

Crisis¹ in Eden



SABBATH—JANUARY 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:28; Matthew 6:26; Genesis 2:15–17; Genesis 3:1–7, 10–19.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I will put hatred between you and the woman. Your children and her children will be enemies. Her son will crush your head. And you will crush his heel’ ” (Genesis 3:15, NIV).

AFTER THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, GOD ANNOUNCED THAT EVERYTHING WAS “VERY GOOD” (GENESIS 1:31). But it is very clear now that everything in the world is not “very good.” Over hundreds of years many individuals (persons), organizations, and governments have tried to make things right. But our world continues toward violence, pollution, and war. The twentieth century probably began with a positive outlook for the future. But the twenty-first century has certainly lost it—and with good reason too.

How did we get into this situation? The answer is found in the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan). It began in heaven but came to earth rather early on in earth's history.

This week we will look at how Satan was able to take advantage of human freedom. This is how he has started the destruction that we all experience even today. The story of the Fall reminds us that our only safety as human beings depends on our believing what God tells us and on our *obeying* Him, too.

DEFINITIONS

1. crisis—time of great trouble and hardship.

THREE BLESSINGS (Genesis 1:22, 28)



The Creator invited our first parents to be co-rulers with Him and to care for all living things.

DEFINITIONS

2. evolution—the theory (unproved idea) that the differences between modern plants and animals are because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.

About Creation, the wording “and God saw that it was good” appears seven times in Genesis 1: (1) light (Genesis 1:4); (2) dry land and sea (Genesis 1:10); (3) plants giving seed and fruit trees bearing fruit (Genesis 1:12); (4) sun, moon, and stars (Genesis 1:16); (5) seas full of fish and skies filled with birds (Genesis 1:21); and (6) beasts, cattle, and creeping things (Genesis 1:25). Finally, when God’s work is finished, we get the sentence: (7) “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31, NKJV).

So God announced that everything He made was “very good.” Then He went a step further and “blessed” His creation in three areas.

First, He blessed the sea animals and fish and the birds. He encouraged them to “‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’ ” (Genesis 1:22, NKJV). Second, when Adam and Eve were created, God blessed them too with the same kind of encouragement: “ ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth’ ” (Genesis 1:28, NKJV).

Read Genesis 1:22, 28. Both blessings begin in the same way, but what extra is added for Adam and Eve?

Humans share with fish and birds God’s encouragement to be fruitful and multiply. But what is different is that Adam and Eve are given the responsibility to care for the earth.

The third blessing given in the Creation story is the seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:3). Here is further proof that people are far more than just animals. These people were created to enjoy fellowship with the Creator in ways no other kinds of living things can. Here we find strong proof that God has given humans a very important place in the creation. Jesus made this important point: “ ‘Look at the birds of the air. They don’t [do not] plant or gather crops. They don’t [do not] put away crops in storerooms. But your Father who is in heaven feeds them. Aren’t you [are you not] worth much more than they are?’ ” (Matthew 6:26, NIV). Truly, Jesus made it clear that people are very special on earth.

In what ways does the Creation story in the Bible give special honors to humans that evolution² cannot? From the Bible view of human beginnings, ask yourself: *Am I treating everyone as they deserve to be treated?*

THE TEST AT THE TREE (Genesis 2:15–17)

God created everything by a series of clear separations, such as light and darkness, waters above and waters below, land and sea, night and day, animals according to their kind, a day separated from the others, a woman separated from a man, and a tree set apart from the others.

Read Genesis 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18, 21, 24, 25. Why is it important that clear separations are outlined, even before the creation of humans?

God created man, beast, and bird from the ground (Genesis 2:7, 19). He also caused beautiful trees with delicious fruit to “spring up” from the ground (Genesis 2:8, 9, ESV). God also chose a special piece of land in which He planted a garden. We can only imagine its beauty. In the middle of this special garden in Eden there were two special trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Fruit from the second tree was not to be eaten, or there would be terrible results (Genesis 2:17).

