

From Exalted to Cast Down



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16, 17; Ezek. 28:12–19; Deut. 8:1–18; Isa. 14:12–14; 2 Cor. 11:14.*

Memory Text: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (*Ezekiel 28:15*).

Today's memory text has to be one of the most profound in all revelation. Two crucial words stand out: *perfect* and *iniquity*, with the latter (*iniquity*) encapsulated by the former (*perfect*). What this means is that contained in the idea of being perfect, of having perfection—even in heaven!—is the potential for iniquity. How could iniquity be found in a being created “perfect” unless perfection allowed for it? Iniquity could not arise in a being created perfect unless being “perfect” included the possibility of it, which it obviously did.

What this text shows is that, in God's universe, the concept of “perfect” includes freedom, moral freedom, the ability to choose right and wrong. How could it not and humans still be moral and free? A company might be able to program software that blocks employees from accessing Internet pornography or gambling or other immoral sites, yet no one would call the software itself “moral” or “free.”

What we have, then, is a being, Lucifer, so highly exalted that even his garments, his covering, are given special notice in Scripture, yet he abuses the freedom given him and falls away from the Lord.

What can we learn from his tragic mistake?

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

The Creator of All That's Been Made

Our God is the Creator. John 1:1–3 makes it clear that anything that was created, that is, anything that once didn't exist but then existed, did so only through the action of the Lord.

Someone once asked the question, “Why is there something instead of nothing?” It is perhaps the most basic of all questions that ever could be asked. Read John 1:1–3. How does it answer that question?

This idea is interesting, too, in light of what is known as the big bang theory, which teaches that our universe, instead of being eternal, as many believed through the millennia, actually came into existence billions of years ago. Whether the theory turns out to be true or false, many have seen it as evidence for a God, a Creator, because a lot of science, a lot of physics, and a lot of math equations were needed for the big bang to have occurred. And, as one scientist asked, “Who breathed fire into the equations?”

We know the answer, don't we?

Scientists now speculate, too, that there are vast sections of the universe that we cannot see, which are filled with what is called dark matter and dark energy. What this should tell us, if nothing else, is that we are very limited in our view of what's really out there.

Read Colossians 1:16, 17. What else—and *who* else—has God created that, for the most part, are beyond what we can see every day? What lessons should we draw from this about how humble we need to be regarding our knowledge of reality?

Notice, too, in those verses that not only were all these things created by God, they also were created “for Him.” What might that mean? How can we understand that? What should it mean for us to know that we, too, were created “for Him”?

A Beautiful and Perfect Being

Among what was created by God, among what once didn't exist but then came into existence, was the angelic host. Chief among the host was the created being known as Lucifer, whose fall is recounted in Ezekiel 28 in the figure of the king of Tyre.

Read Ezekiel 28:12–19. What description is given to Lucifer? What kind of covering did he have, and what might that represent?

Describing Lucifer as the “son of the morning,” Isaiah 14:12 records how God pictured him in his unfallen state. In Ezekiel 28:12 God described him as “thou sealest up the sum”; the word *sum* could be translated as “pattern” or “You set a seal to your completeness.” —*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 675.

Lucifer also carried the description of “day star” or “shining one” (*Isa. 14:12, ASV and NLT*). In Hebrew, *htel* (shining one) and its equivalents in related languages commonly were applied to the planet Venus when it appeared in unrivaled brilliance as the morning star.

Imagine wearing a garment, a covering, made perhaps of rubies, diamonds, topaz, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, chrysolite, and turquoise mounted on gold. Even though we might attempt to visualize the colors of Lucifer's covering (red, yellow, green, azure blue, turquoise, olive green), our earthly vision of the heavenly jewels and the majestic colors never would allow us to admire the robe as the angels could. As a heavenly being adorned in such splendor and with the highest position among them, Lucifer must surely have had the respect and affection of all the other angels.

The angels desired to do as they were bidden. They reflected the beauty of their Creator and praised Him for their privilege of living in a paradise of celestial harmony. Their constant praise for their Maker inspired an unselfish love for each other, and, as long as this was their only desire, they lived in a constant, unequaled, and loving environment.

In this heavenly environment, harmony, perfection, love, and adoration reigned—a picture that we, as human beings, can barely imagine.

