

War in Heaven



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 John 4:8, 16; 1 John 4:7–16; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Isaiah 14:12–15; Revelation 12.

MEMORY VERSE: “King of Babylon, you thought you were the bright morning star. But now you have fallen from heaven! You once [in the past] brought down nations. But now you have been thrown down to the earth!” (Isaiah 14:12, NlrV).



The Bible tells us a different story about how evil started.

MANY THINKERS try to explain how evil started. Some thinkers say that evil was always part of life from the beginning. These thinkers believe we really can't know good without knowing evil. Other people believe that God made everything perfect. But then evil happened. During Bible times, Greeks believed evil started when a young woman named Pandora opened a locked box. The box was filled with all the bad things on earth. (But this story doesn't explain how the evils got in the box.)

The Bible tells us a different story about how evil started. The Bible tells us that God is loving and all-powerful (1 Chronicles 29:10, 11). God also is perfect (Matthew 5:48). So, everything God made was perfect, too (Deuteronomy 32:4). How, then, did evil and sin start on a perfect earth? Genesis 3 tells us that Adam and Eve's sin caused evil and death.

But before Adam and Eve sinned, evil already happened in the heart of Lucifer in heaven. Then Lucifer used the snake to lie to Eve (Genesis 3:1–5). So, if we want to know how evil started, we need to look at what happened before Adam and Eve sinned.

NATURE SHOWS GOD’S LOVE (1 John 4:8, 16)

God made everything on this earth beautiful and perfect. But then Satan made the earth ugly with sin.

Read 1 John 4:8, 16. These verses teach us that “God is love” (ERV). How does this Bible truth help us to understand who God is and how He works?

“God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16, ERV). This Bible truth helps us to understand three important ideas. First, love must be shared. We see this important idea in the Godhead. The Godhead is made of One God who is Three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Three Persons in the Godhead share Their love and power with each other. God also shares His love with the human family. Second, everything that God does shows His love. We see God’s love in the things that He made, His saving acts, and His punishments. That is why Ellen G. White writes, “God’s punishments show us His love as much as His mercy does. God’s work as Judge is important to His government. His punishment against sin and evil comes from His love.” —*The Desire of Ages*, page 762, adapted. God’s love does not change. Third, God can’t be blamed for sin. Everything that God does shows His love. Because God is love, sin did not start with God.

But did God really need to make life on earth and on other planets? No. God chose to make life because He wanted to. God made everything to show His love. He made humans because He wanted a family. God wanted to share His love with His human children. God also made humans free to love Him back and to love other people, too. (Read also Mark 12:30, 31.)

Spend some time in nature. Look at the plants and animals around you. Yes, sin destroyed much of the beautiful things in nature that God made. At the same time, how does nature continue to show you God’s love? What do the beautiful things we see in nature teach us about hope?



God made everything to show His love.

LOVE AND THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE (1 John 4:7–16)



We show God we are thankful for His love when we love each other.

Read 1 John 4:7–16. What do these verses teach us about our freedom to choose? Why is this freedom so important to us when we love people and accept their love?

Silk flowers can be beautiful. But they don't have any smell and don't bloom the same as real flowers. Robots can do many tasks. But they are not alive, and they have no feelings. Without life or freedom of choice, we cannot give, grow, or share love. So, God made angels (including Lucifer) and humans free to make their own choices. This freedom includes our being able to make the wrong choice.

As we read in yesterday's study, John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:7–16, ERV). Because God is love, He gives us everything we need to grow in love and in wisdom. God showed His love to us by sending His own Son to die for our sins. We show God we are thankful for His love when we love each other. Our love for each other comes from God. This love is the best and strongest proof that God lives in our hearts and that we live in Him. So, we must be careful with our freedom. We can easily make bad choices the same as Lucifer. He chose to fight a war against God in heaven.

Some people may say, "Yes, I know that freedom of choice is important. But if God knew that Lucifer was going to sin, why did God make Lucifer?" Is sin God's fault because He made Lucifer?

This question is very hard to answer. Other questions need to be answered first, including, "What does the word 'responsible' mean?" Also, "What is sin, and when did it start?" No one can fully explain these mysteries. So, we must be careful not to try to guess the answers.

God never wanted sin to be part of our lives. God only **allowed** sin to happen. At the cross, God accepted the punishment for our sin because He wanted to end sin forever. When we think about evil, we always must remember that God Himself accepted our punishment for sin and evil (read Romans 5:6–11). God suffered from sin and evil worse than we suffered.

God gave us the freedom to choose. This gift can change our lives in powerful ways. So, we must make wise choices. What important decisions are you ready to make? How much will your choices "cost" you and other people?

SIN IS A MYSTERY (Ezekiel 28:12–19)

Read Ezekiel 28:12–19. What do these verses teach us about how sin started? Why is the start of sin a mystery?

