

# Creation *and the* Fall



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 3:1–15; Matt. 4:3–10; Col. 2:20–23; John 3:17; Rev. 14:6, 7.*

**Memory Text:** “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (*Genesis 3:15, NIV*).

A comic used to play a female character called Geraldine. In one monologue she was a minister's wife who had come home with an expensive new dress. Her husband (played by the same comedian) got angry. Geraldine then shrieked in response: “The devil made me buy this dress! I didn't want to buy the dress. The devil kept bothering me.”

That was supposed to be funny. But our world, and the evil in it, shows that Satan is no laughing matter.

For some people, the idea of the devil is an ancient superstition not to be taken seriously. Scripture, however, is unequivocal: though Satan is a defeated foe (*Rev. 12:12, 1 John 3:8*), he is here on the earth, and he is determined to wreak as much havoc and destruction as possible against God's creation.

This week we'll look at Satan's original attack and what we can learn from it so that, while we are still under his assault, we can claim the victory that's ours in Christ.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 9.*

## The Serpent Was More Cunning

**Read** Genesis 3:1. How is Satan, in the form of a serpent, described? How is the truth of that depiction revealed even in that one verse?

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The cunning of the serpent is seen in the way that he introduces his temptation. He does not make a direct attack but attempts to engage the woman in conversation. Note that the serpent’s words include at least two problematic aspects. First, he asks if God really made a particular statement. At the same time, he phrases his question to raise doubt about the generosity of God. In effect, he asks, “Did God really withhold anything from you? Did He not give you permission to eat from every tree in the garden?” By intentionally misquoting God’s instructions, the serpent entices the woman to correct his statement and successfully draws her into conversation. The serpent’s strategy is certainly “cunning.”

Of course, none of that should be surprising. Jesus called the devil a liar and the father of lies (*John 8:44*). In Revelation 12:9 the devil deceives the whole world, which means that none of us, even as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, are safe. Satan has, obviously, lost none of his cunning or deceptiveness. He still uses the strategy that was successful with Eve. He raises questions about God’s Word and God’s intentions, hoping to raise doubts and draw us into “conversation.” We must be vigilant (*1 Pet. 5:8*) in order to resist his devices.

**Compare** Matthew 4:3–10 with Genesis 3:1. What similar ploy did Satan try on Jesus, and why did it fail? What lessons can we learn from how Jesus responded to the devil’s attacks in the wilderness? In what ways does Satan try the same thing with us now?

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## The Woman and the Serpent

**Read** Genesis 3:2, 3. How did the woman respond to the serpent? What mistakes did she make?

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Though Eve clearly knew the command of God, which shows her culpability, she does make a statement that goes beyond what God had said, at least as recorded in the Bible. God had clearly instructed Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree; nothing was said about not touching it. Because we don't know what prompted her to say that, it's best not to speculate about its origins. There is no question, though: by thinking that she shouldn't touch the fruit, she would have been less inclined to eat it, because she couldn't eat what she couldn't touch.

How often do we face the same thing today: someone comes with teachings that are in harmony with Scripture on most points but not all? It's the few points that aren't that can ruin everything else. Even mixed with truth, error is still error.

**Read** Matthew 15:7–9. What reproof did Jesus give the scribes and Pharisees concerning the addition of human thinking to the Word of God? Compare this with Revelation 22:18 and Colossians 2:20–23. What dangers arise from making up rules that we think will protect us against sin? *Vs. 23.*

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The problem with sin is not a lack of rules but a reprobate heart. Even in secular society, we often hear calls for more laws against crime when there are already sufficient laws in existence. We do not need new laws so much as we need new hearts.

**In what ways might we be in danger of following the things warned about here? Standards based on biblical principles are crucial. The question is, How can we be sure that the standards and rules we apply aren't going to lead us astray? Bring your answer to class.**

## Deceived by the Evidence

**Read** Genesis 3:4–6. What are the principles that led to Adam and Eve’s downfall? What can we learn from their experience that can help us to deal with whatever temptations we face, as well?

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Satan was successful in drawing Eve into conversation and in raising doubts about what God had said and why. Now he tells Eve that God is not telling the truth and provides an explanation for God’s motive behind His forbidding them to eat of the fruit. According to Satan, God is withholding something good in order to keep Adam and Eve from reaching their full potential. In doing so, Satan builds on his previous question about whether God has withheld some of the trees from them.

