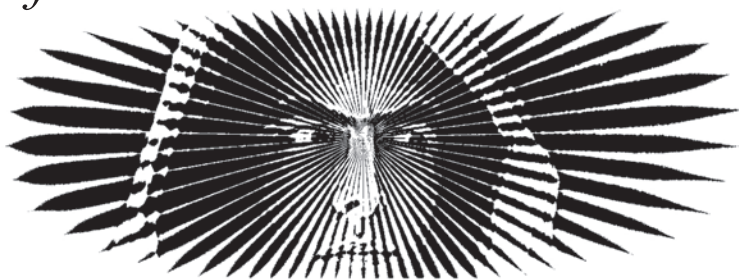


Cosmic Crisis: The Disruption of God's Established Order



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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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”?

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)?

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.

“God Was My Umbrella”

by ALEX ERIGA

I was called to the headmaster’s office in the high school I attended in northern Uganda. My school fees were due, and I had no money. I walked the 29 miles home and told my parents the problem. They asked relatives to help pay my fees then sent me back to school.

As I walked toward school, I saw storm clouds gathering. Rain would follow, and there was no place to take refuge. I hurried on, watching the dark clouds approach. Their feathery bottoms told me it was raining hard. With no shelter, I kept walking. I worried that my schoolbooks would get wet.

As the storm drew closer, I remembered God’s promise that He will not leave His servant to suffer. I knelt beside the road and prayed. I could hear the wind blowing and could smell the rain. “Thank You for the school fees, God,” I prayed. “Please protect me from the rain so my books won’t get wet.” I got up and hurried on. The rain clouds were closing in.

Two people walking toward me were soaking wet. Then I noticed that the ground was wet. The rain was in front of me as well as behind me. It was getting late, and I still had a long way to go. I kept walking. Two miles farther I felt a few drops of rain. The clouds above me were dark and heavy.

At last I approached the school and the nearby trading center. The mud puddles along the road told me that it had rained quite hard there. Some of my classmates returning from the trading center saw that my clothes were dry and asked, “Where did you wait out the storm?”

“Nowhere,” I said. “God was my umbrella.” I told them how I had prayed and God had protected me on my long walk to school.

When I arrived at school, other boys asked how I had stayed dry in the storm. Again I shared how God had protected me. As I told my story, I realized that God cares about the little things in my life; surely He also cares for the big things. As I told how God had kept me dry, I was able to witness to others who didn’t know how much God loves them.



I thank God for giving us miracles to share and faith to live by as we tell the world about God’s love. And thank you for supporting the mission offering each week, for it helps carry the gospel to the world.

ALEX ERIGA (left) lives in a Sudanese refugee camp in Adjumani, Uganda.