Ezekiel wrote most of his book in word pictures and symbols. These symbols show us what will happen in the end times. Ezekiel also wrote about persons, animals, or objects in his day to show us deeper Bible truth. In Ezekiel 28:1–10, we read about the king of Tyre. In Ezekiel’s day, Tyre was a rich city by the Mediterranean Sea. God says that the king of Tyre is a powerful leader. The king brags that he sits on the throne of the gods “ ‘with the seas around me’ ” (Ezekiel 28:2, NLV; also read Ezekiel 28:8). But God says that the king of Tyre only is a man.

In Ezekiel 28:12–19, the king of Tyre becomes a word picture for Lucifer: “ ‘You were in Eden, the garden of God’ ” (Ezekiel 28:13, ERV). “ ‘You were one of the chosen Cherubs [angels with four wings] who spread your wings over my [God’s] throne. I put you on the holy mountain of God’ ” (Ezekiel 28:14, ERV).

Next, we read one of the most important things that the Lord says about Lucifer: “ ‘You were good and honest when I created [made] you, but then you became evil’ ” (Ezekiel 28:15, ERV). Do you see that God made Lucifer perfect? But God also made Lucifer free. So Lucifer can choose to do evil.

Lucifer chose to sin. He sinned because he believed he was a very important person. Lucifer did not thank God for making him and honoring him above all the angels. Lucifer wanted more praise and honor. How did this happen in the heart of a perfect angel who lived in a perfect place? The answer to this question is a mystery.

“We can’t explain sin. Sin is a mystery. There was no reason for sin. If we try to explain sin, we give a reason for it. That is the same thing as excusing it. Sin happened in a perfect place, but there was no excuse for sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Truth About Angels*, page 30, adapted.

Paul says, “Give thanks no matter what happens” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NIV). How can these words encourage us during hard times when we feel pity for ourselves?



“ ‘You were good and honest when I created [made] you, but then you became evil’ ” (Ezekiel 28:15, ERV).

THE DANGER OF PRIDE (Isaiah 14:12–15)

Several times in the Bible we see that God tells His people to leave Babylon for the Promised Land.

The book of Revelation shows us two very different cities: Jerusalem and Babylon. Each city is a symbol for spiritual truth. The New Jerusalem is a symbol for God's kingdom. Babylon is a symbol for Satan's kingdom. Satan's kingdom pretends to be the same as God's kingdom. Satan's kingdom tries to remove God and His kingdom from men's hearts. Several times in the Bible we see that God tells His people to leave Babylon for the Promised Land.

We see this call from God in the story about Abram. God asks Abram to move from Ur to the land of Canaan (Genesis 11:31–Genesis 12:9). Ur is a city in the land of Babylon in Abram's day. Much later, after many long years, the Jews leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2). In the book of Revelation, God calls His people out of end-time Babylon (Revelation 18:4). God's people will live with Him on Mount Zion and in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 14:1; Revelation 21:1–3, 10).

What happened in heaven and on earth because of Lucifer's pride? For the answer, read Isaiah 14:12–15.

In the Bible, the city of Babylon is a symbol of an evil religious power. This power fights against God and His kingdom. The king of Babylon is a word picture for pride. God told King Nebuchadnezzar that Babylon only was the gold head on the statue that the king saw in his dream. The statue showed the different kingdoms on the earth after Babylon (Daniel 2:37–43). But King Nebuchadnezzar did not pay attention to God. The king made a gold statue to show everyone that his kingdom will continue forever. Then the king commanded everyone to worship the statue (Daniel 3). As we saw with the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12–19), the king of Babylon also is a word picture for Lucifer.

Isaiah 14:3–11 says that the king of Babylon lost his kingdom because of his pride. Then, Isaiah 14:12–15 tells us that pride also caused Lucifer's fall in heaven. The Bible explains that Lucifer planned to make himself king of all the angels. Lucifer wanted to be the same as God (Isaiah 14:14). Lucifer told lies about God to other angels. Lucifer said that God was evil. But really, the evil was in Lucifer's heart. This story shows us how evil first started.

Why is it easy to brag about ourselves? How does the Cross help us to empty our hearts of all pride?

**LUCIFER CONTINUES HIS WAR ON EARTH
(Revelation 12)**

Read Revelation 12. What does this chapter teach about the war that came to earth from heaven?

God did not throw Lucifer out of heaven because he disagreed with God. God threw him out because Lucifer started a war. Revelation 12 tells us that Lucifer and his angels fought against Jesus and His angels. Lucifer is named “a giant red dragon” (Revelation 12:3, ERV). “This giant dragon is that old snake, the one called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world into the wrong way” (Revelation 12:9, ERV). This same dragon “says bad things about our brothers to God day and night” (Revelation 12:10, WE). In Revelation 12:7, Jesus is named Michael, which means “who is the same as God?”

