

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 03 2015

the way of two worlds

Scripture Story: Isaiah 14; Revelation 12; Genesis 1; 2.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 1 and 2.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The book of Genesis introduced the human story with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” but the story really began before the earth was created. God and the angels lived in perfect harmony by the basic rule of love until selfishness grew inside Lucifer. The selfishness that stirred in Lucifer’s heart soured the music of heaven, and many began to suspect that something was different about the musically gifted angel.

The Father in heaven made personal appeals to Lucifer to surrender his pride, but the honored angel responded to God’s kindness with only deeper resentment. As Lucifer’s jealousy of the Son of God intensified, open conflict in heaven became inevitable. Both God and Lucifer drew their weapons. Lucifer’s primary weapon was to deceitfully undermine the character of God with a well-placed lie. God, however, chose the only weapon His nature would allow: He chose to continue His rule of love and allow the fruit of sin to ripen in the arena of His creation. Love’s response to sin would not be to destroy it, but to pay for it and patiently allow sin to run its horrible course. God chose to create the world, including Adam and Eve, according to His perfect plan and expose the glorious world to the deceiver.

Many have wondered whether the world would have been better off if God had dealt with Lucifer quickly and quietly. This lesson leads us to wonder,

“Why did God choose to create the world and mankind when the imminent danger of sin waited to corrupt God’s plan?” Ellen White says, “Had he [Lucifer] been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 42).

When God commenced with the plan of creation, He was fully aware of the danger that lurked for His beloved children. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve and the inhabitants of the earth were created. The Sabbath, marriage, the joy of work, and communion with God became rich blessings for Adam and Eve. Their perfect world would remain as long as they were loyal to God and His rule of love.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that the central rule of God’s government is love, which is why He allowed sin to begin and why He created humanity. (*Know*)
- Experience a sense of confidence in God’s law of love and His creative design. (*Feel*)
- Be encouraged to live patiently with a more resolute trust in God’s character. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Sabbath¹
- Marriage and family²
- Creation³ / Evolution

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnection.net

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A nurse in California recalled working tirelessly with the emergency room staff on a sweet-natured toddler who repeatedly showed up with breathing problems. Over the course of a year the little boy underwent examination after examination, each resulting in a diagnosis of asthma. The source of the illness eluded the doctors and nurses, and each time the little boy was examined the mystery of his struggle to breathe continued to baffle everyone involved. There was no prior history of asthma as an infant, and the notion of allergies was ruled out after further testing. Every symptom seemed to point to asthma, and so he was treated and sent back home.

But sure enough, he would experience difficulty with his breathing and show up in the emergency room again and again. While the staff grew to love the youngster, they were mystified as to how to fix the real problem. One day, when the child was again rushed into the emergency room struggling to breathe, an intern decided to take a look up the little boy's nose. The doctor discovered a black jellybean lodged way up in the child's nostril (probably placed there by his brother). The doctor and staff victoriously removed the obstacle, and the problem was solved. Can you imagine the relief that young boy felt when he finally was able to breathe properly?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

As humans, we see the symptoms of sin, but do we understand what is causing the problem? God rarely answers our “whys” about His actions. What are the questions we should be asking to get at the source of the problem? What are the things we should be asking about the character of God and the character of Lucifer, the fallen angel?

When sin reared its ugly head in heaven, the solu-

tion might have seemed obvious: Stop Lucifer—at all costs! Keep the devil away from Adam and Eve! Erase Satan and sin will be no more! God looked much more deeply at the sin problem, and in light of His desire to create you and me He chose to banish Lucifer from heaven and continue with His plan of creation on earth. Our story today has two pictures: (1) a snapshot of the beginning of sin, and (2) a snapshot of God's perfect world.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What are some key facts in these passages that show who Lucifer was? What was his role in heaven? What was he like? What was his downfall? What did he ultimately desire more than anything else? What was God's response?
- Why do you think there are no reasons given in this passage as to why God allowed sin to continue? Are there reasons given in the Creation story as to why He created the earth and humanity?
- *Highlight* what you think are the most significant aspects of the Creation story.
- What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? How were Adam and Eve “like” God? Was it physical? emotional? moral? Are we like God in the same way or in a similar way? What is the difference?
- What do you think is significant about the fact that humans were created in the image of God? How do you think people would be different today if they had a better understanding of why sin was permitted?
- What do you think is significant about the fact that the Sabbath, marriage, work, and long walks with God existed before sin entered the world? How do you think people would be different today if they knew God's ultimate reason for creating the world and people?
- What are some insights from this reading that you have noticed for the first time?
- *Underline* the verse that you think is the most important part of the story. Why do you think so?
- What do you think is more important to understand—why God let sin continue, or what God was thinking when He created the world and

humanity? Explain. (You may want to connect the student responses back to the opening activity in the *Getting Started* section by saying: Who would benefit from an explanation of sin's existence? Who would benefit from more insight into God's mind at Creation? Why?)

