

WHY WAS SIN PERMITTED?

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 1.

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psalm 145:17).

The great controversy between good and evil began in heaven as an outgrowth of love that flourishes only in freedom. When the controversy is over, the universe will have seen a demonstration of this love in such a display that it will prevent another rebellion from ever happening again. Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of God’s love—especially His decision to create intelligent beings who could say No to Him!

Because love freely given is the foundation of true happiness, God desires from all created intelligences the response of love. Because genuine love is loyalty and appreciation, freely offered, God takes no pleasure in forced love or forced obedience.

But Lucifer, the summit of all of God’s creation, perverted this freedom and pervasive love. Little by little, Lucifer began to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. He envied one of the Godhead, whom we know today as Jesus. Fellow angels and God, Himself, pled with Lucifer, but He continued to foster deep, strange thoughts. With his extraordinary mind he began to devise a plan to win the allegiance of the angels by insinuating that God was unfair. Lucifer’s big promise was to offer freedom from the “restraints” of God’s government.

God knew that it was necessary for Lucifer’s plans to be developed further and that if He eliminated Lucifer from the universe, angels would immediately believe that Lucifer was right when he charged that God was a power-hungry tyrant.

Key Thought: “God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. . . . It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, that God’s government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 42).

Today’s Lesson: God values our love and obedience only when we give it willingly. He will never force us to obey.

THE CREATION

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 2.

*“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord”
(Isaiah 1:18).*

All creation, everywhere in the universe, God spoke into existence. This included each galaxy, star, and planet. But foremost in His planning on planet Earth was the creation of the human race, male and female, both reflecting His own image. Their nature was in harmony with God’s will, their minds capable of comprehending divine things. Their affections were pure; their appetites and passions were under the control of reason.

God celebrated the marriage between Adam and Eve, one of the two original gifts to mankind in Eden that still exist—the seventh-day Sabbath and marriage. The first couple were given the Garden of Eden as their home—resplendent with all varieties of flowers and trees, with birds and animals as their companions.

The seventh-day Sabbath would become their weekly celebration as they reflected upon God’s great work of creation. Without threat or fear, they saw the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, filling their hearts with love and reverence for their Maker.

Their job description included the care of the Garden—“to dress it and to keep it.” God knew that pleasant and invigorating labor would be a blessing to them. Adam and Eve were also students, receiving daily instruction from heavenly angels and God Himself. They were full of vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellect was but a little less than that of the angels. As they studied life throughout the universe, their hearts were filled with an even deeper love and gratitude to their Creator.

Key Thought: “God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan’s charge of God’s arbitrary rule” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49).

Today’s Lesson: Freedom of choice is so important to God that He was willing to risk the possibility that human beings would choose to disobey.

THE TEMPTATION AND FALL

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 3.

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

After Satan was cast out of heaven, he turned to beautiful planet Earth and its blissful first couple. His plan was to incite them to disobedience, bringing on them guilt and the consequences of sin. All of this would bring dishonor upon God—exactly what he had wanted in heaven.

Heavenly angels revealed to Adam and Eve the history of Satan’s fall. They wanted them to beware of his subtle, deceitful ways and to understand that life itself is a gift that is maintained by obedience to the just laws of the universe. The angels also told them that to yield to Satan’s temptations would open the door, making them helpless to resist Satan’s further enticements—that their whole lives would become depraved and hopeless.

Nevertheless, Eve’s curiosity led her to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She was captivated by Satan’s subtle praises and excited by the new powers that Satan promised if she would only eat the forbidden fruit. But Eve and the rest of her offspring have learned to their regret that disobedience may give them greater liberty, but it brings even greater sorrow.

Deciding to stand by his wife, Adam soon found that their disobedience robbed them of peace and gave them a sense of sin, a dread of the future, and a nakedness of soul. They clung to the thought that God loved them so much He would pardon their transgression and that they would not be subject to the inherent consequences of their folly. They even tried to blame God for their predicament.

Key Thought: “In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 55).

Today’s Lesson: In the moment of temptation it is difficult to recognize the terrible consequences that can result from one wrong step.

JANUARY 4

THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 4.

*“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”
(Revelation 13:8).*

The disobedience of Adam and Eve had been foreseen by the Godhead. Because sin carries its own self-destructing virus, God knew that a plan to save mankind was necessary, but it would require divine intervention. One of the Godhead (He whom we know today as Jesus) would Himself assume the guilt and shame of sin and rescue the ruined race. Further, He would show that God could be self-denying and unselfish.

Jesus would become human, incredible as it sounds, and endure the fiercest attacks of Satan, even to the point of dying horribly on a Roman cross. In so doing, He would prove Satan a liar. Every time we look at the Cross, we want to trust God more for giving us a future with a fresh start. He died for us so that we would not have to die the sinner's death. Further, Jesus would prove that God was fair in giving us a code of obedience that would lead the obedient to real joy, health, and hope. We call this wonderful arrangement the atonement that God provides for sinners.

From the first, the great controversy had been over the law of God. Satan tried to prove that God was unfair, that His laws were faulty. Christ's life and death would show that the divine statutes were not defective or subject to change without penalty.

Key Thought: “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” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68).

Today's Lesson: As we allow God to work out His plan in our lives, we can help to vindicate His character before the universe.