How could we imitate the heavenly environment with harmony, perfection, and love in our homes, workplaces, and churches? Discuss specific ways our earthly existence could better reflect our God's glory and His love.

The Fall of a Perfect Being

However hard it might be for us, with our limited view of reality, to envision it, Lucifer must have been an incredible-looking being. Look at the description of him again in Ezekiel 28: wise, beautiful, dressed in all these majestic stones. He must have been something!

If we look carefully at Ezekiel 28:13, we can notice an interesting point. After talking about all these precious jewels that were his covering, the text says, “ ‘ ‘on the day you were created they were prepared’ ’ ” (*NIV*). Lucifer’s coverings, his garments, as they were, simply reflected his exalted position. As we’ll see throughout this quarter, garments can reveal a great deal about our station and position. Thus, if garments hint at anything, it was that Lucifer was an exalted and lovely being, one with power and influence.

Read Ezekiel 28:17. According to this text, what helped bring Lucifer’s downfall? What important message should we take from this for ourselves?

The irony in all this is that however wonderful Lucifer’s coverings, however beautiful his person, however wise he was, where did it all come from? Of course, whatever Lucifer had, whatever he achieved, whatever the wonderful garment that covered him, it all was from God. Again, we are dealing with a created being: his covering, his beauty, and his wisdom were all gifts from God. Without the Lord, he would have had nothing and been nothing.

And yet, somehow, a being who lived closest to God forgot that important point.

Read Deuteronomy 8:1–18. What principle is found here that is reflected in what happened to Lucifer?

How easy, especially in times of prosperity and wealth, to forget just how dependent we are upon the Lord for everything. What daily and practical things can we do to help us keep from falling into the trap of looking at our “beautiful garments”—our wisdom, our success, our prosperity, in whatever form these come—and forgetting just how dependent we are on the Lord for it all?

Wanting to Be God

“ ‘ “You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones” ’ ” (*Ezek. 28:14, NIV*).

Ezekiel used a figure of speech that represents the placement of God’s government or heaven itself. When Ezekiel described Lucifer on the mountain of God, his words showed the high position that God gave to this created being and the privileges that were granted him. Other instances in the Bible indicate that a mountain experience was of great meaning. For instance, Moses ascended a mountain to meet God (*Exod. 19:20*), and Jesus and three of the disciples met on a high mountain where Jesus experienced the Transfiguration (*Matt. 17:1, 2*).

In “Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” (*Ezek. 28:14*), again the prophet Ezekiel uses symbolism to indicate the presence of God: “stones of fire.” The Lord appeared to Moses, Aaron, and the other leaders in this way: “And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” (*Exod. 24:10*).

In spite of all of Lucifer’s privileges, he allowed the wrong thoughts to enter and to fester in his mind, thoughts that eventually led to actions and to his rebellion and ruin.

Read Isaiah 14:12–14, another depiction of Lucifer’s fall. What principles are in play here, and what can we learn from them for ourselves amid our own temptations and struggles?

The ancient Romans often believed that when an emperor died, he became a deity, which explains Vespasian’s dying words, “Oh, my, I think I’m becoming a god.”

The temptation to play God can be more subtle than most of us realize. When we judge people’s motives, when we take for ourselves prerogatives that don’t belong to us, when we seek to control others in ways that are inappropriate—are we not, in our own way, seeking to play God?

Dwell more on the subtle ways we all might be in danger of seeking to put ourselves in the role of God. How might you have done the same thing? What is, really, the only cure for this dangerous but often subtle deception?

Satan on Earth

“No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14, NASB).

As we all know so well, Satan’s fall didn’t impact only heaven but affected earth, as well, and his fall and rebellion in heaven are manifested here on earth in what we call the great controversy. It’s real, it’s bitter, and it involves all of us.

Read Revelation 12:7–12. What is this passage talking about, and what caution—and at the same time, hope—can we take from these verses?

Fortunately, because of the Cross, because of what Jesus completed for us there, we know how it will turn out in the end. Victory is assured for all who are covered in the robes of Christ’s perfection. Hence, Satan works diligently to try to keep as many as possible from finding the saving righteousness that guarantees them a place in eternity.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:14 again, paying close attention to the context in which Paul is writing. What important message should we take from this passage for ourselves?

