

Creation *and the* Fall



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?

The cunning of the serpent is seen in the way 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?

The Woman and the Serpent

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

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. No question, though: by thinking 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, on most points but not all, are in harmony with Scripture? 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.*

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?

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 had been 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 eyes. 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 has 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*.

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?

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?

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?

Kayaks on a Mission

They're off! Thirty-one kayakers wearing life jackets, hats, and eager smiles embarked on a five-day mission adventure down the Rospuda River in Poland.

Their colorful kayaks were crammed with sleeping bags, tents, clothes, and food, and their most important cargo—magazines and books to share with people they would meet along their route. Their goal was to bring the people hope found only in Jesus.

When the kayakers came to a village, they docked their boats and set out to visit every home, praying with people and offering them literature about Jesus. Along their route they shared 3,500 copies of the newspaper edition of *Signs of the Times* and sold hundreds of books, including *Messiah* and *The Great Controversy* on CD. They even met people who remembered buying books from them on a previous trip down the river. "It's wonderful to hear that people have read our books and received a blessing," says Piotr Stachurski, church pastor and kayaker.

This was the fourth kayak mission trip for members of a Seventh-day Adventist church near Warsaw and some of their friends. This time almost half the group was young—between the ages of 7 and 15. "It's great to see our young people eager to become involved in mission," says Pastor Stachurski. "They learn from the adults how to share Jesus' love, and their enthusiasm encourages the rest of us."

The 41-mile (60-kilometer) river trip took kayakers through pristine forests and marshy meadows. Paddling about eleven miles a day, the team made plenty of time for outreach and Christian fellowship. At night they gathered around a campfire to worship God and pray for the people they had met that day.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland is small, with about fifty-seven hundred members. That's one Seventh-day Adventist for every 6,600 people. "The work is difficult in Poland," says Pastor Roszkowski, Global Mission director for the Polish Union Conference. "Poles want to catch up with Western Europe, often working two jobs. They have little time to read the Bible."

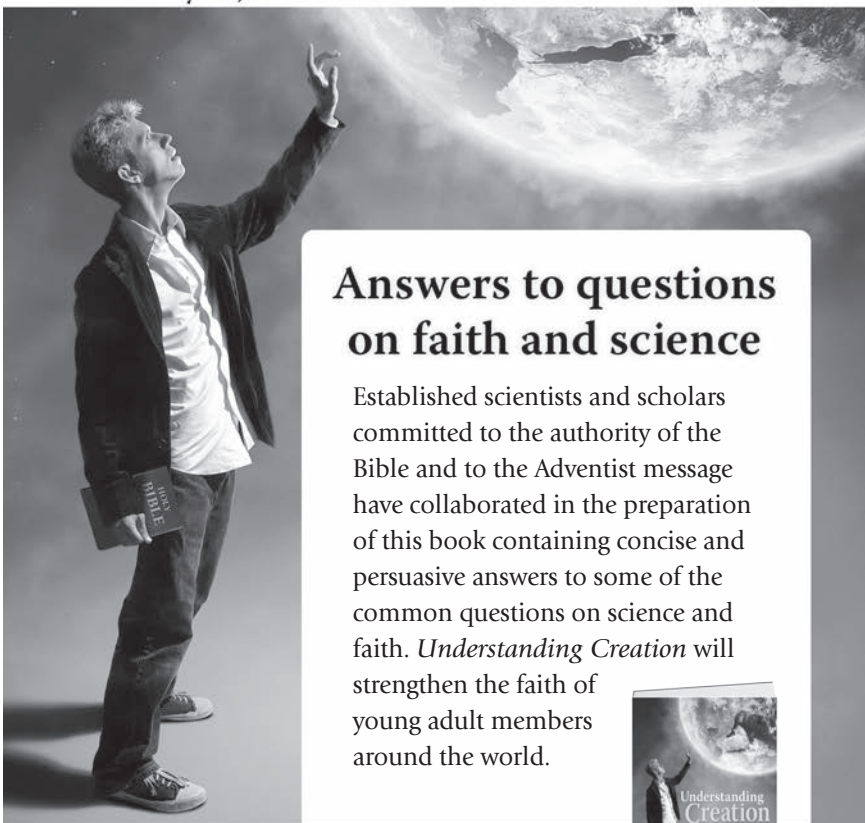
For many of the villagers the mission team members were the first Seventh-day Adventists they had ever met. The trip was funded in part by the mission offerings you give each week in Sabbath School.

"Our church is so thankful for the opportunity to share the hope we have in Jesus," says Pastor Stachurski. "We know people are reading the material we've given them, and some have requested Bible studies. It's my hope that our kayak mission story will help you know that your support of mission is making an incredible difference in people's lives."

PIOTR STACHURSKI is secretary of the South Polish Conference.

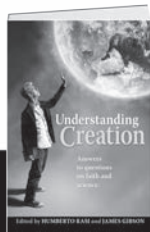
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THEY MAY NEVER SEE A DOCTOR



People in remote regions of the South Pacific live without conveniences we take for granted. Most will never visit a hospital or see a doctor in their lifetime. If they fall ill from malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, or pneumonia, or if they are injured, the nearest help could be several hours—or even days—away.

Adventists are responding to these needs. Dozens of simple clinics staffed by Adventist nurses provide the only medical care available to thousands of people in isolated regions of

the South Pacific Division. But thousands more still need clinics and nurses to treat their life-threatening injuries and illnesses. I'm glad that our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help provide more clinics to the people of Papua New Guinea and across the South Pacific. I want these people to know that God—and Adventists—care for them. For me it's personal.

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