CAIN AND ABEL TESTED

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 5.

*“And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering”
(Genesis 4:4).*

Cain and Abel differed widely in character. Abel was loyal to God and saw justice in His dealings with the fallen race. Cain cherished feelings of rebellion and murmured against God because of sin’s curse. His mind ran along the same channels as Satan’s, cherishing self-exaltation and questioning God’s authority.

Both Cain and Abel were tested to prove their loyalty to God. The system of offerings would test their faith in Jesus, whom the slain lamb represented. The two sons built identical altars, but Abel’s offering was consumed by fire from heaven, while Cain’s offering of fruit received no token from heaven.

Abel pleaded with his older brother to respect God’s will, but Cain resented his counsel. Cain’s offering was presented as a favor done to God—a thank offering for which he expected divine approval. He did not sense a need for a Redeemer.

Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist till the close of time—one realizes the need for a Savior; those in the other venture to depend on their own merits. Those who follow Cain are the greater portion of the world. Nearly every false religion is based on one principle—that men and women can depend on their own efforts for salvation.

From Adam’s day, the great controversy has concerned obedience to God’s will. True faith, like Abel’s, relies wholly upon Christ and is revealed by obedience to all of God’s requirements.

God came close to Cain, pleading with Him to be reasonable. Reason and conscience told Cain that Abel was right, but he was enraged and finally killed his brother. Such has been this world’s history—the wicked hate those who are better than themselves.

Key Thought: “The brighter the heavenly light that is reflected from the character of God’s faithful servants, the more clearly the sins of the ungodly are revealed, and the more determined will be their efforts to destroy those who disturb their peace” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 74).

Today’s Lesson: Sin is unwilling to listen to reason, and often those who know themselves to be in the wrong attempt to silence their conscience by attacking those whose obedient lives are a rebuke to their own disobedience.

SETH AND ENOCH

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 6.

*“After [Enoch] begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years.
... And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”
(Genesis 5:22, 24, NKJV).*

Seth followed the noble example of Abel, yet he, too, inherited his parents’ fallen nature. To Seth was born Enos, but the Scriptures tell us that now “men began to call on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26, NKJV), signifying that as population increased, the distinction between those who followed God and those who did not became more marked.

Cain’s extended family built cities; Adam continued his pastoral life, as did Seth. For some time the two distinct families kept separate. But eventually the children of each began to intermarry—the children of Seth became enamored with the daughters of Cain’s descendants. Mingling with the depraved, they became like them, disregarding the Sabbath and enjoying polygamy.

Adam lived on for nearly a thousand years, his life one of sorrow, humility, and contrition. Yet, He remained faithful to his Lord, imparting his unparalleled knowledge to his descendants. The antediluvians possessed extraordinary mental and physical vigor, reaching high standards of religious and scientific knowledge.

Through it all, Seth’s line understood their mission—to develop characters of righteousness and to teach lessons of godliness. Enoch, one of the holy line, learned from Adam the dark chapter of the lost Garden and leaned on God for grace to remain faithful. The birth of his first son taught him even more of God’s love.

Day by day, Enoch longed for a closer union with God until God took him to heaven, the first from earth to enter there. By translating Enoch, the Lord taught us all-important lessons—that God does reward the faithful, that it is possible to live obedient lives, and that God will reward with eternal life those who are willingly obedient.

Key Thought: “In the midst of a life of active labor, Enoch steadfastly maintained his communion with God. The greater and more pressing his labors, the more constant and earnest were his prayers” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 86).

Today’s Lesson: Parents have a decided influence on their children, but ultimately each person decides for himself how he will live his life. Adam’s sons chose distinctly different paths in their relationship to God.

THE FLOOD

Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 7.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Hebrews 11:7).

Before the Flood the earth was still beautiful, and the human race retained much of its original vigor. Men and women of great stature devised wonderful inventions. But they had lost their awe of God and came to deny His existence. As God looked at His creation, He saw a world filled with wickedness and continual evil (see Genesis 6:5).

Methuselah, Noah, and others did their best to keep the knowledge of the true God alive. One hundred and twenty years before the Flood, the Lord directed Noah to build an ark in preparation for a worldwide flood and to warn men and women of what was coming.

During this time of construction, Noah continued to appeal to all those who laughed at the idea of a boat on dry ground. But at last silence fell upon the mocking throng as animals—large and small—moved toward the construction site and entered the ark. Then unseen hands slowly closed the huge door.

For seven days, no sign of the coming storm appeared. Faith was tested. But on the eighth day came dark clouds, thunder, and lightning—and then the rain. Rivers overflowed their banks, and jets of water burst from the earth.

Jesus said, “As in the days that were before the flood . . . so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:38, 39). So similar is our world today to the world before the Flood. Multitudes feel under no moral obligation to curb their sensual desires, and they become the slaves of lust. However, when world leaders are pointing to long ages of peace and prosperity and people are absorbed in business and pleasure, rejecting and mocking God’s messengers—then destruction comes, and the Lord will appear the second time.

Key Thought: “All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ are offered pardon” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 102).

Today’s Lesson: As Jesus predicted, world conditions today are increasingly a mirror image of society in Noah’s day just before the Flood.