

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 for iniquity to arise, 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”?

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *Ezekiel 28:11–17*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: Describe the circumstances and the consequences of Lucifer’s spiritual pride and the effects his pride has on life in both heaven and earth.

Feel: Nurture attitudes of gratitude and humble acceptance of God’s gifts, rather than cherish spiritual pride, as Lucifer did.

Do: Honor God’s supremacy and ownership of ourselves and every good thing we have in our hearts by the way we speak to Him, and about Him, to others.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Fall of the Brightest and Best

A How did Lucifer come to fall from a position of highest honor and beauty? What did he value more than God?

B In heaven and earth, what have been the consequences of his spiritual pride? What will be the final outcome?

II. Feel: Pride Versus Humility

A How are we tempted to fall into the same downward spiral that Satan experienced? What is our only hope?

B How can we foster attitudes of humility and gratitude rather than spiritual pride?

III. Do: Giving God His Due

A Since God is the Originator, the Author, of our very being, as well as all the blessings we enjoy, how should we respond to Him?

B Why is it an honor to respond this way?

▶ **Summary:** In growing proud of his gifts and seeking more than what God gave him, Lucifer cultivated evil in his heart and encouraged doubt in others. This led to war in heaven and tragedy on earth.

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 star” (*Isa. 14:12, ASV and NLT*). In Hebrew, *htlel* (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, unequalled, 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.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The freedom that God gives us to choose Him and the way of life He desires for us also allows us to choose the opposite. God doesn't force His way on us; we must consciously choose Him every day of our lives.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize that while God is sovereign—that is to say that everything is ultimately subject to Him—it is necessary to His purposes that we choose to serve Him of our own free will. This free will is a necessary precondition of the perfection that He wishes for us to achieve. As such, it is necessary that we have the freedom not to make the right choice.

Sentenced to two years in prison for burglary in the last year of Germany's Weimar Republic, Waldemar Debblor addressed the court. He explained that free will did not exist and that his upbringing, heredity, and environment made it impossible for him to be anything other than what he was, a burglar. Therefore, he said, the court had no moral right to punish him.

The judge responded, saying that he was a determinist, too, and that the court was similarly bound to punish Debblor.

Debblor replied, "Destiny demands that I appeal."

"That may be," the judge rejoined, "but destiny also demands that your appeal be denied."

As seen above, human free will has been seriously questioned many times in history. Yet, most of us continue to exist and act as though we did have the freedom and responsibility of free will. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we go further and say that God gave us free will, and that our greatest freedom and happiness come from using this free will to acknowledge and serve the God who created us. Unhappiness, evil, and suffering come from the opposite course, as seen in Lucifer's freely made decision to reject God and His love.

Discuss With the Class: If Lucifer could reject God's love with eyes wide open while existing in the very presence of God, what does this say about how deceptive our thoughts and perceptions can be if we cut ourselves off from God's influence?

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: Emphasize that God is the Source of all good

CONTINUED ►

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 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 about 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, we must ask, where did it all come from? Of course, whatever Lucifer had, whatever he achieved, whatever wonderful garment 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 to 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

things that exist, including our freedom to choose or reject His guidance for our lives. If we choose to ignore or reject God, we are opening the door to evil. The story of Lucifer exemplifies this sad truth. All his gifts came from God, and yet, when he made his decision to reject God, these same gifts were perverted and pressed into the service of evil and destruction.

Bible Commentary

I. The Light of All People (*Review John 1:1–5 with your class.*)


The name Lucifer means “light bearer” in Latin, a translation of earlier Hebrew and Greek words conveying the same concept, usually in reference to the planet Venus, which was associated with dawn. It is not completely clear that Lucifer was originally intended to be a proper name. Isaiah 14:12, where the passage on Lucifer first appears, addresses the king of Babylon. This has led some scholars to claim that the figure of Lucifer as we know him does not exist at all in the Old Testament. As Seventh-day Adventists, we reject any theology that denies the literal existence of Satan.

The king of Babylon was seen—and saw himself—as the representative of pagan deities and, possibly, even as a deity himself. In the mythology of ancient Near Eastern peoples, the morning star and the dawn were regarded as gods. The Greeks and Romans inherited them and often used them poetically, as when Homer referred to “rosy-fingered Dawn,” or Eos.

