

# ***The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant***

## ***What Happened?***

Lesson #1 for April 3, 2021

Scriptures: Psalm 100:3; Acts 17:26; Genesis 1:26-29; 2:7,18-25; 3:15.

1. What an incredible beginning! The biblical account of creation could hardly have been better. After each day, God pronounced it good. And then, after creating human beings and animals, He pronounced everything very good.
2. None of the devastations we know today were there. No typhoons, earthquakes, famines, pandemics, or other diseases. So, what happened? God created human beings in His own image. They must have been perfect! None of the sinful characteristics that we know about today were there. No murderers, thieves, liars, swindlers, or any other sinful group.
3. But, unfortunately, Adam and Eve sinned. And thus, sin plunged our world into/under the control of Satan. So, what would God do next? He instituted the plan of salvation.
4. Many people have had strange ideas about the origins of man. Even modern scientists think that they have explanations for how this earth was created and how life was created on this earth without God. One famous chemical engineer who has explored the possibility of creating the chemicals that might have been necessary to create the very first cell has said that these speculators are simply clueless!
5. Philosophers down through the generations have puzzled over four existential questions about **origin, meaning, purpose, and destiny**: (1) Where did we come from? (2) Why are we here? (3) What is the greatest good in life? and (4) Where do we go after we die?
6. Read Genesis 1:1; Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 40:28; Acts 17:26; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:2,10; and many other verses that could have been added. These verses tell us explicitly that God through Jesus Christ created our world.
7. **God did not try to explain philosophically, or in any other way, how or why He did it; He simply did it.** We must accept it on the basis of the evidence that is available to us: The very existence of life on this earth. None of us saw the creation process in the beginning, and only God has given us a report of what actually happened.
8. No matter what your ideas of origins might be—from creation to evolution—since one cannot re-create the event, one must accept one's ideas on faith!
9. As we know, Satan had claimed that he should have been treated on an equality with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. He was jealous and envious and, thus, created that rebellion which caused one-third of the angels to be cast out.
10. So, what do we know about the history of Satan immediately after his fall?

Satan trembled as he viewed his work. He was alone in meditation upon the past, the present, and his future plans. His mighty frame shook as with a tempest. An angel from Heaven was passing. He [Satan] called him, and **entreated an interview with Christ.** This was granted him. He then related to the Son of God that he repented of his rebellion, and wished again the favor of God. He was willing to take the place God had previously assigned him, and be under his wise command. Christ wept at Satan's woe, but told him, as the mind of God, that he could never be received into Heaven. Heaven must not be placed in jeopardy. **All Heaven would be marred should he be received back; for sin and rebellion originated with him. The seeds of rebellion were still within him.** He had, in his rebellion, no occasion for his course, and he had not only hopelessly ruined himself, but the host of angels also, who

[30] would then have been happy in Heaven had he remained steadfast. The law of God could condemn, but could not pardon.

**He repented not of his rebellion** because he saw the goodness of God which he had abused. It was not possible that his love for God had so increased since his fall that it would lead to cheerful submission and happy obedience to his law which had been despised. The wretchedness he realized in losing the sweet light of Heaven, and the sense of guilt which forced itself upon him, and the disappointment he experienced himself in not finding his expectations realized, were the cause of his grief. To be commander out of Heaven, was vastly different from being thus honored in Heaven. The loss he had sustained of all the privileges of Heaven seemed too much to be borne. He wished to regain these.

This great change of position had not increased his love for God, nor for his wise and just law. **When Satan became fully convinced that there was no possibility of his being re-instated in the favor of God, he manifested his malice with increased hatred and fiery vehemence.**

God knew that such determined rebellion would not remain inactive. Satan would invent means to annoy the heavenly angels, and show contempt for his authority. **As he could not gain admission within the gates of Heaven, he would wait just at the entrance, to taunt the angels and seek contention with them as they went in and out. He would seek to destroy the happiness of Adam and Eve. He would endeavor to incite them to rebellion, knowing that this would cause grief in Heaven.**

His followers were seeking him; and he [Satan] aroused himself and, assuming a look of defiance, informed them of his plans to wrest from God the noble Adam and his companion Eve.... And **if they could gain access to the tree of life in the midst of the garden**, their strength would, they thought, be equal to that of the holy angels, and even God himself could not expel them.—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*,\* vol. 1, 29.2-31.0.<sup>†‡</sup>

11. But, there was an event that took place about 2000 years ago that fully and completely eliminated Satan from being considered equal with Christ.