Some people believe that “Michael” only is an angel. That is because Jude 1:9 says that Michael is the leader of the angels. But the book of Daniel also talks about Michael. Each end-time dream in Daniel ends with Jesus and His everlasting kingdom. As we see, Jesus’ kingdom is shown by different symbols:

The rock that no human hands cut	Daniel 2:34, NlrV
“A Son of Man”	Daniel 7:13, NLV
“The commander of the LORD’s army”	Daniel 8:11, NlrV
Michael, the prince	Daniel 12:1, NlrV

In the Old Testament, we see that the Angel of the Lord is God (Exodus 3:1–6; Acts 7:30–33). So, in the same way, Michael must be the same Person. That Person is Jesus.

Revelation 12 shows us three things about the war between Lucifer and God. (1) The war started in heaven with Lucifer and his angels. (2) Jesus won a mighty battle in this war at the cross. And (3) Satan continues to fight against God’s end-time people. “God did not make Lucifer leave his job right away. . . . Again and again, God offered to pardon Lucifer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 495, 496, adapted.

In the end, Satan and his angels “did not win the fight and no longer were they allowed to stay in heaven” (Revelation 12:8, WE; read Luke 10:18). The problem now, of course, is that Satan and his angels came to the earth.

The war that Lucifer started in heaven continues on earth. How do you see the war continuing today? How can we win?



Satan and his angels “did not win the fight and no longer were they allowed to stay in heaven” (Revelation 12:8, WE).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Why was Sin Permitted?” pages 33–43, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Origin of Evil,” pages 492–504, in *The Great Controversy*.

“There was no chance or hope for God to save Satan and his angels. Satan and his angels enjoyed the glory of heaven in the past. They saw God’s royal beauty. But they fought against God anyway. There was nothing else God could show them or do to help them to change. Satan and his angels fought against God while they were with Him in heaven. So, God could not help them anymore. Satan and his angels were filled with doubt. They were jealous. They complained against God. God didn’t force Satan and his angels to change or to remove doubt from their jealous hearts. But Satan and his angels must be punished. Their punishment must show how deeply they sinned against God and everything they left in heaven.”
—Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*, page 21, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Is God responsible for sin on this earth? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 The Cross shows us how God solves the sin problem. Why is the Cross important to our understanding about how evil started?
- 3 Satan has caused 6,000 years of sin and suffering on this earth. For sure, Satan now should fully know that his fight against God has caused bad things to happen. Why then does Satan continue his war against God?
- 4 In Matthew 5:43–48, Jesus talks about God’s love for all humans. God’s love for us never fails. God’s love is the model for how we should love other people. How can you show God’s love to your family and to church members?
- 5 Peter warns us about Satan: “Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy, and he goes around like [the same as] a roaring lion looking for someone to attack and eat” (1 Peter 5:8, ERV). Next, read also Ephesians 6:10–20. How can we protect ourselves from the devil’s evil tricks and lies?



The Cross shows us how God solves the sin problem.

NO MORE CHAINS

A Seventh-day Adventist pastor visited a small village in the country of Laos. The pastor arrived with a small team of church workers. Then, someone started screaming. The screams were coming from a house in the village. The pastor ran to the house to help. He was surprised to see a 16-year-old boy chained to the floor of his family home. “What happened to your son?” the pastor asked the parents of the boy. “Why is he locked in chains?”

The parents looked sad. “Our son Aer has been sick for many years,” his father said. “He is fine for several hours. But then he goes crazy several times a day,” his mother explained.

Aer’s parents spent all their money on doctors and medicine. Nothing worked. Aer’s problem grew worse. His parents locked Aer in chains all the time to stop him from hurting himself and other people. Aer was chained to the wood floor for six months.

The pastor told Aer and his parents about Jesus and His saving love. “If Jesus wants to, He can heal Aer,” the pastor said.

The pastor asked the parents for permission to pray for their son. Aer’s parents were so happy. They accepted prayers from the pastor. They hoped that God would heal their son.

A few days later, the pastor and his team visited Aer again and prayed for him. The pastor invited the family to worship in the Adventist church near them in another village.

The next Sabbath, the parents arrived at church with Aer. Aer’s hands were in chains. Each church member prayed for Aer. Then the pastor also asked the boy’s father to pray for him. Everyone in the church bowed his or her head while Aer’s father prayed to Jesus and asked Him to heal his son. After that day, Aer was healed. His behavior was not dangerous anymore. Neighbors were surprised. They asked Aer’s parents many questions.

“Is this the same Aer who was sick for many years and was locked in chains?” one person asked.

“Why is he OK now?” asked another person. “Who healed him?”

Aer’s parent explained that the Christian God healed their boy. After Jesus healed Aer, Aer’s parents accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. Many other families in the village accepted Jesus, too. Those families were part of a group of 122 people who got baptized at the church in April 2021.

“We praise God for doing so many miracles in this village. Many people gave their lives to Jesus,” said the Lao pastor who shared this story with Adventist Mission. Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that support God’s work in Laos and in other places on the earth.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“Why is he locked in chains?”

