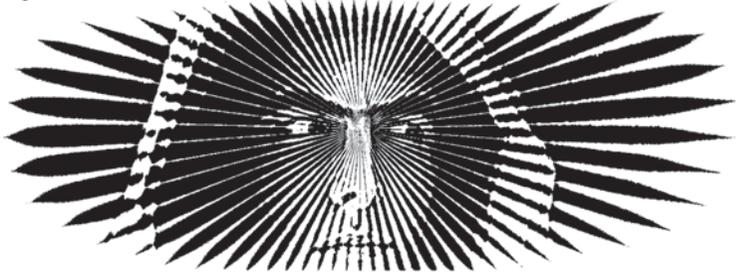


# Cosmic Crisis: The Disruption of God’s Established Order



SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Gen. 3:4, 5; Job 1:8–11; Isa. 14:13, 14; Ezek. 28:14–17; Rev. 12:7–9.*

**Memory Text:** “He [Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (*Colossians 1:17, NIV*).

**Key Thought:** To show the origins of Satan’s fall and how he brought the battle to earth.

No matter how much Lucifer had, no matter how exalted he was, it wasn’t enough. He wanted more. Thus began the “mystery of iniquity” (*2 Thess. 2:7*), the origin of sin in God’s universe.

The origin of evil within this perfect being will remain a mystery, because there was no reason for it. If it could be explained, it could be justified. It began with the first small step that Lucifer took in cherishing a particular emotion and desire. The conflicting emotions within Lucifer, together with the misuse of his God-given freedom, resulted in a cosmic conflict, a full-fledged rebellion against God in which suffering and death have impacted innumerable creatures. Today each one of us is living with the results of this conflict.

But don’t despair. As we will see in future lessons, Christ came to bring a fair and just resolution to issues that caused this cosmic crisis.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 11.*

## Sin: Its Origin

**Read** Ezekiel 28:14–17. What does this tell us about the origin of sin? What was Lucifer like before he fell?

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Unlike God, who is eternal, evil and sin had a beginning; that is, there was a time they didn't exist. Because God is love and holy, and everything He created was good, sin did not originate in Him. Ezekiel makes it clear that sin mysteriously started in a creature who was created good: “ ‘ “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you” ’ ” (*Ezek. 28:15, NIV*). “Blameless” (Heb. *tamim*, “complete”) designates the wholeness of this creature as he came from the hands of the Creator.

Notice, too, that sin began in a cherub, an exalted being. The cherubim were closer to God than any other angelic beings. Two were placed as guardians by the entrance of Eden (*Gen. 3:24*). A pair, made of gold, was placed on the ark of the covenant (*Exod. 25:18–20*). The position of the cherubim on the ark illustrates the high position of this cherub, who stood in the light of God's presence in God's dwelling (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 758). Sin originated, then, in a celestial being who was very close to the throne of God. The phrase “holy mountain of God” designates the heavenly temple, where God dwells among His creatures, the celestial center of government.

The self-corruption of this cherub, Lucifer, was rooted in a selfishness that misused the gifts of beauty and wisdom that God gave him. He mysteriously allowed his emotions and feelings to prevail over his reason, and consequently his wholeness was corrupted. “ ‘ “You corrupted your wisdom” ’ ” (*Ezek. 28:17, NIV, emphasis added*); God placed the blame squarely on Lucifer himself. Instead of holding to the divine order, according to which his gifts were to be used to enrich others, Lucifer perceived himself as superior to everyone else in beauty, splendor, and wisdom. “Little by little Satan came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation” and God's established order was disrupted.—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 66.

**How often has it been that no matter what you had, you still wanted more? Whose character are you manifesting? Why is that so opposite to the character of Christ?**

## *The Lesson in Brief*

► **Key Text:** *Colossians 1:17*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Lucifer's desires caused grief for the entire universe.

**Feel:** God's law is an expression of His true character.

**Do:** Determine to seek a daily relationship with Jesus, asking Him to keep you from temptation.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. It's Heaven—Isn't It Supposed to Be Peaceful?** (*Isa. 14:13, 14; Ezek. 28:14–17*)

**A** Lucifer was created as a beautiful creature with an honored position. Discuss what heaven may have been like before Lucifer began to agitate for change.

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**B** As Lucifer became discontented, he began to talk to other angels. Why wasn't he happy with the position he held? What does this tell us about our trying to obtain power? How did Satan's complaining to the other angels spread the trouble? How does this apply to us and how we deal with dissatisfaction in our lives? Are there times when we use this same behavior to spread discontent at church or at work?

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**II. The Law and Our Independence** (*John 5:3; 14:15, 21*)

From the foundation of the universe God established laws for the benefit of His created beings. How can we view these as giving us independence rather than being constricting? Discuss a world without God's law. What would it be like?

