

The Big War Between Good and Evil



SABBATH—MARCH 31

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ezekiel 28:1, 2, 11–17; Genesis 3:1–7; Revelation 12:1–17; Romans 8:31–39.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the dragon [Satan] was very angry at the woman [God’s church]. It went away to make war against all her other children. Her children are those [people] who obey God’s commands and have the truth that Jesus taught” (Revelation 12:17, ERV).



The war between good and evil started in the heart of a perfect angel named Lucifer.

THE BIBLE TEACHES us that there is a big war going on between God and Satan. We can understand everything happening on this earth better when we understand what this war is all about. We will understand better why there is sin and suffering and death. We will understand why some countries rule over the earth and other countries lose power. We will understand the reasons why we must share the Good News about Jesus with everyone. We will also understand the things that will happen before Jesus comes back.

This week we will look at the “place” where the war started first. It started in the heart of a perfect angel named Lucifer. Lucifer brought his war against God to this earth when he led Adam and Eve to sin. This war has been going on ever since. Each of us is a part of this war.

There is good news. Someday Jesus will win the war. But there is even better news. Everyone can experience Jesus’ victory now. He won the fight against sin for us on the cross. His victory gives us the power to live lives of faith and obedience while we wait for Him to come back.

A PERFECT ANGEL SINS (Ezekiel 28:1, 2, 11–17)

Yesterday, we said the Bible teaches us about the big war going on between good and evil. This teaching leads us to ask several important questions about the war. One of the most important questions is: *How did this war get started?* This question is important because we know that God is loving and He made everything there is. It does not make sense that our loving God would make evil, fighting, and suffering when He made everything good and perfect in the beginning. So, the war between good and evil must have started after God made everything. Also, the war must be separate from everything God made. But the war is real. The war is here on earth. Everyone on earth is part of the war.

Read Ezekiel 28:1, 2, 11–17 and Isaiah 14:12–14. What do these verses teach us about Lucifer’s sin and how evil started in heaven?

Lucifer had been a beautiful angel. He lived in heaven. God made Lucifer perfect. So, how could sin start in Lucifer? After all, Lucifer lived in a perfect place and was made perfect, right? The answer is: we do not know why sin started in someone who was made perfect. Sin is a mystery. Maybe that is why the Bible talks about the “secret power of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:7, NIV) because we cannot know the true reasons for why sin started.

God made us free to choose. Sin started when Lucifer chose evil. But there is no excuse for Lucifer’s sin. Here is what Ellen G. White has to say about how sin started: “It is impossible for us to explain the reason why sin started. We can give no reason for why there is sin. . . . Sin is an unwelcome guest. Sin is a mystery. We cannot explain sin. To give an excuse for sin is the same as defending sin. But what if an excuse could be found for sin and why it is here? Then sin would stop being sin.”—*The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, pages 492, 493; adapted.

Put the word “evil” in the place of the word “sin” in the quotation we read, and read it again. You will see that everything we said about sin also can be said about evil.

God made us free to choose. Think about choices you made and the things that happened in your life because of your choices. What should those experiences tell you about why we need to pray carefully about the choices we make?



“Sin is an unwelcome guest. Sin is a mystery. We cannot explain sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, pages 492, 493; adapted.

KNOWING THE TRUTH IS NOT ENOUGH (Genesis 3:1–7)

We cannot explain why evil started. There is no excuse for evil. But the Bible tells us that evil started in Lucifer's heart in heaven. At the same time, the Bible does not tell us much more about how evil started in heaven. (We can read more about this idea in the writings of Ellen G. White. See her chapter "The Origin [start] of Evil" in *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*). But the Bible is clear about how evil started on earth (read *The Great Controversy*, pages 492, 493).

Read Genesis 3:1–7. What happened here? What were Adam and Eve guilty of doing?



Our knowing the truth is not enough to save us. We must obey it too.

The saddest part about what happened here is that Eve knew the words of warning that God said to her and Adam. Eve even says God's words to the snake: " 'God told us, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not even touch that tree, or you will die' ' " (Genesis 3:3, ERV). The Bible does not say anything about God telling Adam and Eve not to *touch* the fruit. Anyway, the Bible shows us that Eve knew that eating the fruit would cause her to die.

