

# Paradise Lost



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:1-4:26.*

**Memory Text:** “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (*Genesis 3:15*).

In the 1600s, British writer John Milton wrote his famous poem, *Paradise Lost*, about the fall of our parents in Eden. Using a powerful imagination, Milton said that he sought, with this poem, to “justify the ways of God to man.” In it, Milton painstakingly described not only the garden bliss of Eden (“flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose”) but Satan’s ruse to bring Adam and Eve’s demise, all part of his bitter struggle against God (“Better to reign in hell,” Satan says, “than serve in heaven”).

Of course, we know what happened; after the serpent’s long beguiling speech to Eve, “her rash hand in the evil hour/Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate.” And the rest, as they say, is history.

Fortunately, we know not only the past but the future and God’s promise of Redemption. According to Milton’s poem, “the Son of God freely offers himself a ransom for man,” which is what the Bible says, as well (*1 Tim. 2:5, 6*), and with that offer comes the hope of eternal life for all who accept it.

This week we look not at Milton’s poem but at the original account that inspired it, the Fall as revealed in Genesis, and from it learn not only about the disaster of the Fall but the hope of Redemption.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 28.*

## The Serpent

Genesis 3:1 introduces a new and, considering what came before, unexpected element—the serpent. Though the things that “creepeth upon the earth” (*Gen. 1:25*) were not specifically named, a serpent surely could have been among them. It probably wasn’t even extraordinary that the serpent appeared in the Garden. However, that it was talking and that it enticed Eve toward evil, that’s a new element not explained by anything in the previous two chapters, in which everything created was “very good” (*vs. 31*).

**How** do these texts, taken together, help us understand more about that serpent, who he really was and why he appeared? *Job 1:6-11, Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:14-17, Mark 1:13, Luke 10:18, John 8:44, 2 Cor. 2:11, 11:3, 1 John 3:8, Rev. 12:9, 20:2.*

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If someone were to have had only the first chapters of Genesis, they would have no understanding of who this serpent was and how he appeared in God’s perfect creation. How could he speak? Why did he seek to deceive Adam and Eve? How did he get there?

What this shows is how important it is for us to use the whole Bible in order to understand truth. The appearance of the deceiving serpent implies a whole other scenario not revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis. (It does hint at it though. Where?) To understand better what was going on, people needed more revelation. In time, God provided it.

Also, one of the more unfortunate consequences of living in the modern age has been the tendency to downplay the reality of Satan, to make him simply a symbol for evil. It’s considered foolish to actually believe in a literal, personal supernatural evil being. Popular culture has in many minds made him into nothing but another Hollywood figure, along with Batman, Spiderman, and Superman. Of course, that’s always been Satan’s tactic, to hide himself. In the Garden, he hid behind the serpent; today, he has more sophisticated methods. However he does it, the results are the same: People are deceived, at the peril of their eternal lives.

**Do you ever find yourself doubting Satan’s existence? If so, how can you be protected against this deception?**

## The Fall *(Gen 3:1-6)*

**How** clear had been God's command to Adam? How did the tempter seek to confuse the issue with his question and obscure the exact meaning of God's stipulation? *Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1.*

**According** to Eve, what additional command, not recorded in Genesis 2:17, did the holy pair understand? *Gen. 3:3.*

**Having** first questioned the divine stipulation, to what did the serpent now resort? *Vs. 4. (Compare John 8:44.)*

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Satan started out by mixing truth and error; once the bait was taken, he resorted to full-fledged error, blatantly contradicting God's explicit command. How often things work like that even today. Someone starts out with a doctrine, a teaching, that contains both truth and error but, later, when taken to its logical conclusion, it winds up as pure error. How crucial that we always be on our guard!

Genesis 3:6 states the reasons Eve ate the fruit anyway. It appealed to her physical (food), aesthetic (pleasant to the eyes), and intellectual (makes one wise) nature—a nature that God had given her. In other words, Satan took the gifts that God gave Eve and used them against her. If this worked so well with an unfallen being in Paradise, how much more so with fallen creatures?

**What** do these verses say to us in the context of our fallen natures? *Rom. 13:14; Phil. 3:18, 19; 1 John 2:16.*

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The reality of sin, of temptation, of the lure of the flesh, is an ever-present reality in the lives of all humans. The difference, however, is not to be enslaved to physical, mental, or even intellectual passions.

