

The Worldwide War Between Good and Evil



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 13:24–27; Genesis 1:31; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11; John 8:44, 45.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your children and her children will be enemies. You will bite her child's foot, but he will crush [destroy] your head’ ” (Genesis 3:15, ERV).



The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are filled with verses about the devil and demons who fight against God.

AN IMPORTANT BIBLE TEACHING is the worldwide war between God and Satan. This war is fought between God and the angels who sinned against Him. We may read about this idea all through the Bible (Matthew 13:24–30, 37–39; Revelation 12:7–10). This idea also is an important part of Christian history. Sad to say, many Christians today reject or pay no attention to this whole idea.

But the Bible teaches that the devil and his angels fight against God's kingdom. We must pay attention to this important topic. If we don't, we will not understand what the Bible stories are really all about. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are filled with verses about the devil and demons who fight against God.

This week, we will use the Bible to answer two important questions:

1. Where in the Bible can you find the teaching about the worldwide war between good and evil?
2. What is this war all about?

AN ENEMY DID THIS EVIL THING (Matthew 13:24–27)

Read the picture story in Matthew 13:24–27. How does this story help us understand why there is evil on this planet?

Jesus tells the story about a landowner who plants good wheat seeds in his field. But weeds grow with the wheat. When the servants of the landowner see the weeds, they ask him, “You planted good seed in your field. Where did the weeds come from?” (Matthew 13:27, ERV). Many people ask the same question today about the problem with evil: “If God made this earth and everything in it holy, why is there evil in it?”

Read Matthew 13:28–30, along with Jesus’ explanation in Matthew 13:37–40. How do these verses help us understand the worldwide war between good and evil?

The landowner answers his servants’ question: “An enemy planted weeds” (Matthew 13:28, ERV). Jesus later says that the one who plants the good seed is the Son of Man. The Son of Man is Jesus Himself (Matthew 13:37). Jesus also explains that the field is a word picture for this planet (Matthew 13:38). The enemy who planted the weeds is the devil (Matthew 13:39). The word pictures in these verses show the worldwide war between God and Satan. Why is there evil on this planet? Evil came because of the enemy, the devil, who fights against the landowner, or God. That’s what Jesus means when He says that an enemy planted weeds.

The landowner’s answer causes his servants to ask another question: “Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?” (Matthew 13:28, ERV). In other words, why not pull up the evil right away? The landowner answered, “No, because when you pull up the weeds, you might also pull up the wheat. Let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest time [when crops are collected]. At the harvest time I will tell the workers this: First, gather [collect] the weeds and tie them together to be burned. Then gather the wheat and bring it to my barn” (Matthew 13:29, 30, ERV; compare with Mark 4:29). The picture story teaches us that God will finally end evil forever. But destroying evil too soon would cause trouble and hurt the good wheat.



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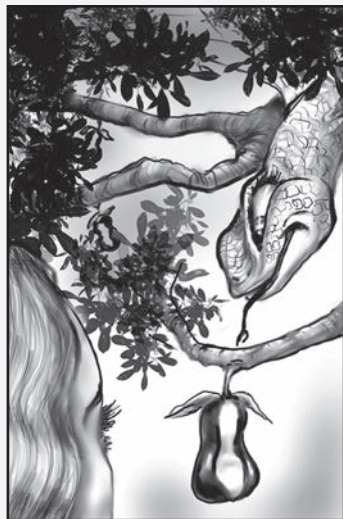
THE START OF THE WORLDWIDE WAR ON EARTH (Genesis 1:31)

Another important question about evil is: If God made the earth and skies good, how did evil start here?

Read Genesis 1:31. What do God’s words show us about the earth and skies when God finished making them? Why is this answer important?

Genesis 1:31 says that when God finished making the earth, it was “very good” (ERV). In Genesis 1, no evil is anywhere on this planet. How, then, did evil become part of the human experience?