► **Summary:** God's law was given for our good and for our benefit. We need the law in order to know how to live properly.

## Attack on God

**How** did Isaiah describe the true intentions of the rebellious cherub? What was in his heart, his inner being? What was his real motive? *Isa. 14:13, 14.*

As the strange, selfish feelings and emotions of the cherub gained ascendancy over his higher powers and reason, he became bolder. He perverted and misused the freedom that God had entrusted to him, even to the point where He wanted to usurp God's own authority.

In Ezekiel 28:15, a contrast is made between the condition of the cherub as a good creature from the hand of his Creator and what he, the creature, had become. He was at first "blameless" (*NIV*), whole, lacking nothing, but something new was formed within him: The verse says that "iniquity," or "wickedness" (*NIV*), was found in him. This term in the Old Testament can be used to mean duplicity, unholy ambition, lying, and apostasy.

Ezekiel also said, " ' "Your heart became proud [Heb. *gabah*, 'to be high,' 'to be exalted']" ' ' " (*Ezek. 28:17, NIV*). To be proud can include perceiving oneself as being more than one really is, or viewing oneself as superior to others. It also can lead to behavior that ignores God's will (*Ps. 10:4, Jer. 13:15*) and that opposes God Himself (*Ezek. 28:2*). One could easily conclude that the fallen cherub was being disloyal to God, attacking Him, speaking lies, and acting deceptively.

**How** did the serpent misrepresent God to Eve? *Gen. 3:4, 5.*

In order for Satan to persuade Eve to disobey God, he sought to attack the character of God. He said, basically, that God was fundamentally a selfish being who limits the development of His intelligent creatures, keeping them in a state of involuntary submission through a threat of death. He was not what He claimed to be, a God of love, but was camouflaging His true nature through the appearance of a loving attitude. Satan was projecting onto God His own deceitful nature and the real intentions of his corrupted heart. His attack in heaven against God and God's loving nature was now being transferred to this planet.

"Had Lucifer really desired to be like the Most High, he would never have deserted his appointed place in heaven; for the spirit of the Most High is manifested in unselfish ministry. Lucifer desired God's power, but not His character."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 435.

**How can we avoid falling into this same spiritual trap as these principles are played out around us more and more subtly?**

## *Learning Cycle*

### ► **STEP 1—Motivate**

The inexplicable happened; in the most beautiful and wise of all God's creatures was found doubt and rejection of the all-loving, all-wise God who made him. And from that small seed of rejection has developed all the lies and violence of war against God in heaven and on earth. While there is no reason for why rebellion started in Lucifer's heart, ask your class members to comment on why we need to examine the path of Satan's fall into sin.

**Alternative:** Using a picture of a beautiful garden and a picture of disaster and violence, ask your class to contrast the scenes. What were the steps that led Satan from Paradise into the horrors of war against God?

### ► **STEP 2—Explore**

## **Bible Commentary**

### **I. The Origin of Sin** (*Review Isaiah 14:13, 14 and Ezekiel 28:14–17.*)

Though Ezekiel refers to the king of Tyre and Isaiah refers to the king of Babylon, it is difficult to make a literal connection from the descriptions in these verses to activities of earthly kings. However, these earthly kings were imitating their real leader, Satan. Understood in this light, these passages provide us with a “history of the origin, initial position, and downfall of the angel who later became known as the devil and Satan.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 675.

**Consider This:** What advantages did Lucifer have in position, form, and relationship to God? The prophet Ezekiel seems to dwell at length on these advantages. Why?

### **II. Lucifer Attacks God** (*Review Genesis 3:4, 5.*)

Though Lucifer was right next to God, he wanted to be above God.

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## Sin and the Law of God

The law is an expression of the character and will of the Lawgiver. The psalmist wrote, “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (*Ps. 40:8, NIV*). Here the will of God has been internalized and has become part of the character of the psalmist. In other words, the character of God is being appropriated through submission to the divine will expressed in the law.

**How** do these texts help us understand the link between God’s love and His law? *Matt. 22:37–40; John 3:16; 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3.*

When John wrote, “The devil has been sinning from the beginning” (*1 John 3:8, NIV*), he was saying that Satan, in heaven, rebelled against the loving will of God.

In contrast to loving obedience, there is lawlessness (*see 1 John 3:4*). The word *lawlessness (anomia)* refers to a deep-seated attitude in the heart of rebellious human beings. It speaks of chaos and anarchy as the substitutes for the divine law and for what it stands for, the divine character. The cosmic conflict is against God and what He is in Himself. Paul describes the end-time eschatological antichrist as “the man of lawlessness” (*2 Thess. 2:3, NIV*) and refers to the phenomenon of sin as the “mystery of *anomia*” (*vs. 7*).