**Make a list of texts that you could give to a Christian who feels weighed down and discouraged over his or her spiritual or moral state. What do they say, and what hope is found in them?**

## **The Fallen** (*Gen. 3:7-24*)

In the fulfillment of the serpent's promise, the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, but their dream of enlightenment turned into a nightmare. This, the first of countless subsequent satanic schemes, demonstrates that the devil's promises of precious gold are delivered only in the form of tinsel. Deprived of the glory of holiness, burdened by the sense of guilt, their physical nakedness revealed in a consciousness of inner nakedness, the first pair sought to hide from God and to fashion their own covering.

**In your own experience, or what you have seen happen to others, what other “wonderful promises” have turned into hellish nightmares? What principles can we learn from these sad accounts?** *See also Judges 17:6, Prov. 14:12, Mark 4:19, 1 Tim. 6:10.*

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Look at the immediate results of the Fall. First, alienation arose between Adam and Eve (*Gen. 3:7*); then between them and God (*vs. 8*); nature itself suddenly turned more hostile (*vss. 16-18*); the relationship between Adam and Eve changed even more so (*vs. 16*); there was the reality of death (*vs. 19*); there was a change in how humanity related to toil (*vs. 19*); and Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden (*vss. 23, 24*). If only they could have seen in advance the consequences of their actions!

What's fascinating, too, is that the serpent told Eve that they would be like gods, knowing good and evil. He was right (*see vs. 22*). It obviously wasn't in God's will for humans to know evil; He wanted to keep them innocent and dependent upon Him, like children (*see Deut. 1:39*). God had given them only good (*tov*); everything that He created was only “good” (*tov*). The Creation in Genesis 1, which was “good” with no evil, taken together with Genesis 3:22, reaffirms the idea that God wanted only good, not evil, for humanity.

**How can you preserve or (if need be) regain some innocence? What things are you doing that are, perhaps, making that goal more difficult? What changes do you need to make?**

## Hope for the Fallen

After the Lord came down to the Garden and all the participants were together, He issued His judgments upon them all.

**Read** Genesis 3:14-19. **What was pronounced upon them? What were the immediate, as well as the long-term, consequences?**

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Even before Adam and Eve heard about toil, pain, submission, thorns, and the judgment upon them for their transgression, God granted them words of hope and promise. Verse 15 not only offers the first glimpse of the gospel but also presents a compressed history of the conflicts between the family of the serpent and the descendants of the woman. The genealogies of Genesis develop the lines of those who chose “sonship,” either with the devil or with God. And the rest of Scripture continues to depict the struggles between God’s people and their enemies. The conflict announced in verse 15 points past the immediate actors in the drama and toward the entire conflict between good and evil as it was to be played out on the earth, a conflict that we ourselves are part of right now.

**Compare** Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 12:17 (*see also Rev. 12:9, 20:2*). **What common elements are found in both texts? How do these verses show how the principles of the conflict first expressed in Eden will be manifested at the end of time?**

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Despite the blatant transgression on the part of Adam and Eve, and despite their sorry attempts to justify their actions, the Lord offered them hope that although there would be enmity between them and the serpent, the serpent’s head would be crushed; that is, it would be destroyed. Here we see the first promise of the gospel, of what Jesus would do for fallen humanity.

**Keeping in mind today’s lesson, read Hebrews 2:14. What hope does this text offer to you amid the struggles you face in your part in the great controversy between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent?**

## **After the Fall** *(Genesis 4)*

Genesis 4 very quickly gets into the story of Cain and Abel. Though many years passed since the Fall, the Bible quickly gets into some of its catastrophic results. The enmity predicted in Genesis 3:15 and hinted at in Cain's jealousy was manifested in full force in the murder of Abel. This murder demonstrated that Cain was a follower of Satan (see *John 8:44*).

### **Why** did God accept Abel's sacrifice but reject his brother's offerings?

*Gen. 4:3-7. (Compare with Lev. 17:11, Heb. 9:22. See also Heb. 11:4.)*

Notice in Genesis 4:6 and 7 how God dealt with Cain. God tells Cain to do well, to obey, and thus he shall "be accepted." He says this, though, in the context of sacrifice, which is needed because no matter how well we do, it's still not good enough to save us. We see here, then, a balance between the law and grace and faith and works. Cain, apparently, understood neither, as reflected in the sacrifice he offered, as well as in his refusal to "do well" (see *1 John 3:12*).