Satan works in various ways to deceive us, to turn us from a saving relationship with Christ, and he’s not averse to using other professed Christians to do just that. Indeed, that often can be his most effective ploy.

Spiritual danger lurks all around us (1 Pet. 5:8). The important thing for all of us to remember, however, is that we’re dealing with a defeated foe: the devil has lost, his ruin is sure, and his reign will end. Yet, in and of ourselves we cannot fight him and win. Our only hope and strength are found in the One who has defeated him already, and that is Jesus. His victory is ours, as long as we claim it for ourselves in faith and obedience.

What are the subtle ways the devil can slowly but surely, step-by-step, undermine our faith if we are not careful? What day-by-day choices can we make to ensure that he doesn’t succeed?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Why Was Sin Permitted?” pp. 35–43, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” p. 349, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Light of Life,” p. 464, in *The Desire of Ages*. Read also *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 675, 676.

“When Satan seeks to cover the people of God with blackness, and ruin them, Christ interposes. Although they have sinned, Christ has taken the guilt of their sins upon His own soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 169.

“Sin entered the world by the defection of one who stood at the head of the holy angels. What was it that wrought so great a change, transforming a royal, honored subject into an apostate? The answer is given, ‘Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.’ Had not the Lord made the covering cherub so beautiful, so closely resembling his own image; had not God awarded him special honor; had anything been left undone in the gift of beauty and power and honor, then Satan might have had some excuse.”—Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 2, 1897.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Dwell more on the idea of morality and freedom. Can there be true morality apart from freedom? Are actions that are deemed moral really moral if they are forced, if they don’t come from free choice? Discuss.
- ❷ No matter how much Satan had, it wasn’t enough. In what ways do we find ourselves manifesting that same attitude? How can we stop ourselves from following down this ruinous path?
- ❸ In class, read over Revelation 12:7–12 and discuss what those texts mean in light of how we are to live, particularly verse 11: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”
- ❹ Dwell more on the idea of how we can make ourselves out to be God. What does it mean? How might this trait be manifested in our lives without our even realizing it?
- ❺ Read again the first Ellen G. White quote above, about Christ taking our guilt upon Himself. What exactly does that mean? What hope can we take from that promise for ourselves? What will happen to those who refuse to believe that this promise is applied to them personally?

Nagging Questions

by DANIEL SAFCIU

I grew up in Romania during Communist times. My parents were Seventh-day Adventists, and they risked everything to teach us about their faith and model Christian behavior. But in spite of their efforts and prayers, I chose to believe evolution rather than the faith my parents had taught me.

I lost my faith in God and stopped attending church, stopped obeying the Ten Commandments, and stopped keeping the Sabbath. I declared myself an atheist, which broke my mother's heart. I was uncomfortable being the only unbeliever in my home, so I left home and set out to escape from Romania. I slipped across the border in hopes of escaping the Communist world, but I failed repeatedly; and each time I tried, I was sentenced to time in prison.

Later I was caught stealing cars and was sent to prison again. There I met a doctor who was a political prisoner. I told him I didn't believe in God, and he said, "Why? Even Einstein believed in God." I wondered, *Is this man right? Does God really exist after all?* I began to wonder how such scientific phenomena as gravity and electromagnetic force could exist unless Someone created them. I prayed, "God, if You exist, help me believe." About this time, Communism fell in Romania.

Without warning I was sent to another prison. Two days after I arrived, a guard asked me, "Do you want to attend a small meeting for Christians?" I went, and to my surprise I recognized people I had known from the Adventist church during my childhood. One was my cousin. He gave me some books to read. One was on creationism and science. I read them and found answers to my questions. I continued attending the small group, and I felt God changing my life. I surrendered my life to Christ and was baptized after I was released from prison.

I joined a group who ministers to prisoners because I understood their situation and their needs. Today I work with former prisoners, helping them adjust to society, find housing and work, and make something of themselves. I'm raising funds to set up a book bindery and other vocational training programs for ex-convicts.

God has brought me full circle. I knew the truth but let it go; then I struggled with disbelief until I was willing to listen to God's voice again. Now I am helping others who've walked the same path as I have.

Your mission offerings are helping so many people find new meaning in life. I'm one of them.

DANIEL SAFCIU is a carpenter. Originally from Romania, he now lives in Belgium.