Eve uses three lines of evidence that lead her to the conclusion that she would benefit from eating the fruit. First, she sees that the tree is good for food. Perhaps she has observed the serpent eating the fruit. He may have commented on how good it tasted. It’s interesting that though Adam and Eve were told not to eat of it, she notices that it is “good for food.” Talk about a conflict between the senses and a clear “Thus saith the Lord!”

A second line of evidence that convinces Eve to eat the fruit is that it is pleasant to the eye. No doubt all the fruit in the garden is beautiful, but, for some reason, Eve is especially attracted to the fruit that Satan is offering her.

The supposed power of the fruit to make one wise is a third reason that Eve wants to eat of the fruit. The serpent assured her that eating the fruit will expand her knowledge and make her like God. Of course, the sad irony here is that, according to the Bible, she already is like God (*Gen. 1:27*).

We are told that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (*1 Tim. 2:14*). If Adam was not deceived, why did he eat? Adam consciously disobeyed God, choosing to follow Eve rather than God. How often is this same kind of behavior seen today? How easily we can be tempted by what others say and do, regardless of how contrary their words and actions are to the Word of God. Adam listened to Eve instead of to God, and the rest is the nightmare known as human history (*see Rom. 5:12–21*).

## Grace and Judgment in Eden: Part 1

In Genesis 3, after the Fall, the Lord’s opening words are all questions: “Where are you? . . . Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? . . . What is this you have done?” (*Gen. 3:9–13, NIV*).

**In contrast, God’s first declarative statement in chapter 3—His first statement of fact—follows these questions. What does God say to the serpent, and what is the meaning of His words? See *Gen. 3:14, 15*.**

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Think through the implications of what is happening here. God’s first declarative statement to the fallen world is, in fact, a condemnation of Satan, not humanity. Indeed, even in that condemnation of Satan, God gives humanity the hope and promise of the gospel (*vs. 15*). As He declares Satan’s doom, He proclaims humanity’s hope. Despite their sin, the Lord immediately reveals to Adam and Eve the promise of redemption.

Notice, too, that only after this promise, only after hope of grace and salvation is given in verse 15 (known also as the “First Gospel Promise”), does the Lord pronounce judgment on Adam and Eve: “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children. . . .’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife . . .’” (*Gen. 3:16, 17, NKJV*).

Don’t miss this point: the promise of salvation comes first, followed by judgment. Only against the backdrop of the gospel, then, does judgment come; otherwise, judgment would mean nothing but condemnation, but Scripture is clear: “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (*John 3:17*).

**Why is it so important always to dwell on the fact that God’s purpose is to save us, not to condemn us? How does sin in our life cause us to lose sight of that crucial truth? That is, how does sin cause us to turn away from God?**

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## Grace and Judgment in Eden: Part 2

In Genesis 1 and 2, God utters imperative statements such as: “Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven. . . . Let the earth bring forth living creatures. . . . It’s not good for man to be alone.” All these declarations deal with Creation and with establishing humanity in that Creation. As we saw yesterday, the next declarative statement recorded in the Bible occurs in Genesis 3:14, 15, in which the Lord offers humanity the gospel.

Thus, in Scripture, God’s initial statements deal with Creation and then with redemption—and this redemption occurs in the context of judgment itself. It would have to. After all, what’s the purpose of the gospel, what’s the good news, if there were no judgment, no condemnation from which to be spared? The very concept of the gospel carries within itself the concept of condemnation, a condemnation that we don’t have to face. That’s the good news!

Though we have violated God’s law and though God will judge those violations, in Christ Jesus we are spared the condemnation that this judgment would, inevitably, bring.

**Creation, gospel, and judgment appear not only in the early pages of the Bible but in the latter, as well. Read Revelation 14:6, 7. In what ways are these verses linked to the first three chapters of Genesis? That is, what parallel ideas are found in all these verses?**

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In Revelation 14:6, 7 we see a declaration of God as the Creator, a key theme in the opening pages of Genesis. In Revelation 14, however, the “everlasting gospel” comes first and then is followed by the announcement of judgment, as in Genesis 3. Judgment is there, but not before the gospel. Thus, the foundation of our present-truth message has to be grace, the good news that, though we deserve condemnation, we can stand pardoned, purified, and justified through Jesus. Without the gospel, our destiny would be the same as the serpent’s and his seed, not the destiny of the woman and her seed. And, fascinatingly enough, this great news appears even in Eden, in God’s first words to a fallen world.

