



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 03 2015

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

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

the way of two worlds



Photo by Bairn 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?

According 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#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.