

Paradise¹ Lost



SABBATH—OCTOBER 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 3:1–4:26.

MEMORY VERSE: “I [God] will put hatred between you [the serpent] and the woman. Your children and her children will be enemies. Her son [Jesus] will crush your head. And you will crush his heel” (Genesis 3:15, NlrV).

IN THE 1600S, BRITISH WRITER JOHN MILTON WROTE HIS FAMOUS POEM, *PARADISE LOST*. It was about the fall of our parents (Adam and Eve) in Eden. In his poem, Milton used a lot of imagination. Milton carefully described the garden bliss (happiness) of Eden (“flowers of all hue [shades] and without thorn the rose”). He also described Satan’s trick to bring on Adam and Eve’s end. Milton described Satan’s bitter struggle against God. (“Better to reign [rule] in hell,” Satan says, “than serve in heaven.”)

We know what happened. After the serpent’s long speech to Eve, “her rash [careless] hand in the evil hour / Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked [picked], she ate.” And the rest is history.

Fortunately, we also know God’s promise of salvation. Milton’s poem shows that “the Son of God freely offers himself a ransom² for man.” This is what the Bible says, too (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). The Bible also says that salvation comes with the hope of eternal³ life for all who accept salvation.

This week, we look at the Bible verses that inspired Milton. We will study the Fall⁴ as shown in Genesis. We will learn the sad results of the Fall and the hope of salvation.

¹paradise—a beautiful, peaceful place almost the same as heaven or the Garden of Eden.

²ransom—money paid for the return of a kidnaped person. Jesus’ death paid the ransom for our freedom from sin and Satan.

³eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁴the Fall—when Adam and Eve first sinned.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 22**THE SERPENT (Genesis 3:1)**

Genesis 3:1 introduces something new and unexpected—a talking serpent. It tempted Eve toward evil. This temptation is not explained in Genesis 1 and 2. These two chapters said that everything created was “very good.”

How do the following verses help us understand who the serpent was and why he appeared? Job 1:6-11; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-17; Mark 1:13; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9; 20:2.

Suppose someone read only Genesis 1 and 2. Then they would have no understanding of who this serpent was and how he appeared in God’s perfect creation. How could the serpent speak? Why did he try to deceive (fool) Adam and Eve? How did he get there?

This shows how important it is for us to use the whole Bible to understand full truth. The appearance of the deceiving serpent suggests a whole other scene not shown in Genesis 1 and 2. To understand better what was going on, people needed more information. In time, God gave this information.

Also, one of the more unfortunate results of living today has been that people do not believe that Satan is real. They think it is foolish to believe in

Satan. Many people think Satan is just another Hollywood figure, along with Batman, Spider-man, and Superman. Of course, Satan tries to hide who and what He really is. In Eden, Satan hid behind the serpent. Today, he has more modern ways to hide. It does not matter how he hides. The results are the same. People are fooled at the danger of losing their eternal lives.

Do you ever find yourself doubting that Satan is real? How can you protect yourself from Satan’s tricks to hide?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 23**THE FALL (Genesis 3:1-6)**

How clear was God’s command to Adam? How did the tempter (Satan) try to trick Eve? Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:1.

What other command, not written in Genesis 2:17, did the holy pair (Adam and Eve) understand? Genesis 3:3.

Having first questioned God’s command, what did the serpent do next? Genesis 3:4 (compare⁵ John 8:44).

Satan first tried to confuse Eve with a question. Next, he told Eve a lie. He dared to rebel against God’s clear command. How often things work like that today. Someone tries to confuse

⁵compare—show how things are the same.

us with a clever question or teaching. But when we think more about it, we realize it is a lie! How important it is for us to be always on guard!

Genesis 3:6 explains why Eve ate the fruit anyway. It was pleasing to her physical (food), aesthetic (pleasant to the eyes), and intellectual (makes one wise) nature. It was the nature God had given her. Satan used what God had given Eve and used it against her. If this worked so well with an unfallen⁶ person, how much more will it work with sinners?

What do these verses say about our fallen natures? Romans 13:14; Philippians 3:18, 19; 1 John 2:16.



Sin and temptation are always real in the lives of all humans. But Jesus promises us the power to overcome. This power prevents us from being slaves to physical, mental, and intellectual desires.

List some verses you could give to a Christian who feels discouraged over his or her spiritual condition. What hope is found in these verses?

⁶unfallen—having no sin.

⁷principles—basic rules of life upon which other rules and laws are based.

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 24

THE FALLEN (SINNERS) (Genesis 3:7-24)

In time, the serpent's promise became fulfilled. Then the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened. Their dream of new understanding turned into a nightmare. This shows that Satan's promises were lies. Adam and Eve lost the glory of holiness and were filled with guilt. They tried to hide from God. They tried to make their own covering (clothes).

In your experience, what other "wonderful promises" have turned into nightmares? What principles⁷ can we learn from these sad stories? Read Judges 17:6; Proverbs 14:12; Mark 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10.



Loving money more than you love God can bring much evil.

Look at the results of the Fall that happened right away. First, bitter feelings arose between Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7) and then between them and God (Genesis 3:8). Nature itself suddenly turned cruel (Genesis 3:16-18). Eve changed (Genesis 3:16). Death would be real to them (Genesis 3:19). There was a change in how people related to work (Genesis 3:19). And Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden (Genesis 3:23, 24). If only they could have seen the results of their actions!

The serpent told Eve they would be like gods, knowing good and evil. Satan was right (Genesis 3:22). It was not God's will for humans to know evil. God wanted to keep them innocent and dependent upon Him, like children (Deuteronomy 1:39). God had given them only good (*tov*). Everything God created was only "good" (*tov*). The Creation in Genesis 1 was "good" with no evil. Genesis 1–3:22 support the idea that God wanted only good for people.