But the snake lied to Eve. "The snake [Satan] said to the woman, 'You will not die' " (Genesis 3:4, ERV).

Satan was very sneaky at first. But what happened when Satan got Eve's attention and saw that she was not turning away from him? Then Satan challenged the Lord's word to her. The sad thing is that Eve knew the truth. She could not say, "I did not know. I did not know any better!"

She knew.

But Eve sinned anyway. Adam sinned too. They were both perfect. That should tell us something important. Our knowing the truth is not enough to save us. True, we need to know the Bible. But we also need to do what the Bible says.

God said one thing. Satan said another. Adam and Eve knew the truth. But they chose to believe Satan. How can we avoid making this same mistake?

WAR IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH (Revelation 12:1–17)

We talk about a big war between good and evil that started in heaven. But that war also is happening here, right now, on this earth. We need only to look at Bible history to see how real this war is. Everything that happens in the Bible shows us that this war is real. That includes everything from the sin of Adam and Eve in Eden to the last things that happen before Jesus comes back. We live on this earth, where this war is being fought right now. The Bible explains what is going on in this war and tells us the reasons for it. Most important, the Bible tells us how this war will end.

Read Revelation 12:1–17. What wars are shown in these verses? Where do they happen?

In Revelation 12:1–17, we see a war in heaven and several wars happening on earth. The first fight is between the dragon (Satan; read Revelation 12:7–9) and Michael. Michael is another name for Jesus. (In Hebrew, Michael means “Who is the same as God?”) Lucifer became known as Satan. The name Satan means “enemy” or “an unfriendly person” or “someone who fights against another person.”

The big war between good and evil is not about gods who are fighting each other. No, the war is about an angel—Lucifer—who fights against Jesus, the One who made him. Lucifer also shows his attack on God by attacking the people on earth and everything God made.

Satan failed in his attack on Jesus in heaven. So, Satan went after Jesus on earth after Jesus was born in a human body (Revelation 12:4). But Satan failed in his attack against Jesus. Then Satan failed again in his attack against Jesus in the wilderness. Satan also failed in his attack against Jesus at the cross. So, what did Satan do after he lost all these fights against Jesus? Satan went to war against Jesus’ followers. This war has been going on ever since the Christian church got started (Revelation 12:6, 14–16). This war will continue to grow and get worse until the end of time (Revelation 12:17). Then Satan will fail again when Jesus defeats him at the Second Coming.

Read Revelation 12:10–12. What do we find in these verses to give us hope while this war between good and evil is being fought all around us?



The big war between good and evil is about an angel—Lucifer—who fights against Jesus, the One who made him.

JESUS IS WITH US UNTIL THE VERY END (Matthew 28:20)

The book of Revelation warns God's people ahead of time about Satan's attacks on the church. Satan's attacks would happen during most of the church's history.

"The attacks against Christians started with the Roman ruler Nero, around the time Paul was put to death. The attacks continued for many hundreds of years. Christians were blamed for awful crimes they never even did. People blamed Christians for the earthquakes, food shortages, and the diseases on earth. People everywhere hated Christians. Some people were ready to hurt Christians in exchange for money, power, or other things in this life. Christians were accused of being at war against the leaders of Rome. Christians were accused of attacking religion. People accused Christians of being the same as diseases or insects that destroyed plants. Many Christians were thrown to wild animals. Some Christians were burned alive in the big theaters in Rome."—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 40; adapted.

The Bible says that the "woman [God's true church]" ran into the wilderness to escape these attacks (Revelation 12:6). The Bible tells us that the woman had wings the same as an eagle. These wings help us make a picture in our minds of the woman flying away to a place where she could find help. God took care of the woman while she was in the wilderness. The snake [Satan] could not get to her (Revelation 12:14). God always protects His church during big attacks. God will protect it again in the last days.



The woman had wings the same as an eagle. She flew to a place where she could find help.