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Ephesians 1; Revelation 20; 1 John 4:8; Isaiah 46:10; John 12:31; John 14:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

1. The cryptic story of Lucifer's fall still seems to baffle those who read it. Why was sin permitted? Another question to ask might be: What kind of God would make creatures who had the power to choose whether to serve Him or themselves, and then wipe them out the moment they made the wrong choice?
2. The Hebrew word for Satan means *adversary*. In the New Testament the name for Satan is *Diabolos*, which means "one who slanders or accuses." Every time Satan shows up in Scripture he attempts to bring down the character of God. For examples:

(A) In Eden: "You will not certainly die. . . . For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will

be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4, 5, NIV).

(B) With Job: "God said to Satan, 'Have you noticed my friend Job? There's no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil.' Satan retorted, 'So do you think Job does all that out of the sheer goodness of his heart? Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can't lose!' " (Job 1:8-10, Message).

(C) At the temptations of Christ: *Feed Yourself* by turning stones to bread. *Save Yourself* and mystify everyone watching with Your power. *Make it easy on Yourself*, and I'll give you back the world and you won't have to die for it (Matthew 4 and Luke 4).

3. This lesson is not only about the Fall and the impact of Lucifer's sin, but about God's character and the way He chooses to create humanity in the very presence of an enemy.

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? The word *image* in the Hebrew means a "copy or a shadow or reflection of an original." Bible scholars agree that this word does not mean humans are an exact duplication of God, but rather the effects of God's internal

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**

Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

character and external qualities are evident in humans, thus making them different from any other created being. As time and sin have had an effect on humanity, our reflection of God is much dimmer than it was with Adam and Eve, but it is still there! Can you see attributes of God's great character reflected in the Godlike people you know?

4. The following were in existence before sin marred humanity:
- Human nature and the ability to freely choose to love others or self
 - The Sabbath
 - Marriage
 - Walking and talking with God

What do you think the new earth will be like?

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Teaching With Punch

A teacher can ask the students, "What does Psalm 139 say about God's love and plan for our lives?" The problem with that question is: (1) The teacher is only asking the student to restate what has already been stated, and (2) The question fails to get the students to truly interact with the meaning in the text. One approach that might engage students to interact personally with the Bible would be to say: "Read the *Punch Lines* and choose the verse that speaks to you personally about God's plan for your life." This enables the students to think for themselves and internalize the message. Also, students feel safer to answer a question when the teacher has removed the fear of potentially being wrong.

RABBI 101

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Bring a mirror to class or take the students to a mirror. If the mirror is clean, the reflection will be pretty accurate. If you rub an oily substance on the mirror, it reflects a smeared image. But some of the attributes are still identifiable—just not clear. Talk about this dynamic with the students. If we are a reflection of God ("made in the image of God"), then His attributes are evident in the mirror. The mirror isn't God. Ask the students to consider what things may dirty up the mirror the most.

Ask: What can we do today to better reflect to others who God is?

Summary

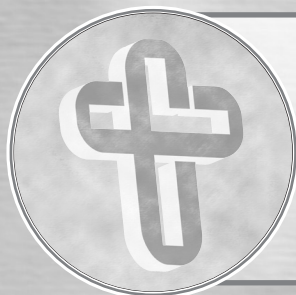
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Lucifer's tragic fall and deception provides snapshots of the way sin works us away from God's way of life. In all of the unanswered questions about what God should or should not have done with sin, there is still the truth about what He did do. God looked at the long road ahead. He saw the decay. He could sense the pain and horrible future of the human race during these dark times. What prompted God to create anyway? You! God wanted you to be able to be there with Him. In Psalm 139 and Ephesians 1 the Scriptures say that you were on God's mind before anything was created. The questions about what happened in the beginning and what will happen in the end are interesting, but not as crucial as knowing that God wants you to know how much you matter to Him. Created in God's image (Genesis 1:26), you can't help being awesome!

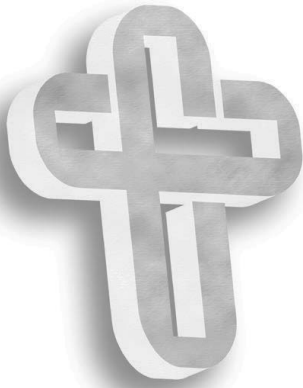
¹Fundamental Belief No. 20.

²Fundamental Belief No. 23.

³Fundamental Belief No. 6.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 1 and 2.



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Photo by Barin Von Foregger

flashlight

“God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34).

keytext

“Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

(Revelation 12:7-9, NIV)

what do you think?

Perhaps the most challenging question Christians have ever asked is why God permitted sin to corrupt His perfect world. With so much pain and suffering in the world, how do we explain God's decision to others? Who below do you think would be the hardest person to explain it to? Why? (Rank them from one—hardest, to five—easiest.)