**Further Study:** “God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church*, p. 228.

“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

“But man was not abandoned to the results of the evil he had chosen. In the sentence pronounced upon Satan was given an intimation of redemption. . . . This sentence, spoken in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. Before they heard of the thorn and the thistle, of the toil and sorrow that must be their portion, or of the dust to which they must return, they listened to words that could not fail of giving them hope. All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 27.

### Discussion Questions:

- ① In class, go over your answer to Monday’s final question. What kind of rules do we make that could turn us into the very people Jesus condemned? At the same time, how can we make commitments that might help us better to follow the principles of truth as revealed in the Bible?
- ② Eve trusted her senses instead of a very clear command from God. Why do we find it so easy to do the same thing?
- ③ Dwell on the obvious contrast between the Creation story and the various evolutionary ideas that depict natural evil as being part of God’s original creative process. Why is it impossible to harmonize such conflicting views of our origins without ultimately destroying the plain meaning of the Bible? Why is a correct understanding of Creation important in order to gain a correct understanding of the Fall?
- ④ Some cultures find the idea of a literal devil nothing but foolishness; others, in contrast, can be obsessed with the power of evil and evil spirits. What about your culture? What’s the tendency, and how can you learn to strike the right balance when dealing with the reality of the supernatural battles in which we find ourselves?

## The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Genesis 3:1–6, 15*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Explore Satan’s original attack against humanity and analyze the dynamics of the temptations faced by both Eve in Eden and Christ in the wilderness.

**Feel:** Value the importance of trusting God’s Word, even when observations and experience come into apparent conflict with that Word.

**Do:** Commit to trusting God’s Word more than his or her own opinions and perceptions.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: The Dynamics of Satan’s Original Attack**

**A** What can we learn through Eve’s story about the dynamics of Satan’s temptations?

**B** Likewise, what do the temptations that Christ underwent reveal to us about the devices of Satan and the power that God gives us to overcome them?

**II. Feel: Trusting God’s Word Over Our Senses**

**A** How does Eve’s story help you to better value God’s Word?

**B** The forbidden fruit would have been easy to resist had it been bitter or rotten. But sin would not be tempting if it did not appear to be sweet. How can we cultivate within us a desire to resist this “sweetness,” no matter how tempting sin may be?

**III. Do: Committing Our Ways to God**

**A** How can you trust God’s Word more fully and completely?

**B** In what ways can you allow God to live out His life and His Word more fully and completely through your life?

► **Summary:** The original attack by Satan on our planet reveals some important dynamics in the temptation process. Satan caused Eve to experience a dissonance between her perceptions of the forbidden tree and God’s command to refrain from eating of its fruit. Eve’s management of that conflict can show us how we can manage or mismanage temptation today.



## Learning Cycle

### ► **STEP 1**—Motivate

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** Understanding the issues and dynamics underlying all temptations better equips us for successful spiritual life. These dynamics are highlighted in the Fall story of Genesis 3.

**Just for Teachers:** Emphasize to your students that our understanding of sin, salvation, and the dynamics of temptation are all affected by the way in which we view the historicity of the Genesis text.

The story of Eve and the serpent is a classic, even in secular literary circles. How we are impacted by the story will be determined, to a great degree, by our view of its historicity. If Genesis 1–3 is not based on historic fact, then that would mean that the author of Genesis was constructing his own religious beliefs out of some combination of his imagination and ancient culture. Such a construct would suggest, then, that our beliefs are based not in factual revelations from God but in human creativity. By contrast, when Genesis 1–3 is taken as historically accurate, God now acts in history, revealing plans and purposes for humankind and holding humans accountable for how they respond to His communications.

Genesis 1–3 thus plays a key role in determining how authoritative God’s Word is to you as a believer. The Fall story highlights a tension that arose between creaturely experience and divine revelation. This dynamic of perception versus divine Word plays a key role in the Fall story of Genesis 3.