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, **the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself.** Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 10:17, 18; 2:19.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 785.2.<sup>†</sup>

12. Satan knows perfectly well that he could never do that! Only God has the power to give life! Thus, we believe that God has provided all the evidence that we need.

**God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.** His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all **established by testimony that appeals to our reason**; and this testimony is abundant.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*\* 105.2.<sup>†</sup>

13. Look at Genesis 1:27.

**Genesis 1:27:** So God created human beings, **making them to be like himself.** He created them male and female.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy*

*Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Genesis 1:27). New York: American Bible Society.†

14. What does it mean to be created *in the image of God*? Were we created in His physical image? His spiritual image? His intellectual image? His social image? Or, something else? In what image would you like to be created?

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. **Human beings were a new and distinct order.** They were made “in the image of God,” and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth. They were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,\* February 11, 1902, par. 1.† Compare 1SDABC 1081.3.

15. Do we have any evidence that a tree of life and a tree of knowledge of good and evil existed in other worlds as well as this one?

The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel attended me from the city to a place that was bright and glorious. The grass of the place was living green, and the birds there [40] warbled a sweet song. The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic, and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy, expressive of the freedom and happiness of the place. I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, “We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth.” **Then I saw two trees, one looked much like the tree of life in the city. The fruit of both looked beautiful, but of one they could not eat. They had power to eat of both, but were forbidden to eat of one. Then my attending angel said to me, “None in this place have tasted of the forbidden tree; but if they should eat, they would fall.”** Then I was taken to a world which had seven moons. There I saw good old Enoch, who had been translated. On his right arm he bore a glorious palm, and on each leaf was written “Victory.” Around his head was a dazzling white wreath, and leaves on the wreath, and in the middle of each leaf was written “Purity,” and around the wreath were stones of various colors, that shone brighter than the stars, and cast a reflection upon the letters and magnified them. On the back part of his head was a bow that confined the wreath, and upon the bow was written “Holiness.” Above the wreath was a lovely crown that shone brighter than the sun. I asked him if this was the place he was taken to from the earth. He said, “It is not; the city is my home, and I have come to visit this place.” He moved about the place as if perfectly at home. I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, “You must go back, and if you are faithful, **you, with the 144,000**, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*\* 39.3-40.0.†

16. Nothing else was created in God’s image. God even gave us that incredible ability to procreate, allowing us to share the gift of life and, thus, “create” beings in our image.
17. Aren’t you glad that God did not give Satan the power to procreate? Can you imagine a universe—or even a world—full of little satans?

Man was to bear God’s image, both in **outward resemblance** and in

**character.** Christ alone is “the express image” (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. **His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 45.2.†

18. So, what sets us apart?

**Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do.** The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. **It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.**—Ellen G. White, *Education*\* 17.2-18.0.†

19. While other creatures on this earth were given the unusual capacity to reproduce, which even Satan does not have, **none of them have been created specifically in God’s image with the power to think and to do.**

20. Instead of making a single being with the ability to divide or reproduce itself in some way, God created male and female so that we have to come together, preferably in an environment of love, in order to procreate. Does God intend for us to learn many lessons about His challenge of dealing with us as His children by our dealing with our own children?

21. John 4:24 tells us that God is Spirit. We do not fully comprehend what that means. We know that God can appear as a human being anytime He wants. Jesus has chosen to join the human race forever. But, we know the **Bible emphasizes our intellectual and spiritual capacities.** God intends that we use these capacities to grow and become more like Him.

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 46.2. Compare *1MCP* 159.2.

**Genesis 1:28-29:** [God]<sup>28</sup> Blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that **your descendants will live all over the earth** and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.<sup>29</sup> I have provided all kinds of grain and all kinds of fruit for you to eat.”—*Good News Bible*.\*†‡ [How large was the Garden of Eden?]<sup>‡</sup>

22. How do you think man took charge of the fish living in those four rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden? What was Adam and Eve’s relationship with the birds and the wild animals? However it took place, it was God’s intention for man to live in harmony with the other living creatures on this earth and to rule over them in a benign and wonderful way. Adam and Eve were to reproduce themselves; they and their children were to populate the earth. They were given a specific diet to eat, as were the animals. In other words, God intended for them to have a wonderful life in obedience to His will.