How can you keep or regain some innocence? What things are you doing that make innocence more difficult to have?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 25

HOPE FOR THE FALLEN (SINNERS) (Genesis 3:14-19)

God came down to the Garden. He gave His judgments (punishments) to Adam, Eve, and the serpent.

What punishments did He give? What were the quick and long-term results of the first sin? Genesis 3:14-19.

Adam and Eve heard about hard work, pain, and suffering. But they also heard words of hope and promise. Genesis 3:15 is the first place in the Bible that talks about salvation. Genesis 3:15 also summarizes the struggles between the family of the serpent and the future children of the woman. The family histories of Genesis show people who chose either of the two kinds of "sonship" with the devil or with God. The rest of the Bible continues to show the struggles between God's people and their enemies. This struggle was announced in Genesis 3:15. Genesis 3:15 points to the entire struggle between good and evil throughout the history of the world. We ourselves are part of this struggle.

Compare Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 12:17; also read Revelation 12:9 and Revelation 20:2. What basic parts are found in both verses? In what ways do these verses show how the principles of the struggle were shown in Eden, but will be made clearer at the end of time?

Adam and Eve sinned against God. They tried to "cover up" their sin. But God offered them hope anyway. He showed that they and the serpent would be enemies. But He also showed that the serpent's head would

be crushed and destroyed. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of the gospel. This is the promise of what Jesus would do for fallen people.

What hope does Hebrews 2:14 offer to you in your part of the great struggle between the children of the woman and the children of the serpent?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 26

AFTER THE FALL (Genesis 4)

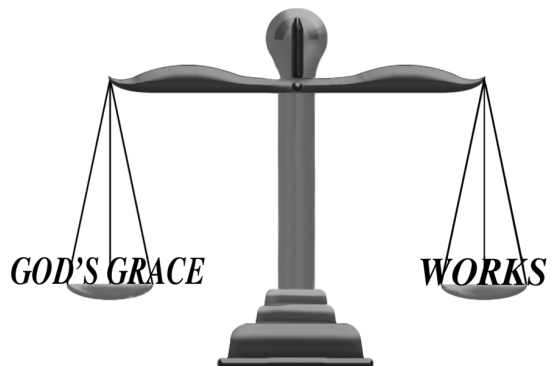
Genesis 4 quickly gets into the story of Cain and Abel. Many years passed since the Fall. But the Bible quickly gets into some of the terrible results of sin. Genesis 3:15 foresaw that God's people and Satan would be enemies. An example of this was fulfilled in Cain's murder of Abel. This murder showed that Cain followed Satan (John 8:44).

Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice but refuse to accept Cain's offerings? Genesis 4:3-7. (Compare Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 11:4.)

Notice in Genesis 4:6, 7 how God worked with Cain. God tells Cain to do well, to obey, and then he shall "be accepted." God says this with Jesus' future sacrifice in mind. Jesus' sacrifice is needed because whatever we do, we are still not good enough to save ourselves. Here, we see a balance between the law and grace, between faith and works. Clearly,

Cain did not understand this balance. Cain's misunderstanding was shown in the sacrifice he offered and in his refusal to "do well" (1 John 3:12).

How does Romans 5:17-6:6 show the balance between faith and works?



God's grace helps us to do good works.

Cain discovered that people cannot hide from God (Genesis 4:9, 10). He also learned that God will make all wrongs right. As punishment for his sin, the earth would not support him (Genesis 4:11, 12). Genesis 4:17-26 shows a picture of fast downfall. But it also shows great progress in community building and culture. For example, Cain's family members are involved in polygamy⁸ and murder. But these verses also show success. They point to artists, craftsmen, herd keepers, and farmers who came from Cain's family.

Genesis 4 closes with Seth, who replaced Abel. Seth became the father of the line of pre-Flood Bible leaders between Adam and Noah.

Have you ever been jealous?

⁸polygamy—the practice in which a person is married to several partners.

Jealousy is a terrible feeling. How can jealousy lead to something even worse? Why is accepting the Cross your only hope in having victory over jealousy?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 27

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52–62, 71–81; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, comments on Genesis 3 and 4.

“Satan made Adam and Eve think that they would gain something by breaking God’s law. Today, we hear the same kind of reasoning. Many people say that those who obey God’s commandments are narrow-minded, while they claim to be more broad-minded and to enjoy greater liberty (freedom). This is the same voice from Eden, ‘In the day ye [you] eat thereof’ (break God’s requirement) ‘ye shall be as gods’ ”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 55.

“The ‘seed’ is spoken of as one person. This shows that not many children of the woman shall be involved in crushing the serpent’s head. Instead, only one person will succeed in doing this. This clearly shows that Genesis 3:15 summarizes the great struggle between Christ and Satan. This is a battle that began in heaven (Revelation 12:7-9), continued on earth, where Christ again defeated him (Hebrews 2:14), and will end when Satan is destroyed at the end of the millennium⁹ (Revelation 20:10). Christ did not come out of this battle unhurt. The nail marks in His hands and feet and the scar in His side will

always remind us of the terrible struggle in which the serpent bruised the woman’s seed (John 20:25; Zechariah 13:6; *Early Writings*, p. 53).”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 233.



Genesis 3:15 tells us that Jesus would suffer in the battle between good and evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ A lot of unanswered questions remain about the Genesis story of the Fall. When you meet God face to face, what are some of the questions you might ask about this story? Why is it so important to trust God now when we have many unanswered questions? Also read 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 13:12.
- ❷ Discuss why we know Satan is real and an expert liar. Why is it important for us to believe this?

Sing together, as a class, a hymn or song that shows the victory and promises we have in Jesus. Discuss how music can encourage us.

⁹millennium—a thousand years.