12:15). A woman against a flood? But, again, God steps in and rescues her (Revelation 12:16).

The dragon now turns his attention to the remnant⁵ of the woman’s seed (followers). The dragon is very angry and wars against the woman’s followers. History clearly teaches how God’s people have been hunted, put down, and attacked over the years. Too often we think that the struggle is almost impossible. We, too, wonder how the faithful will survive. But we forget that the story does not end there. It continues in Revelation 14, where we find the faithful standing before God’s throne. So, they, too, have been rescued.

At times when you feel pressured by forces greater than yourself, how can you learn to take courage in the Lord, who is greater than all things?



The great red dragon (Satan) prepares to eat a baby (Jesus) about to be born, but the baby escapes.

DEFINITIONS

4. overcomers—people who have victory over sin.
5. remnant—a small group of people that is separated from a larger group of people.

SATAN DRIVEN OUT (Luke 10:1–21)

As we have studied, the war in heaven was not limited to heaven only. It hit the earth too. For some time it appears that Satan (the “accuser of our brethren,” Revelation 12:10) was still able to stand before God’s throne and make charges against God’s people. Job was one Bible leader who suffered this insult.

Read Luke 10:1–21. What was the meaning of Christ’s words about Satan here?

Before Jesus sent out the 70, He told them not to take any extra clothing or money (Luke 10:4) and to ask God’s blessing on their hosts (Luke 10:5). He warned that they were like lambs walking among wolves (Luke 10:3). This concern is found again in Revelation 12, where the dragon tries to make war with God’s people.

On their happy return (Luke 10:17), the disciples reported that the demons were under their power. This report must have brought great joy to Jesus (Luke 10:21). During that time Jesus makes His statement about Satan falling like lightning from heaven. He warns the disciples that their joy must not be based on their success over demonic (from Satan) forces but rather on having their names written in heaven (Luke 10:20). This reminder places human salvation firmly where it belongs—in the hands of our Savior.

Jesus’ followers are given the honor of witnessing about the salvation Jesus has won. This part in Luke 10:17–20 seems to connect the work of witnessing that Jesus entrusts to His people with power over Satan in this great controversy. The work of witnessing lessens the power that Satan has over the people of this world and gives humans opportunity to restart their work of making God’s kingdom larger on earth.

Power over Satan is possible only because of the victory Jesus won at the cross. Paul says that Jesus “took away the weapons of the powers and authorities” and had victory over them (Colossians 2:15, NIV). In Him, God’s people are successful. Satan’s death is sure to come. “ ‘Now the prince of this world will be thrown out’ ” (John 12:31, NIV). He will never bother God’s people again. We can surely rejoice that the battle is the Lord’s!

“Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” Think deeply about these words. What are they saying? Why is that such a great reason to rejoice?



Christ warned His followers that they were like lambs walking among wolves.

THE CONTINUING BATTLE (John 16:33)

A freshly killed poisonous snake can still “shoot” its poison in you if you pick it up. In the same way, Satan’s bite is still deadly. He may have lost at Calvary, but the danger is not over yet.

Read John 16:33. How did Jesus warn His disciples of the continuing struggle against evil?

Jesus was clear that His followers would not have an easy time. Instead Jesus said that they should pay close attention to the victory that they would have in Him. Reflecting on this guarantee, Paul encouraged the believers in Rome that God would crush Satan under their feet (Romans 16:20). And John told the last-day church the same thing. Their victory was safe through the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11).

Read Hebrews 12:1, 2. Who are the “witnesses”? How do they encourage us? Read Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 quickly lists the lives of some of the famous heroes of faith. Abel offers a perfect sacrifice, and he is not forgotten even after his death. Enoch remains so close to God that he is taken straight to heaven to be with Him. Noah warns of unseen events and offers salvation to a world drowned in sin. Abraham leaves a great civilization to go to a land of promise. Sarah gives birth to a promised son even though she is too old to have a child. Moses chooses to suffer with his people rather than to live in a king’s palace. And Rahab witnesses to God’s greatness (Joshua 2:9–11). These people are part of the group of a great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews 12:1. They are not inactive witnesses, like spectators watching a game. Instead, they actively witness to us that God is faithful and supported them in whatever struggles they faced. We are not alone in this great battle.

Look at some of those named in Hebrews 11. Who were they? What were they like? What encouragement can you receive from the fact that they were not without fault nor weakness? Instead, they were people with fears and weaknesses, just the same as we all are.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: We do not know why sin arose in Lucifer. Ellen G. White tells us that “little by little Lucifer’s desire for self-glory [praise and honor and worship] became greater and greater.”—Adapted from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 35. The fact that this happened to a perfect being (angel; person) teaches us how powerful and important free will and free choice are as part of God’s government. All of the beings God created were good. They were moral (righteous; holy) beings. Nothing in them leaned toward evil. How, then, did sin arise in Lucifer? The answer is that there is no answer. There is no excuse for sin. If an excuse for it could be found, then God could be held responsible for it. As humans we understand the relationship between cause and effect. But sin does not have a cause. There is simply no reason for it. It is unreasonable and makes no sense. Lucifer did not have good reasons for his actions. Somehow Lucifer abused free will and made himself evil. From being the “light bearer,” he became Satan, “the enemy.” There is a lot we do not understand, but we should understand enough to know just how careful we need to be with the important gift of free will and free choice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jealousy played a large part in Satan’s rebellion against God. In your own experience, what kind of damage has jealousy caused? How can we learn to fight against this very common emotion?
- ② Think more deeply about the wonderful gifts of free will and free choice. How do we use these gifts every day? Look at some of the terrible results of the wrong use of these gifts. How can we learn to use them correctly?
- ③ Think about the role (work) of the law in connection with free will and free choice. The fact that God has a law should tell us that we have free will. After all, what is the purpose of the law if you do not have moral creatures who can choose to follow it? Think more deeply about what the law is and what it says about human freedom.
- ④ Many people, especially those in certain parts of the world, refuse to accept the idea that the devil is real. How is such a view so different from even the most basic understanding of the Bible?