23. And God gave them that fabulous garden. They did not do anything to earn it; they were simply recipients of God’s love and care.

24. What should we learn from those original events that may still apply to us today. Surely, we are still to live in obedient relationship with God. If we do, He will continue to bless us.

**Genesis 2:16-17:** <sup>16</sup>He [God] said to him, “You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, <sup>17</sup>except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*‡</sup>

25. How many children did Eve have? Adam and Eve were provided with freedom and power to choose. Without it, they could not have the capacity to love. Of course, that meant that they had the capacity to sin and/or to hate as well.

“Everything preceding in this chapter has paved the way for this climax [*Gen. 2:16, 17*]. The future of the race centers upon this single prohibition. Man is not to be confused by a multiplicity of issues. Only one divine ordinance must be kept in mind. By thus limiting the number of injunctions to *one*, Yahweh gives tokens of His mercy. Besides, to indicate that this one commandment is not grievous, the Lord sets it against the background of a broad permission: ‘from [every] tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.’ ”—H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1942), vol. 1, p. 127.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Wednesday, March 31 including the brackets and the content in brackets].<sup>‡§</sup>

Holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve concerning their employment and also taught them concerning the rebellion and fall of Satan. The angels warned them of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. The angels also enjoined upon them to follow closely the directions God had given them, for in perfect obedience only were they safe. Then this fallen foe could have no power over them.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*\* 147.1.

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. **Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.** Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 53.3.<sup>†</sup>

26. When Adam and Eve were created, Satan and his evil angels immediately demanded access to them. And God, being the fair Individual that He is, allowed Satan to have access to them; however, only at that one tree did he have access. He was not allowed to follow them around the garden wherever they went. So, **the tree was intended to be a protection instead of being a temptation!**

27. Adam and Eve had been warned. They knew that their lives were totally dependent upon God Himself. They could continue to live forever in that garden if they would remain faithful to their loving heavenly Father. But, they had to use their freedom to choose to accept His will. While they did not understand all of the implications at the time, we know that the knowledge of evil they were offered led to alienation, loneliness, frustration, and death.

28. Do we face any tests like the tree of knowledge of good and evil in our day?

29. Living in an evil world as we do, we tend to trust people we know and instinctively distrust

those whom we do not know. Repeatedly, Eve had been warned about Satan. If Satan had appeared as an angel, she would have run. So, Satan used a surrogate—the serpent or snake in the tree who appeared to be able to talk.

**Genesis 3:1-6:** <sup>1</sup> Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. The snake asked the woman, “Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from **any** tree in the garden?”

<sup>2</sup> “We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden,” the woman answered,  
<sup>3</sup> “except the tree in the middle of it. God told us not to eat the fruit of that tree or even touch it; if we do, we will die.”

<sup>4</sup> **The snake replied, “That’s not true; you will not die.** <sup>5</sup>God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad.”

<sup>6</sup> The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

Deplorable as was Eve’s transgression and fraught as it was with potential woe for the human family, her choice did not necessarily involve the race in the penalty for her transgression. **It was the deliberate choice of Adam, in the full understanding of an express command of God—rather than hers—that made sin and death the inevitable lot of mankind. Eve was deceived; Adam was not.**—Article on Genesis 3:6. In F. D. Nichol (Ed.), *The SDA Bible Commentary*,\* vol. 1, 231.3.<sup>†</sup>

30. We must admit, of course, that Eve became the temptress! Thus, that special relationship God had with the pair was broken.

**Genesis 3:7-10:** <sup>7</sup>As soon as they had eaten it, they were given understanding and realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves. [How did they do that? God created them as brilliant beings.]

<sup>8</sup> That evening they heard the LORD God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called out to the man, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup> He answered, “I heard you in the garden; I was afraid and hid from you, because I was naked.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

31. But, as sad as this whole story is, God almost immediately gave them a glimmer of hope.

**Genesis 3:15:** “I will make you [the snake] and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring’s heel.”—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

32. This was to be a conflict between Satan and Jesus. Adam and Eve already knew that the cosmic conflict was underway, and God had promised that, ultimately, His side would win.