**Review** God’s command to Adam and Satan’s words to Eve (*Gen. 2:17; 3:4, 5*). **What was going on here?**

Genesis 2:17 was a clear expression of God’s love for Adam and Eve and His intense desire to enjoy their fellowship forever. He clearly did not want them to experience death; otherwise, why alert them to the possibility of it? Created as free beings, Adam and Eve had to demonstrate their willingness to enjoy eternity with the Creator. Their obedience to the divine command would show that they were freely choosing to enjoy eternal life with Him. It is that clearly expressed divine will that Satan attacks and opposes, offering instead total “independence” from God. This was his basic agenda in heaven: independence from the divine command, being his own law without accountability to anyone.

**In what subtle ways is Satan still trying to get us to declare our “independence” from God? How can we protect ourselves from this deadly deception?**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

“Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35. At first Lucifer covered his tracks by pretending reverence, but in his dealings with the angels he began insinuating doubts about the nature of God.

**Consider This:** What doubts about God did the serpent try to awaken in Eve’s mind?

### III. Lucifer Attacks God’s Law (Review Matthew 22:37–40.)

God has represented His laws as expressions of love. When we obey God’s will, we are acting in a loving way to God and those around us. But Lucifer misrepresented these laws as repressive and unnecessary. “He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

**Consider This:** How does Satan tempt us to disregard God’s laws as rules that don’t apply to us? Examine Luke 11:42 and Galatians 5:13–15.

### IV. Lucifer Attacks God’s Government (Review Colossians 1:16, 17.)

**Consider This:** What role does Christ play in the government of the universe? In refusing to acknowledge Christ’s supremacy, where did Lucifer find himself in relationship to the universe?

“God’s government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also all the worlds.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 41. God had to let Lucifer’s plans ripen into full revolt, so that all the worlds could see the true nature of His accusations against God.

■ *How did Satan attack God’s methods of government in dealing with Job? (See Job 1:8–11.)*

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## Sin as Rebellion Against God's Government

**How** does Paul describe the cosmic role of Christ? *Col. 1:16, 17.*

That which integrates creation into a harmonious unity are not the laws of nature, important as they are, but the power of a loving God in the person of Christ. Love is not only the bond that keeps Christians united (*Col. 3:14*) but the bond that holds the universe together. It is not an impersonal force but the very essence of God Himself. An attack against God is an attack against the way He rules the universe and, therefore, is an attempt to upset the divine order of creation.

**Read** Job 1:8–11. Where do you see in these verses an attack on God Himself by Satan?

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The charges Satan raised against both Job and God reflect the charges he raised against God in heaven. According to him, Job served God out of selfish concerns, not out of love. He served God in order to obtain things from Him, and God provided for Job in order to gain his service. Satan argued that God's government was characterized by selfishness—not by selfless love, as God claimed. According to him, the true nature of humans is revealed in the midst of chaos, and if given the chance, they would rebel against God.

“All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.

“In heaven itself this law was broken. Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21.

**How can you better fit in with this “circuit of beneficence”?**

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED**V. War in Heaven** (Review Revelation 12:7–9.)

When Lucifer declared his determination to follow only the Father and not Christ, the Father pronounced the sentence that Lucifer and his angel followers should be cast out of heaven. Satan did not go willingly, but eventually he and his angel followers were thrown to the earth. “Satan became the avowed antagonist of Christ. On the earth he planted the standard of rebellion, and round it his sympathizers rallied.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 973.

**Consider This:** How has Satan carried on his work of rebellion here on earth? What is his purpose? (See *Zech. 3:1, John 8:44.*)

► **STEP 3—Practice****Object Lesson:**

Ask two people to come to the front of the class and each tenderly and carefully make a clay person. Put a bowl of water between them and announce, “The little people you have just made are spitting in your face. [Flick water at the creators.] What are you going to do about it?” (Coach your helpers ahead of time of your expectations.) One person should smash his creation; the other should turn her back.

**Consider This:** Discuss God’s options in dealing with Lucifer. If God had destroyed Lucifer right away, what might have happened? If God had ignored Lucifer and the problems he was causing, what might have happened? How does God handle rebellion?

**Life Applications:**

**1** Consider the laws we have today: traffic laws, tax laws, city ordinances, church and school policies, etc. How should we relate to laws that we disagree with? Compare Acts 4:19, 20 with 1 Peter 2:13–18.

**2** Lucifer declared himself to be the defender of liberty for angels who were being oppressed by God’s overbearing laws. What is the proper relationship between liberty and law? Examine Matthew 5:17–20, Romans 14:13–19, and Romans 15:1–8 as part of your discussion.