Read Genesis 3:1–7. What do these verses tell us about how evil got here on earth? How does this answer help us better understand the worldwide war between good and evil? (Also read Revelation 12:7–9.)



Here in Genesis and elsewhere in the Bible, the worldwide war between God and Satan is about what to believe.

In this story, the snake tells lies about God. The snake is a word picture for the devil himself (Revelation 12:7–9). The snake first uses a question to cause Eve to doubt God’s command. Then the snake attacks what God said when he says to Eve, “ ‘You will not die’ ” (Genesis 3:4, ERV).

Someone, the snake or God, lied to Eve. Eve now has a choice to make. Will she believe what God told her? Or will she believe what the snake said?

Here in Genesis and elsewhere in the Bible, the worldwide war between God and Satan is about what to believe. Will we believe God’s truth or Satan’s lies? Also, this war is really about love. That’s because your beliefs and knowledge about someone help you to know if you can trust, love, and listen to this person.

Read Genesis 3:15. God tells the snake that a future Son of the woman will be the Savior. The Savior will destroy the snake’s head. Bible thinkers name this promise the first example of the Good News about Jesus in the Bible. How does this promise help us better understand the worldwide war between God and Satan? Also, how does this promise give us hope?

THE WAR STARTS IN HEAVEN (Ezekiel 28:12–19)

Genesis 1–3 shows us that there was evil **before** Adam and Eve sinned. “Evil” already appeared in the name of the tree of the knowledge about good and evil (Genesis 2:9, 17). At this tree, the snake accuses God of lying when the snake is really the liar. The snake (Revelation 12:9) and his lies show the evil that is in his heart. So, before the Fall happened in Eden, there was evil.

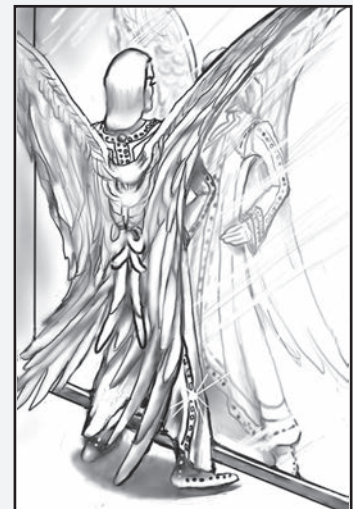
Read about Lucifer’s fall in Ezekiel 28:12–19. Also read Exodus 25:19, 20. Why does Lucifer fall?

Ezekiel 28:12–19 tells us how evil started and how the worldwide war between God and Satan began in heaven.

Before Lucifer fell and became Satan, he was a mighty angel. The Bible also tells us that he was “an example of what was perfect. You were full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You had a wonderful life . . . in Eden, the garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:12, 13, ICB). The king of Tyre did not live in Eden. As a sinner, the king of Tyre wasn’t perfect. So, these verses can’t be talking about the real king of Tyre (or any other human). The king of Tyre is a word picture for Lucifer. So, in these verses, we are really reading about the fall of Lucifer.

Read Isaiah 14:12–15. What extra information do these verses give us about the worldwide war between good and evil?

In Isaiah 14, Lucifer decided to make himself the same as God. Isaiah 14 adds more information to what we read about Lucifer in Ezekiel 28. Lucifer’s heart was filled with pride because of his beauty (Ezekiel 28:17). Lucifer didn’t worship the God who made him beautiful. Lucifer tried to replace God with himself. Lucifer lied about God. The Hebrew word in Ezekiel 28:16 for “trading” (NLV) or “traded” (ICB) means to talk bad about somebody and say false things about that person. This word shows us how Satan will work against God and His people in the end times.



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IF YOU WORSHIP ME (Matthew 4:1–11)



The Spirit led Jesus into the desert so that the devil could try to get Him to sin (Matthew 4:1).

As we saw yesterday, Satan wanted to remove God and replace Him with himself. We see this same evil plan in stories in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. In these chapters, Satan tries to get Jesus to sin. We learn a lot about the worldwide war between God and Satan in these chapters.