- An open-minded atheist who is looking for a logical answer to life's biggest problems
- A 17-year-old girl who contracts the AIDS virus from a blood transfusion
- A father who discovers that a distant member of the family molested his 6-year-old boy
- An employee who gets falsely accused and then fired because of his race
- A disaster-relief volunteer faced daily with the trauma caused by natural disasters

What basic beliefs are needed to be able to understand this issue? What evidence or testimony would you give to explain why a God of love would permit such tragedies? Which person above do you think would benefit most from a deeper understanding of the purpose and plan of Creation?

did you know?

A ccording to a 2009 study, the notion that Satan, or the devil, is a real being who can influence people's lives is considered fiction by most Americans. Only one quarter (27 percent) strongly believes that Satan is real, while a majority argue that he is merely a symbol of evil. Mormons are the group most likely to accept the reality of Satan's existence (60 percent), while Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists are the least likely (just one fifth).—www.barna.org.

INTO THE STORY

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphron. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”

“Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

(Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7-9; Genesis 1:26, 27; 1:31-2:3, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What are some key facts in these passages that show who Lucifer was? What was his role in heaven? What was he like? What was his downfall? What did he ultimately desire more than anything else? What was God's response?

What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? What do you think is significant about the fact that humans were created in the image of God?

What do you think is significant about the fact that the Sabbath, marriage, work, and long walks with God existed before sin entered the world?

What do you think is more important to understand—why God let sin continue or what He was thinking when He created the world and humanity? Explain.

Underline the verse that you think is the most important part of the story. Why did you choose that one?

punch lines

"You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you. . . . Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you" (**Ezekiel 28:13-15, NIV**).

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (**Psalms 139:14-16, NIV**).

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (**1 Peter 5:8, NIV**).

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (**Ephesians 1:3, 4, NIV**).

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (**John 10:10, NIV**).

other eyes

"Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately."—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century

U.S. scholar, writer, preacher.

"Sin will keep you from the presence of God or the presence of God will keep you from sin."—Unknown.

Sabbath

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you are challenged to rank types of people according to how difficult it would be to explain the reason for God's allowing sin to continue in this world. With whom do you think it would be the most difficult to discuss this and why? What approach would you take to answering this question? What key points would be most effective in communicating with the type of person you selected?

Read John 10:10 and consider how Jesus described God's plan and Satan's plan for life on earth. How does this saying of Christ add to the discussion about God's seeming nonresponse to Satan's work on earth?

Imagine that Lucifer had rebelled against God and then suddenly disappeared from heaven with no explanation. How would the rumors about what might have happened to him affect the way the other citizens would relate to God?

Sunday

Read the selection of Scripture that tells the story of Lucifer's fall in the *Into the Story* section. While the information about how sin began is limited, if you use the study questions in *Out of the Story* you will discover the basic elements of sin's origin. What are some of the positive, beautiful truths about God's character that you see in the way He deals with rebellion and the way He created humanity? What aspects of this whole story are still difficult to understand?

Monday

Read the *Key Text* from Revelation and try to imagine what this scene looked like. While some want to downplay the reality of Satan and his demonic forces, the presence of

an evil adversary is actual and relevant. Notice in *Did You Know?* that the majority of people in America believe Satan is only a symbol for evil, not an actual person. However, the reality of an evil being is more widely believed in other parts of the world. What is the good news, if any, in the text? How should believing in a literal devil impact the way we live in the world today?

Tuesday

Why do you think God's style of government and His desire for a service of love seem so foreign to us? The quote in the *Flashlight* section unpacks the central issue of free will in our relationship with God. As you read and reflect on this quote think about someone you know who loves and serves God freely with devotion as opposed to doing these things from fear or obligation. How is their attitude toward God helpful to you as you relate to the Savior? What evidence do you see in their life that reveals to you that they follow God freely and willingly? Do you think this attitude is rare or common? Explain.

Wednesday

Read the verses in *Punch Lines*. Highlight or note key phrases in each verse that you think a friend of yours might need to understand. Choose one of the verses that spoke to you personally and paraphrase it. (Try not to use any of the major words used in the text.) Be ready to explain how evil came to be and how God continued with His plan for humanity because of His deep love for them. Is there someone in particular you know who is confused about the origin of sin and the creation of the world? Pray about how you might effectively be a witness to them with the insights gained in this study.

Thursday

Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*,* chapters 1 and 2, with your Bible open to glimpse a powerful picture of what happened in heaven and what eventually happened on earth at the creation of the world. As Ellen White comments on specific aspects of the fall of Lucifer and on the week of Creation, specifically note the insights that are new to you.

Friday

A popular T-shirt among some Christians reads "Can't Help Being Awesome—Genesis 1:26, 27" and refers to the stated truth that we are created in the image of God. How does this truth encourage and elevate your own sense of value and worth? Can we become so focused on the wonderful work of creation that we lose sight of the Creator? Read Isaiah 14:13, 14 and Ezekiel 28:17 and note the cause of Satan's fall. How do you see the same kind of self-absorbed focus in the world today? What will you do this week to be aware of the great controversy between good and evil and freely worship God out of a heart full of adoration?

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 1 and 2.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.