Read what God said to Adam in Genesis 2:15–17. How is the idea of separation explained here, in this test of their obedience to God?

The separation is very clear: eat from all the other trees, but not from this certain one. It was separate from the others. There was nothing unclear about God’s words. Adam and Eve were created as moral³ persons. Righteousness cannot work without free choice. Here was a test to find out what Adam and Eve would do with that freedom. “The tree of knowledge had been made a test of Adam and Eve’s obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them just one rule among all that was theirs to use in the garden. Should Adam and Eve disobey God’s will by eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would be recognized as guilty of law-breaking.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Forefathers and Leaders] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 53.

What are some things in your life that you really need to separate yourself from?



The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was made a test of Adam’s and Eve’s obedience and love to God.

DEFINITIONS

3. moral—righteous (holy and good).

THE FALL: PART 1 (Genesis 3:1–5)



The tempter made it appear to Eve that God was not only dishonest but also withholding something good from humans.

The snake is described as more clever than any other animal (Genesis 3:1, NIV). It became a powerful symbol throughout the Bible. Moses lifted up a bronze serpent on a pole to stop people from dying in a plague of deadly serpents during the Exodus (Numbers 21:5–9). The same bronze serpent became an idol. And King Hezekiah destroyed it about seven hundred years later (2 Kings 18:4). In Revelation, the “old serpent” is clearly called “the devil, or Satan” (Revelation 12:9, NIV).

Read Genesis 3:1–5. What plan did Satan use to deceive Eve?

The first words spoken by the snake were negative words of doubt: “ ‘Did God really say?’ ” (Genesis 3:1, NIV). Eve did not wonder why a snake was talking to her. Instead, she was deceived by its faith-destroying lies. Satan asked, “ ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden?” ’ ” (Genesis 3:1, NIV). But he really suggested that God forbade (did not allow) them to eat from *all the trees*. In fact, that was really not what God had forbidden them to do. God forbade them to eat from only one tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God’s character (goodness) is being questioned here. This is a direct attack on Him. Her answer adds a detail that God did not give: “ ‘We can eat the fruit of the trees that are in the garden. But God did say, “You must not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. Do not even touch it. If you do, you will die” ’ ” (Genesis 3:2, 3, NIV; compare Genesis 2:17).

Satan’s success up to this point made him bold. So, he then directly challenged God’s authority: “ ‘You will not surely die’ ” (Genesis 3:4, NKJV). The fact that Satan was touching the fruit and remained alive made his statements believable. He then said, “ ‘God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’ ” (Genesis 3:5, NKJV). The tempter made it appear that God was not only dishonest but also holding back something good from them.

Satan mixed truth with error. What are some things people believe that are a mixture of truth and error? Why is that always a deadly mix?

THE FALL: PART 2 (Genesis 3:4–7)

When God decided to create Adam and Eve, He said that they would be made in God's image and be like Him (Genesis 1:26). The bait on the tempter's "hook" was that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would become "like God." The truth is that they already were like God. They had been created in His image. But the sad fact is that in the heat of temptation, they forgot this important truth.

Additionally, God was the original Giver of their food. But part of the rebellion (war against God's authority) involved Adam and Eve choosing something to eat outside of God-given limits. It would be like being invited to someone's home for a meal. But instead of eating from their table, you go to their cupboard or refrigerator and help yourself to something that interests you more. That would be an insult to your hosts. And it would also show that you do not respect your relationship with them.

Read Genesis 3:4–7. The tempter had promised Eve that by eating the fruit her eyes would be opened. What did Adam and Eve see when their eyes were opened? And what did that new sight make clear to them?

Eve became overpowered by her senses (Genesis 3:6). The tree was beautiful. As she sank her teeth into a piece of the fruit, Eve imagined that she entered into a higher level of life. Then she shared her experience with Adam. And, yes, their eyes were opened (Genesis 3:7). But they became embarrassed by what they saw.