Read Matthew 4:1–11. How is the worldwide war between God and Satan shown in these verses?

The Spirit led Jesus into the desert so that the devil could try to get Him to sin (Matthew 4:1). Before Jesus met with Satan, He ate no food for 40 days. Jesus was very hungry. So, when the devil came, he tried to get Jesus to change the stones into bread. Jesus fought the devil with Bible verses, and Satan’s plan failed.

Next, Satan tried to get Jesus to throw Himself off the top of the temple. Satan tried to make the Bible say something that it didn’t promise. Satan told Jesus that if He was truly God’s Son, angels would protect Him if He jumped. But Jesus used Bible verses to fight against Satan and his lies.

The third time Satan tried to get Jesus to sin shows us what he was trying to do. Satan wants Jesus to worship him. Satan tries to steal the worship that belongs to God.

To get Jesus to worship him, Satan “led Jesus to the top of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of [on] the world [earth] and all the wonderful things in them. The devil said, ‘If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you all these things’ ” (Matthew 4:8, 9, ERV). We can read the same story in Luke 4. In Luke 4:6, the devil says to Jesus, “ ‘I will give you all these kingdoms and all their power and glory. It has all been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish’ ” (ICB).

Again, Jesus fights against the devil with Bible verses. Again, Satan loses the fight.

In all three examples, Jesus uses the Bible to fight against the enemy.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us about our real enemies. We are fighting against evil spirits. But we must not live in fear. Jesus will help us win. At the same time, why must we always remember what is really going on around us?

WHAT THE WORLDWIDE WAR IS ALL ABOUT (John 8:44, 45)

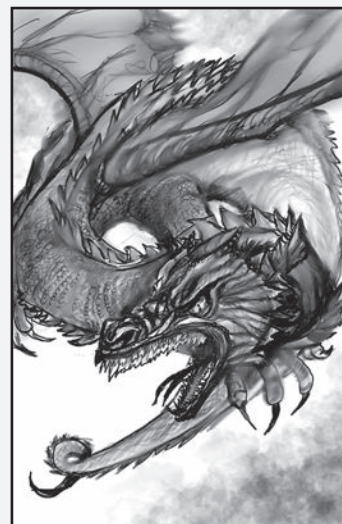
How can God and Satan have a war against each other? If God and Satan war against each other about power, the war would be finished in one minute. That's because Satan can't beat God. So, the war must be about something else. The Bible shows us that the war is about God and His government. Satan says that God is not fully good and loving. God can't destroy these lies with power. So, God must compare His government with Satan's to show how the two governments are different.

“When God fights against sin, He can only use Bible truth and His holy law. Satan can use what God can't use: lies and tricks. Satan tried to make the Bible say things it didn't mean. Satan also lied about God's government to the angels. Satan told the angels that God was not fair in commanding them to obey laws and rules. Satan said that God was trying to make Himself more important and powerful than He really was when He asked the angels to obey Him. So, God must show the angels in heaven and the people on all the other planets that His government was fair and that His law was perfect. Satan tried to make the angels believe that He wanted the best for everyone in heaven. God must show everyone Satan's real plan. So, God gave Satan time to show who he was by all the evil things he did.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 498, adapted.

Read John 8:44, 45, along with Revelation 12:7–9. What do these verses show us about the devil and his plan?

The devil's plan from the start was to try to make people believe that God wasn't really fair and loving. Satan also wanted people to believe that God's law hurt people and made them slaves. No wonder Jesus says the devil is “ ‘a liar. He is the father of lies’ ” (John 8:44, ERV). Jesus came to “ ‘to tell people about the truth’ ” (John 18:37, ERV). Jesus came to destroy the devil's lies and, in the end, the devil himself (1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14).