### **How** does Romans 5:17–6:6 reflect the balance between faith and works as in the story of Cain and Abel?

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Cain discovered that people cannot hide anything from God (*Gen. 4:9, 10*) and that the divine Sovereign will right all wrongs. As punishment for his callous sin, the earth, which had been forced to drink innocent blood, would withhold its strength from the murderer (*vss. 11, 12*).

Meanwhile, verses 17 through 24 disclose a picture of rapid moral decline, as well as technical and cultural advances. Polygamy and murder characterize the family of Cain. Yet, the Bible writer does not attribute only evil to the descendants of Cain; their achievements are recognized. He notes that artisans, craftsmen, pastoralists, and agriculturalists descended from Cain.

The chapter concludes with a reference to Seth, who replaced Abel. Seth became the ancestor of the line of pre-Flood patriarchs who bridged the period between Adam and Noah.

**Have you ever been envious? Isn't it a wretched feeling? In what ways did that envy have the potential to turn into something even worse? Why is falling before the Cross your only hope in getting victory over this emotional scourge?**

**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52–62, 71–81; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, comments on Genesis 3 and 4.

“Satan represented to the holy pair that they would be gainers by breaking the law of God. Do we not today hear similar reasoning? Many talk of the narrowness of those who obey God’s commandments, while they themselves claim to have broader ideas and to enjoy greater liberty. What is this but an echo of the voice from Eden, ‘In the day ye eat thereof’—transgress the divine requirement—‘ye shall be as gods’?”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 55.

“The ‘seed’ is put in the singular, indicating, not that a multitude of descendants of the woman jointly shall be engaged in crushing the serpent’s head, but rather that a single individual will accomplish this. These observations clearly show that in this pronouncement is compressed the record of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, a battle that began in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), was continued on earth, where Christ again defeated him (Heb. 2:14), and will terminate finally with Satan’s destruction at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:10). Christ did not emerge from this battle unscathed. The nail marks in His hands and feet and the scar in His side will be eternal reminders of the fierce strife in which the serpent bruised the woman’s seed (John 20:25; Zech. 13:6; EW 53).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 233.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ A lot of unanswered questions remain regarding the Genesis account of the Fall. When you meet God face to face, what are some of the questions you might ask regarding this account? Meanwhile, why is it so important to trust God now despite having many unanswered questions? *See also 1 Cor. 4:5, 13:12.*
- ❷ Discuss reasons we as Adventists believe that Satan is a real being of incredible deceptive power. Why is it important for us to hold to this belief?
- ❸ Sing together, as a class, a hymn or song that acknowledges the victory and promises we have in Jesus.

# The Invitation

by CHARLOTTE ISHKANIAN

Show-In saw her neighbor crying as she walked past her home in Taipei, Taiwan. “Huey, what is wrong?” Show-In asked. Huey sat with her religious holy book on her lap and a look of despair on her face. Trying to cheer her, Show-In asked Huey what she thought of the holy book she was reading.

Huey told Show-In that she was worried about her children. “I know that God exists—somewhere,” Huey said, “and I am grateful for everything—even a glass of water.” Show-In encouraged Huey’s faith in God and invited her to come to church with her on Sabbath. Huey smiled and nodded. She was eager to learn the truth about God, no matter where she found that truth.

On Sabbath Show-In took her neighbor to church. That afternoon after Huey returned home, she slept. She dreamed about God and was surprised that she was not afraid of Him. She decided to continue attending Show-In’s church. Huey could walk there by herself whenever there was a meeting.

One day when Huey returned home, her eyes fell on the idol sitting on the shelf. She used to burn incense to the idol every day then bow before it, telling her wishes and her problems. She would study the holy book, searching for peace. But peace did not come until she accepted Show-In’s invitation to worship in her church.

One night she dreamed that God wanted her to remove the idols from her home. Huey gathered her idol, her incense, and her holy book, and took them to a neighbor. “I don’t want these anymore,” she said. “You may have them.”

The next day Huey invited Show-In and two friends from the church to visit her home. When they arrived, she showed them the empty shelf and eagerly told them what she had done. “You did this alone?” Show-In asked in amazement. “That takes great courage.” Huey smiled. She had done it alone.

The devil has not left her entirely unmolested, but Huey’s trust in God has strengthened her against the devil’s attacks.

Huey is often the first person to arrive at church when there is a meeting. She has joined the church by baptism and finds her joy in following Jesus and being a part of His family.

Our mission offerings provide the training to help lay workers such as Show-In lead others to Christ.

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*Show-In and Huey live in Taipei, Taiwan. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.*