One important issue here is that Adam and Eve turned away from God as the Giver of every good thing. Instead, they chose a man-made answer to human need (in this case, the desire to eat). God had promised Adam and Eve that He would give them their food. He had given them their "menu." Adam and Eve's eating from the forbidden tree was a move outside of that menu or agreement and showed their lack of trust in God.

What kind of "forbidden fruit" (which often appears so tempting, so pleasing, and so full of promise) is made available to us today? How can we learn not to make the same kind of mistake when we are tempted?



As she sank her teeth into the fruit, Eve imagined she entered into a higher level of life.

THE RESULTS (Genesis 3:10–19)

We may be well into eternity before we understand fully how much damage was caused by that one event at the tree. All that God did during Creation week started to fall apart. Relationships that God established were broken. This included relationships (1) between people and God (they hid from Him), (2) between each other (Adam blamed Eve for his trouble), and (3) between humans and the land.

Read Genesis 3:10–19. What did Adam’s and Eve’s excuses show about how ruined they had already become?

Notice how God dealt with these excuses. Before God could save them, Adam and Eve had to admit responsibility for what they had done. So, God carefully explained to them the results of their actions. First, the serpent was cursed and would eat dust, be hated by the woman, and have its head bruised (Genesis 3:14, 15).

Then the Lord told Eve that she was to experience great pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16). Meanwhile, Adam was to work hard and sweat for food rather than live as a king (Genesis 3:17–19).

Adam and Eve were now faced with the choice of either continuing in rebellion or returning to God. Accepting responsibility for their wrong was their first step in returning to God. But even that acceptance was not enough to solve the problem caused by sin.

There had to be another way to ensure the future of humanity. So, God made an animal sacrifice to point to a Savior (Genesis 3:21). Satan used a creature,⁴ a snake, to introduce them to sin, loss, and broken relationships. So God used a creature, a lamb, to point forward to the Savior, who would bring salvation (read Genesis 3:15). But, rather than being rulers over the earth, Adam and Eve were now dependent on the earth and each other as never before. “Among the lower creatures Adam had stood as king. As long as Adam remained loyal to God, all nature accepted his rule. But when Adam fell into sin, this position was taken away from him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 26.

Immediately after the Fall, we were given hope of salvation. Read Genesis 3:15. How can you make that hope your own? How can you learn the joy of salvation, knowing that it is offered to you no matter what your past life was like?

DEFINITIONS

4. creature—a living thing created by God.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: We are a long way away from Eden, from the original creation. But there is still so much in creation that speaks to us of the goodness of God. Look around: we can find not only wonderful beauty but also wonderful design. All these good things speak of our Creator's love. For example, think about things such as apples, oranges, tangerines, strawberries, blueberries, avocados, tomatoes, lemons, limes, watermelons, almonds, pecans, pears, plums, carrots, peas, bananas, pineapples, pomegranates, broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, onions, raspberries, cherries, celery, papaya, eggplant, rhubarb, spinach, melons, and on and on. Is it just by chance that all these are so good for us and that they just happen to grow out of the ground bearing their own seed? Of course not. But not everyone can have these delicious foods. For there are floods and famines and disease. And people do go hungry. This shows how greatly damaged our world has become because of sin. But if we can, for a moment, get "behind" the damage in creation and just think of the creation itself—wow! What a powerful example of God's love. We just have to remember: the hope is not in the creation itself but only in the Creator Himself (Jesus).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 As humans, we were never meant to die. Death is just an unpleasant "break," something that we should have never known or experienced. So, our natural feeling of hatred for death is, no doubt, a weak example of what we have taken with us from Eden. Think deeply about all the Bible promises of eternal life that we have been given. How can they help us to deal with the terrible thought of death now?
- 2 What parts of the created world talk to you in a powerful way about how real God and God's love are for us?
- 3 Read again in Genesis 3 about how Adam and Eve started making excuses for their sin. Why is that so easy to do? What are ways that we try to do the same? How often do we blame heredity, environment, or other people as causes of our mistakes? How can we get out of this dangerous mind-set and accept responsibility for our actions?