Revelation 12:9, 10 shows that Satan is (1) the snake, (2) the one who accuses God's people, and (3) the dragon who lies to everyone. In the Greek language, the word “devil” means someone who tells lies. This word shows us that the worldwide war between good and evil is about beliefs, including what we believe about God and who He is.



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Origin of Evil,” pages 492–504, in *The Great Controversy*.



“For the good of heaven for all ages to come, Satan must be allowed to fully show the rules of his government.”

“The Bible teaches very clearly that God did not make sin. Sin did not start in heaven because of something God did. Sin didn’t start because there was something wrong with God’s government. Sin is an enemy. No reason can be given for sin. Sin is a mystery. No one can explain it. If we could give a reason for sin, then that is the same as making an excuse for sin. . . . What if God destroyed Satan right away? Then the angels in heaven and the people on other planets would serve God with fear and not with love. Satan’s power would continue and not be fully destroyed. Other angels would continue to fight against God. For the good of heaven for all ages to come, Satan must be allowed to fully show the rules of his government. Then everyone will see that God’s government was good and fair. They would see that God’s mercy and His law should forever be trusted and obeyed.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 492, 493, 499, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Many people wonder how Lucifer, a perfect angel, could sin for the first time. Why is sin a mystery? Why can’t we excuse sin? How can we explain this first sin without making an excuse? Why would trying to give a reason for how this first sin started be the same as making it okay?
- 2 Why didn’t God destroy Satan right away? Why must evil be allowed to grow and show itself for what it really is? How is this plan for the good of everyone in heaven and on earth for all ages to come?
- 3 Why is it so important to understand that the worldwide war between God and Satan is not about power and might? What type of war is it? How does a conflict about God’s government, His law, and His love help us understand what this war is all about?
- 4 In what ways does your own life show the worldwide war between God and Satan? How should you behave to show whose side you are on?

THE DOCTOR WHO DIDN'T GIVE UP: PART 1

Matrona couldn't get the Zoom call with Dr. Colette Reahl to work.

Matrona told Colette on the phone, "The Zoom call is not working!" Matrona typed and retyped the Zoom password on her computer.

Matrona was one of many Indian orphan children living in Alaska. Matrona wanted to talk with Colette, but the Zoom call didn't work.

Colette said, "It's OK."

Matrona said, "It's not OK! I want to try again."

When the Zoom call didn't work again, Colette suggested that they talk on the phone instead of on Zoom.

Colette Reahl was a Seventh-day Adventist and a children's doctor. Colette was born in Florida, but she had lived in Anchorage, Alaska, for eight years with her husband. Now Colette wanted to adopt a child. So, Colette was excited about getting to know Matrona.

Matrona agreed to talk on the phone. The first question Matrona asked Colette was, "What rules do you have in your house?"

Colette said, "That is something we can talk about more when you get to the house. But respect is important in my home."

Matrona asked Colette many questions for the next 30 minutes. At the end of the conversation, Matrona said, "Did you know that the lady who takes care of me now plans to adopt me?"

Colette did not know that. She thought, "Matrona is so interesting. She has such a big personality, too!"

Matrona knew that Colette wanted to adopt a child. But Matrona didn't want to get hurt. So, she didn't let Colette get too close to her heart.

Colette asked Matrona how often she could call her. Matrona said only one time each week, on Tuesdays. But when Colette called, Matrona didn't answer or wasn't at home. So, Colette and Matrona changed the time to Thursdays, and then to Saturdays.

Colette understood that Matrona was upset about something, but she didn't understand why. Colette decided to keep calling every week anyway, even if Matrona didn't want to talk to her. As Colette kept calling, Matrona started to trust that Colette really cared about her.

Dr. Colette Reahl is a leader at the Bethel (Alaska) Seventh-day Adventist Church. Last year, Bethel Church got part of a 13th Sabbath Offering. Your 13th Sabbath Offering will help us continue to share the Good News with people everywhere. Read more about Colette and Matrona next week.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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Dr. Colette Reahl and Matrona