Two things (at least) are happening in this description. First, the being we refer to as Lucifer is clearly associated not only with pagan kingship and royalty but also with the system of pagan worship upon which it depended for its legitimacy. Second, both the terms *light bearer* and *morning star* contain important clues to this being’s nature and role.

To be a bearer of light is a very important task. But to bear light is not the same as to give light or to be the source of light. In his previous existence as an angel in heaven, Lucifer might have been a “bearer” of God’s light. At some point he apparently came to believe himself to be its source, or at least one source. He thought himself to be the equal of God and, at some point, His superior.

The morning star, or the planet Venus, is known to be the brightest body in the early-evening and early-morning sky. But it is such only because it happens to be in position to catch the reflected light of the sun. The light is not inherent to it; when the sun is gone, so is our view of the

CONTINUED 

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 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 in which 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

radiant planet Venus. In the same way, once Lucifer removed himself from the influence of God, his light went out, and he became the being we know as Satan.

Consider This: Most of us have, at one time or another, been disappointed by someone we regarded as a spiritual model. Or perhaps we believed ourselves to be free of old habits or behaviors that separated us from God, only to fall into them again in a moment of unwariness. What happens when we begin to believe subconsciously that somehow our strength is our own, not God’s? Why do we, to reflect God’s light, need to make an effort to remain in His presence and under His influence?


II. Devil in Disguise *(Review 2 Corinthians 11:14 with your class.)*

According to the Greek philosopher Plato, “To prefer evil to good is not in human nature.” So, then, why does evil exist? Plato believed it came about because of ignorance of what is good. Of course, this isn’t what the Bible teaches about evil or the origin of evil or why people do evil; even though, at times, people might be deceived into thinking that their evil deeds are good, or at least not that bad. But the fact remains, evil must present itself as good in order to be attractive to most of us. This is why Satan—or Lucifer—must present himself as an angel of light.

Most of us have a conscience and a capacity for moral reasoning. These are powerful tools, but left to themselves, they aren’t always accurate. Indeed, in a world corrupted by sin, the line between good and evil isn’t always clear without the guidance of God and His Word.

As such, it isn’t necessary for Satan to urge us to commit acts or think thoughts that are unambiguously evil. He can make use of things that are ostensibly good or neutral, so long as they can distance us from the Source of good, God Himself.

Consider This: We live in a world in which we are confronted with choices, activities, or beliefs that may appear to be good or harmless or may bear the stamp of society’s approval, but that may not match with what we know to be correct from God’s Word. In addition, there are genuine shades of gray and predicaments that lend themselves to situational ethics. How can we claim God’s discernment to help us make sense of such things?

CONTINUED 

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. It 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 and 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 and 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Use the following questions and exercises to explore the issues of God’s creation of beings with free will and the evil that may—and has—resulted from it. Emphasize the freedom that God has given to us, and the responsibility to use it rightly.

Thought Question:

The creation of Lucifer—and the resulting evil—leads into the questions of foreknowledge and predestination. God, being omniscient or all-knowing, has foreknowledge of the results of the decisions of those He creates. Does this mean He predestines us to make those decisions? Why, or why not? If not, what does it mean when the Bible refers to predestination, as in Ephesians 1:5, 11?

Application Questions:

❶ In Ezekiel 28:13, Lucifer’s garment or covering is emphasized. Specifically, it is stated that God covered Lucifer with all the precious stones and other items that enhanced his beauty. In a way, this speaks to the central point in question. God gave Lucifer the things that made him beautiful and (once) good, and Lucifer came to believe that he himself was somehow the origin of this beauty. Have you ever been tempted to assume that any gifts or good qualities you may have are somehow yours alone and that God has no claim on their use? What does the story of Lucifer suggest about the results of such thought patterns?

❷ How can Satan sometimes work through Christians, and the church itself, to advance his agenda? How can we be on guard against this, without becoming judgmental and paranoid?

► **STEP 4—Create**

Just for Teachers: This week we have examined the many factors that led Lucifer to entertain the thoughts and desires that led him to forsake his unique relationship with the God who created him. The following activity emphasizes the fact that we, too, are in danger of a similar end if we forget to honor God and allow Him to rule in our lives.

Lucifer’s fall began with thought. We all have thoughts that we would rather not have. Ask members of the class to share how they deal with and banish (or could deal with and banish) thoughts of hatred or jealousy or thoughts of committing or entertaining sin.

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?