Jesus made this promise to His people living in the last days: “I am always with you, to the very end” (Matthew 28:20, NIV). What a wonderful promise! But does it mean that we will never need to suffer or die for our faith? Of course not. We know that many of Jesus' followers were put to death. So, what does this promise really mean? (Read also Romans 8:31–39 and Matthew 10:28 for hints.)

Nothing can separate us from God's love. Not attacks. Not food shortages. Not even death. Jesus is always with us. But God never promised us that we would never suffer, feel pain, or even death. Instead, Jesus' promise to us in Matthew 28:20 means God is with us in everything that happens. We also have the hope of everlasting life with Him in the new heavens and the new earth (2 Timothy 4:8).

THE LAW AND THE GOOD NEWS (Romans 3:20–26)

Have you ever stopped to think about the way our name announces to other people what we believe? Look at it and see: Seventh-day Adventist. The “Seventh-day” part reminds people about the seventh-day Sabbath. Do you know what is so wonderful about that? Our belief in the Sabbath commandment also shows our belief in all ten of God’s commandments. The “Adventist” part of our name shows our belief in the Second Coming of Jesus. So, our name Seventh-day Adventist shows two very important parts of the truth needed for this time: (1) the law and (2) the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin.

Read Jeremiah 44:23; Romans 3:20–26; and Romans 7:7. How do these verses show the close connection between the law and the Good News that Jesus saves us from our sins?

Jeremiah 44:23 _____

Romans 3:20–26 _____

Romans 7:7 _____

We have sinned by breaking God’s law. The Good News is that we can be forgiven for our sins. We are saved by our faith in Jesus and His death for us on the cross. Also, God gives us the power to obey the same law we broke. God gives us the power to obey that law fully. These special gifts—(1) being saved by faith, (2) Jesus’ death on the cross, and (3) the power to obey—clearly show how very different God’s people are from other people on earth.

So, it should not be a surprise to us that the Bible shows God’s people in the last days of earth’s history as being different from everyone else on earth.

Read Revelation 14:12. How does this verse show the connection between the law and the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in obeying God’s law. We see obedience to the law as something that grows stronger because we love God. How can we show other people that obeying the law does not mean trying to earn the gift of everlasting life by our good actions?



Our name Seventh-day Adventist shows two very important parts of the truth that people need for this time: (1) the law and (2) the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “There was a time when every angel and person that God made loved God with a loyal heart. There was perfect happiness and peace everywhere because of this loyalty and love for God. The angels in heaven loved to do everything God wanted. They loved to show God’s glory in their lives and to praise Him. Their love for God was the most important thing in their lives. Their love for each other was deep and unselfish. Nothing evil poisoned their peace. Then a change took place. Lucifer put to bad use the freedom that God gave to everyone He made. Sin started in Lucifer. God honored Lucifer above all the other angels. Only Jesus was honored more in heaven than Lucifer.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Bible fathers] and Prophets [special messengers from God]*, page 35; adapted.

Notice Ellen White’s words: “loved God with a loyal heart.” This wording is very powerful and full of meaning. It teaches us that love leads us to be loyal to God and to live a life of faith. A person who is married will show that same love and loyalty to the one he or she loves. The angels in heaven loved God and each other that way. That is how we should love God and each other.



A married person will show love and loyalty to the one he or she loves. That is how we should love God and each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What proof does the Bible give us that Satan is real? What proof does the Bible give us about Satan’s part in the big war between good and evil? How can we help people understand that Satan is a real person and not just a word picture for evil in the human heart?
- ② God blessed Seventh-day Adventists with much knowledge about the Bible. But why is knowing the truth not enough to save us? What more do we need?
- ③ How have you experienced Jesus’ love and power over sin in your life? How can these experiences help you in the times of trouble ahead?
- ④ In class, talk more about the powerful words that Ellen G. White wrote: “loved God with a loyal heart.” How does this idea help us understand better the close connection between the law and the Good News? How does this idea show us the truth that to love we first must be free to choose to love? What are ways we can show God’s love to other people?