**Opening Activity for Discussion:** Describe a situation you have been in where your senses fooled you—a time when what you saw, felt, or perceived turned out to be wrong. What does this tell you about the reliability of human perceptions?

### ► **STEP 2**—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** The temptation dynamics in the fall of Eve provide rich insights for our spiritual life. Those dynamics are also demonstrated in the temptations faced by Christ, and they are explored in the following commentary.

## Bible Commentary

### I. Not by Bread Alone . . . (*Read Genesis 3:1–6 with the class.*)

In Genesis 2:16, 17, God tells humankind that if they eat from the forbidden tree, they will “certainly die” (*NIV*). The cunning serpent asks a deceptively simple question—did God place all trees off-limits?—in order to entice Eve to imagine the real question: “why did God forbid us to eat from this single tree?” The purpose of the question was to plant within Eve seeds of discontent against God. Because the tree was a component of a created order that God had declared good, why would it now be declared off-limits?

Eve answers the serpent, repeating the stated prohibition and penalty, but adds another reason for not touching the tree, that she would die. The snake retorts that she would not die, implying that God was lying to her in order to keep her from achieving co-deity standing with God. The serpent promises that she could indeed achieve this status through disobedience. Because the whole argument depends on Eve’s belief that God was deceiving her, what might have made Eve accept the argument as true?

In Genesis 3:6, Eve analyzes the forbidden tree. She observes that the tree is “good for food, . . . a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (*ESV*). The tree looks wholesome not deadly. She experiences a dissonance between her observations and God’s revelation. Furthermore, while not explicitly addressed in the biblical text, the craftiest creature appears to acquire his linguistic ability by eating the forbidden fruit, making it easy for Eve to conclude that God’s word had been falsified. The snake’s implied message is: “If eating this fruit enabled me to talk, what will eating it do for you as the image of God? You will become co-deity with God. Look at what it did for me!” For Eve, this “evidence” would be a compellingly powerful contradiction of God’s truthfulness. Thus, Eve is forced to choose between her observations and analysis and God’s word. She chooses her abilities, thus rebelling against God’s word and sovereignty.

Satan tries to entrap Jesus using the same tactics. In the Matthew 3 baptism scene, God speaks audibly from heaven, affirming Jesus’ identity as Son of God. In Matthew 4, Jesus then enters into the wilderness and does not eat for 40 days. One has to presume that after 40 days without eating, and without creature comforts, that Jesus did not look or feel as though He were the Son of God. According to Ellen G. White, when Satan appeared, he did so as an angel of light, as Paul warns us that he will do (*2 Cor. 11:14*). Arguably, Satan looked like the Son of God, and Jesus looked more like a

fallen angel. The primary focus of Satan’s attack was to challenge what God told Christ six weeks earlier. It is as though Satan effectively implied, “You can’t trust what You heard six weeks ago at the baptism. Do something material and miraculous to prove to Yourself that You are the Son of God.” In His human limits, everything Jesus was observing and experiencing suggested that the baptismal announcement was wrong. As Eve did, Christ had to choose between His perceptions and analysis and God’s Word. Now we can see the significance of His answer, “ ‘ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone [by what he sees and analyzes], but by every *word* that comes from the mouth of God’ ’ ” (*Matt. 4:4, ESV, italics supplied*).

**Consider This:** Because Christ was tempted in all points as we are (*Heb. 4:15*), how do the temptations of Eve and Christ help you to better understand the spiritual issues involved in your own temptations?

### ► **STEP 3**—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** With the following questions, guide the class past theoretical philosophizing in order to confront the limits of their perceptions and analysis.

#### Thought Questions:

**1** How does Satan try to falsify God’s Word to you in order to get you to choose your own observations and analysis over God’s Word? Which will you choose, and why?

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**2** Are human observation and analysis reliable enough to outrank God’s Word in trustworthiness? Why, or why not?

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3 Why does it matter what I choose—my observations or God’s Word? What does Genesis 3 tell us about accountability?

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4 How do accountability and grace interrelate in Genesis 3? What is the purpose of grace in Genesis 3?

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► **STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** We want to end on an uplifting note. Close on a positive track, emphasizing the need and joy of trusting God’s Word.

**Activity for Discussion:** What can I do that will help me to trust God’s Word implicitly and fully, even when it seems to contradict my senses?

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