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## War in Heaven

Two words used by Ezekiel could help us understand the strategy of Lucifer's attack against God.

The first word is *trade* ("your widespread trade" [Ezek. 28:16, NIV]); he was involved in "widespread trade." The word translated "trade" also could be rendered "slander," suggesting that in heaven Lucifer was involved in raising false accusations against God and probably other heavenly beings. *Slander* is evil speech intended to damage the reputation of others, and it can describe the behavior of a person who has chosen to ignore the will of God and who stands under divine judgment (Lev. 19:16, Jer. 6:28–30). It results in division and disorder (2 Cor. 12:20). Satan is described in the Bible as the accuser or slanderer of God's people, the adversary (Zech. 3:1, Rev. 12:10). Satan did not hold " 'to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies' " (John 8:44, NIV).

This slander led Satan to *violence*, the second important word (Ezek. 28:16). *Violence* designates an antisocial behavior that violates God's established order. It is motivated by hate or egotism and could lead to physical and social attacks. In some cases it results in murder or in the exploitation of others for personal benefit (Gen. 49:5, Mic. 6:12). Satan was a " 'murderer from the beginning' " in that he introduced violence and death into God's creation (John 8:44).

**What** was the final result of the anti-God behavior of Lucifer in heaven? Rev. 12:7–9.

Slowly and mysteriously Satan's selfish feelings were transformed into a behavior that was an open attack against God and His Son. What was at first hidden soon became visible, creating confusion and disorder. There was war in heaven. This was the beginning of the cosmic conflict in which we all are involved. Satan and his supporters were defeated in heaven and on the cross, and they will be extinguished from the universe at the appropriate time. The resolution of the sin problem not only restores the fallen human race to perfect and permanent union with God but will reestablish a perfect moral harmony throughout all of God's creation.

**First come bad thoughts, which lead to bad words, which lead to bad actions. This happened to Satan, and unless we're careful, it will happen to us. What's our best defense? See Phil. 4:8.**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

3 As parents, we often have to manage a delicate balance between keeping order and helping our children practice decision-making and learn from the consequences of their choices. How does God’s example in His dealings with Lucifer inform our parenting practices?

► **STEP 4—Apply**

**Consider This:** Discuss the suggestions below as possible activities for the week ahead. Close with suggestion number 6.

1 Outline a plan whereby, with prayer, you implement something you have learned about God’s methods of dealing with challenges to His authority in your family or workplace.

2 Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. are examples of people who challenged oppressive elements in the governments of their day. Compare and contrast their leadership with that of Lucifer. How should we relate to oppression in the institutions and governments in which we are involved? Is there something you need to do?

3 The principle of government illustrated by Christ is that of service: He receives from God in order to give. What has God given to you, personally, that you need to freely offer to others? How do you plan to do this?

4 The world of science in which we are immersed bases its premises on the concept that the laws of nature are the basic harmonizing principles of the universe. Colossians 1:16, 17 argues that it is Christ, a person rather than an impersonal system, who holds the universe together. What fundamental philosophies and activities in your life would be affected by recognizing and applying this principle?

5 Job found himself attacked by one who was really aiming his attacks at God. Job’s behavior and witness were evidence supporting God’s side in the case. How have you found yourself in a similar situation, and how can you respond in such a way as to support God’s cause?

6 Read or sing number 225, “God Is Working His Purpose Out,” in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (1985). Discuss the meaning of the verses in the light of the class discussion.

**Further Study:** “There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Lucifer, ‘son of the morning,’ was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. He stood in the presence of the great Creator, and the ceaseless beams of glory enshrouding the eternal God rested upon him.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.

**Made a Final Choice:** “Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God’s glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God’s love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 761, 762.

### Discussion Questions:

- ① Think about the fact that Lucifer was a “perfect” being, and yet, iniquity was found in him. What does that tell us about the kind of freedom God has given to His intelligent creatures? What kind of moral responsibility does this freedom place on each of us?
- ② Keeping the idea of our freedom in mind, discuss the role of the law. Why would law be so important for free beings? If we were not free, why would there be no need for law? That is, what’s the purpose of a law for beings who don’t have moral choices to begin with?
- ③ Go back to the question at the end of Tuesday’s lesson. What are the various ways Satan seeks to manifest his character in us, both individually and as a church? What are the things we do that show, at times, just how successful he has been?

**Summary:** Lucifer, a free being, abused the freedom that God gave him, and he cherished evil thoughts until those thoughts turned into action, action against God’s government and against God Himself. The result was a disruption of heaven’s established order. Truly, the issues of sin and rebellion have consequences beyond our mere earth.