33. One important thing to notice in this whole story is that no sooner had man committed that first sin than God came searching for him. God is always looking for us. And it is important for us to notice that the Bible is full of calls for us to come back to Him. See, for example, Psalm 95:7-8; Isaiah 55:1-2,6-7; Luke 15:3-7; Luke 19:10; and Revelation 22:17.

34. Unfortunately, many people who study this tragic story do not realize how much was involved.

**But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.** To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all unto [69] Me.**” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 68.2.†

35. The entire universe is involved in the great controversy. And the solution cannot come until everyone in the universe has understood and agrees that: (1) God was not at fault, (2) He has done everything possible to redeem the situation, and (3) His way of handling the rebellion is the best and only way to deal with the conflict. His government by love is the only way in which a universe can survive. And what should be our response? We are expected to extend His invitation to others after we ourselves respond. (Revelation 22:17)
36. One of the very interesting things that we observe on national news from time to time is that despite the fact that they generally give tacit agreement to the idea that we have evolved from lower forms of life, when a disaster comes, they immediately ask us to pray! If we are in need of help in a disaster and if we believe in evolution, should we pray to the presumed one-cell ancestor of mankind?
37. Creatures made in the image of God are intended to live in relationships: Parent-child, friend-friend, husband-wife, employer-employee, etc. Try to imagine what it will be like to live in heaven where everyone is loving and kind.
38. Clearly, God intended for human beings to live in a relationship with Him throughout eternity. But, Eve was trapped by her curiosity. Curiosity can be a diabolical trap when people try to investigate things that God has not revealed. (See Deuteronomy 29:29.)
39. In modern times, human beings have learned how to release a tiny, tiny fraction of the energy contained in matter to produce various kinds of atomic weapons which have massive destructive potential. The famous equation:  $E=MC^2$  tells us about that relationship. But, **God has the ability to take some of His divine energy and condense it into matter!** And how is that described?

“Absolute origination, that is, . . . a beginning and bringing out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and not any mere fashioning of some preexistent matter or pre-matter.”—Harold Kuhn, “God Makes,” in *The Living God: Readings in Christian Theology*, ed. Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 481.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 13].‡§

40. So, what are some of the other ideas about origins?

Spiritualism teaches “that man is the creature of progression.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 554.1.

“Social Darwinism . . . lays the groundwork for geneticists and biologists, under the cloak of science, to categorize human beings in a way as to support racial superiority, an idea brought to its apogee in Nazi Germany.”—Charles

E. Bradford, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1999), pp. 66, 67.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 13].<sup>‡§</sup>

41. God tells us that we were made in His likeness and in His image.

Like God, they had the power of choice—the freedom to think and act according to moral imperatives. **Thus they were free to love and obey or to distrust and disobey.**—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2018) 98.<sup>†</sup>

“God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the *human family might become one with the heavenly family*. **It was God’s purpose to re-populate heaven with the human family**, if they would show themselves obedient to His every word.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1082; emphasis supplied. (See also *Isa. 43:7.*)—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 14].<sup>†‡§</sup>

42. In any case, we know what happened; the results were tragic.

They both ate, and the great wisdom they obtained was the knowledge of sin, and a sense of guilt. The **covering of light** about them soon disappeared, and under a sense of guilt, and loss of their **divine covering**, a shivering seized them.—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*,\* vol. 1, 40.2.<sup>†</sup>

43. So, what change needs to take place in us to get us back on track?

The change which must come to the natural, inherited, and cultivated tendencies of the human heart, is that change of which Jesus spoke when he said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office, and The Work in Battle Creek. Pamphlet 080 (PH080)\** 43.1.

44. As far as possible, we must choose to follow His plan for our lives each day. The life and death of Jesus have given us a choice: We can choose to live, as far as possible, like Jesus lived, and receive eternal life; or, we will die the death that He died, separated from the only source of life, our heavenly Father.

45. Imagine the lengths to which God has gone to restore His relationship with us. He gave us His divine Son to join the human race forever to memorialize what He accomplished through that marvelous life, death, and resurrection. And before He returned to heaven, Jesus promised:

**John 14:12-14:** <sup>12</sup>“I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father.  
<sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father’s glory will be shown through the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

46. The simple fact that we are alive means that we have been made in the image of God. He is the only Source of life. Even the Devil is dependent on God for his life. So, what should we have learned from all the details of this lesson? Are we prepared to respond to God in the only right way?

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