

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

Why is our world so full of pain, violence, and disease? Why have wars ravaged the world throughout history? Why do innocent people suffer? You and I are living in a war zone! The effects of this war that engulfs us look like this:

- A billion people go to bed hungry at night.
- One woman dies in childbirth every minute, 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.
- 100 million cases of AIDS are projected in the next five years unless something is done.
- At least 50 million were martyred for their faith during the Dark Ages. But 221 million are estimated to have been murdered worldwide during the last century alone.



How could all this pain happen if, as the Bible teaches, “God is love”?

This war has wounded all of us. No one escapes. The question is, what is going on here? How could all this pain happen if, as the Bible teaches, “God is love”? (1 John 4:8)

KEY POINTS

To understand what’s happening around us, let’s go back to a story that unfolded in heaven, before this earth was even created. Revelation 12:7-9 tells the story: “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” That’s why Jesus said: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” (Luke 10:18)

So what do we see here: First, we see clearly that there is a place in the universe called Heaven. Secondly, there are two groups of characters in Heaven: the dragon, also known as Satan, and his angels. And there is Michael (which means in Hebrew, “One who is like God.”) and his angels. Third, we see that there was a great war in Heaven, and Satan and his angels not only lost the war but were evicted. Finally, although this war began in Heaven, where does it wind up? On this earth!

That’s the big picture. According to the Bible, you and I are in the midst of a battle that began in heaven. The Bible tells us then to, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

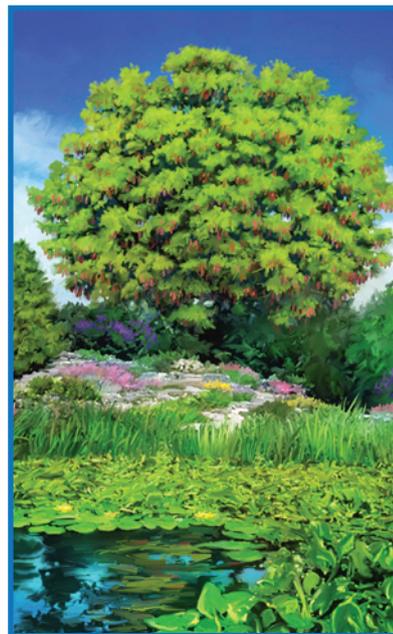


Facts About the Great War

1. There is a place in the universe called Heaven
2. There are two groups in Heaven: the dragon, known as Satan with his angels, and Michael and his angels.
3. There was war between these two groups, and Satan and his angels were evicted from Heaven.
4. The war came to this earth and we are all in the middle of the battle.

Now, how was Satan able to get a foothold on this earth? The answer is found in the next few chapters of the Bible. Genesis states that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) It also says that God “saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) God also created our first parents, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the midst of a beautiful garden, and gave them dominion over the earth.

Adam and Eve were told to avoid one tree in the garden. That tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were told not to eat its fruit. If they did, the result would be death. (Genesis 2:16, 17) Why did God set up this test? It was a test of their loyalty to God. It was a test of how they would use their freedom of choice. Would they obey God or do their own thing? We all have freedom of choice, and we all face that same test. Are we going to do our own thing and become our own god? Or will we love God enough to obey Him? If we truly love God, then our conduct will prove it.



Adam and Eve were told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now back to our story. Look who appears in the garden: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden.”’” (Genesis 3:1) So Satan, in the form of a snake, appeared to Eve, and tempted her to sin against God. (Genesis 3:2-3) God said, if you eat of the fruit you will die. And what did Satan say? No, no! “You won’t die!” (Genesis 3:4).

Basically, Satan told Eve she could become her own god. And this, my friends, is the essence of sin—rebellion against God - doing things our own way against God’s instructions. Faster than you can say, “Just a minute!” Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and acquired an immediate change of nature. They became rebels. Rebellion and selfishness suddenly became the norm for them—and for all of nature as well. Adam and Eve passed on their new rebellious natures to their children. And not too many years later, their first son murdered his younger brother. Such were the results of two people doing things their way instead of God’s. And that is how Satan got control of this planet. All this over eating a piece of fruit? No! All this over rebelling against God!

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

The good news is that though we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), God has not abandoned us to Satan. No, from the very beginning, from before Adam and Eve’s rebellion, God had a plan to rescue us from the devastation and consequences of sin. It’s called the gospel. The word gospel means good news. And let me tell you, the gospel is good news indeed.

What it tells us is that God has made provision to forgive us our sins and to give us power to live new lives in Him. The Bible tells us that “God is love.” And a loving God wasn’t going to leave this planet in the hands of His enemy. The Bible tells us that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

All around us we see the results of sin. But God promises us that one day all this will be gone, and we can have a share in His eternal kingdom. Right now we see the defilement brought by Satan. The good news is that this defilement is temporary. Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our rebellion, so that He can return the earth to its original beauty. Then it will become the eternal home of those who love Him. Won’t you accept the gift of eternal life that Christ freely offers to you today?