

## The Bible: Our True Story

### Act Two—The Battle for the Heart

**Passages:** Genesis 11:1–9  
Luke 10:18–20

Every adrenalin–pumping story, every suspenseful movie, and even every fairy tale has a **villain** in it. As children, we remember the Big Bad Wolf who loved to blow down houses, and the story of the evil Troll who lived under the bridge. As we grew older, we discovered more serious villains, like the Wicked Witch of the West and Darth Vader.

Perhaps you’ve been to see the latest Hollywood thriller called **Hansel and Gretel, witch–hunters!** In the original story, a brother and sister (Hansel and Gretel) get lost in the forest and are seduced by an evil witch from whom they eventually escape. Well, the new story of Hansel and Gretel goes one step further! As it turns out, there is more than one witch! Moreover, these futuristic villains are obviously equipped with a vast array of firepower; all super–enhanced with 3–D glasses and amazing special effects!

(Here’s the trailer to movie: **Hansel and Gretel– Witch Hunters!**)

Now, with the idea of **villains** firmly in our minds, let me ask you a question: **Is there a villain in the Bible?** Of course there is, and his name is Lucifer (aka Satan, or the Devil). And yet, the trouble with the Bible is that this villain is only found in a few (often extremely obscure) passages—passages that come from obscure books like Daniel, Ezekiel, and the Book of Revelation! (Ezekiel 28, for example, entitled “A Prophecy Against the King of Tyre”, clearly makes mysterious references to ‘one’ who existed back in the earliest days of creation. But is it really Satan?

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

<sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you:

carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings<sup>[E]</sup> were made of gold;

on the day you were created they were prepared. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> You were blameless in your ways

from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.  
<sup>16</sup>Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. <sup>17</sup>Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth..."

Is this the King of Tyre, or is it an obscure reference to Satan???  
 Who can be sure?

Equally frustrating is the fact that this isn't the only time the Bible does this sort of thing! It's as if we know there's a villain out there, but we can't really pin him down, identify his motives, establish his origins, or even discover his hideout! In the end, the Bible gives us very little information about Satan ...**except** for the certain fact of his existence and that he stands opposed to God. (We know, for example, that Jesus was face to face with the devil in the desert, that Paul tells us to put on the full armour of God to stand against him, and that Peter warns that he is roaming the earth like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour—but that's all they offer by way of a description!)

All this would make you think that, of all the places in the Bible, the early chapters of Genesis should have a clear description of him! After all, tradition has always said that Satan was created before the world as an archangel who was given rule over legions of other angels. Tradition also says that Lucifer rebelled against God and became His chief rival for the control of the universe. But, as I say, all these traditions began from those obscure passages in Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation!

But let's say they are all true! If they are true, then **where is he** in the early chapters of Genesis?

Well, let me say that I think I've found him! And his story seems to begin somewhere between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2! Why do I say that? Well, perhaps you've noticed it—perhaps you haven't—but Genesis 1 and 2 tell very different stories about the creation of the world.

- In Genesis 1, the entire universe is in perfect harmony and peace, but in Genesis 2, this perfection only seems to exist

inside the Garden—indeed, outside the garden grows thorns and thistles, and the possibility of pain in childbirth.

- In Genesis 1, Adam and Eve rule over the entire earth (Gen 1:26– “**Let them rule over the fish...the birds... the cattle...over all the earth...**”), but in Genesis 2, the scope of their rule is dramatically reduced to a well-defined Garden called ‘Eden’. Indeed, not only will Adam and Eve’s reign be constrained to those animals found inside the Garden of Eden, but the only food that Adam and Eve will be able to enjoy is that which grows inside the Garden! (Note that the world outside the Garden contains ‘wild’ animals! It is uncultivated and, by and large, quite threatening!)

Have you noticed these differences before? If you have, then no doubt you’ve been a bit confused! Even theologians have been confused and valiantly tried to force these two stories together into one! Not only is this impossible, but it’s not smart! **The stories were meant to be different**, for they tell us of a Satanic rebellion that is about to take place!

I mean, have you ever noticed that in Genesis 1 there’s not even a hint of the existence of **Satan**! But in Genesis 2, **the devil clearly exists!** Where is he? He is one of the ‘wild’ animals that lives outside the Garden (and who, according to Genesis 3, will later appear to Eve as a serpent).

So, here’s what I think is going on: **Genesis 1 is the ideal story**; the story that has always been in God’s mind. It’s the perfect story of order and beauty and gratitude and community; a story where all things work in harmony, and where all creatures live in peace under the watchful eye of God’s children, made in God’s image! They rule with God and they rest with God. Through this ideal story of the world, God shows exactly how He has always intended the universe to be!

But the story of **Genesis 2** seems to suggest that ‘**something**’ has caused God to alter His perfect plans! That “something” is

Lucifer and his forthcoming rebellion! God, of course, is omniscient! He can see that this archangel is planning a coup d'etat! And because Lucifer is an archangel in charge of a host of angels, God knows that Lucifer's rebellion will have universal repercussions! Not only that, but in God's foreknowledge of Lucifer's fall is the foreknowledge of the subsequent downfall of humanity!

This is why the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 are different! The perfect plans of the Triune God must now be adjusted/ tweaked/ modified in order to introduce a defensive strategy against the evil that is to come!

Some people may ask; "But why didn't God simply snuff out Satan and stop the rebellion before it began?" That's a good question! But the fact that God didn't snuff out Satan means that He had better plans in store... plans that would incorporate the Fall and bring about a far more glorious outcome for His children! In other words, God was still going to insure that **the perfect world of Genesis 1 would eventually become a reality**...but the journey to get there was not going to be as straight as was first planned.

So, back to Genesis 2. God is now on the defensive! He sees what is coming, and so, He makes plans accordingly. His first defensive strategy is to reduce the scope and span of humanity's rule! Instead of ruling the entire world, He limits their rule to the Garden of Eden. As most military strategists would say, it is far easier to defend a well-defined space than be exposed from all sides. And so, God reduces the world of Adam and Eve to a Garden...a very well-defined space, surrounded by a virtual moat of four rivers. The Garden is perfectly self-sufficient, with fruit trees for food, good soil for cultivating crops, a water supply, 'clean' fish in the rivers, and 'clean' animals to provide milk. In other words, God has established a temporary, defensive position through which He will reduce the impact of Satan's rebellion. (Notice, I said "reduce", not "stop".)

Now, here's is where we come to **the most important part of God's plan!** It's the establishment of a deep relationship with Adam and Eve. You see, to be holed-up inside this Garden (like a medieval city) was not a bad thing. Rather, it gave God time to establish a deep relationship with His children and thus prepare the way for a future victory over Satan! While God was keeping Satan outside the Garden with the rest of the 'wild' animals, He was giving Adam and Eve the full experience of His love inside the Garden, as they co-laboured with Him during the day and rested with Him in the cool of the evening. In other words, **He was insuring the establishment of a relationship with His children that would be so deeply imprinted on their hearts and etched into their very DNA** that, even though they all fell into Satan's trap, **these idyllic memories would reverberate in their souls and, one day, draw them back to the Father!**

This, I believe, was the centrepiece of God's entire strategy for how He would eventually defeat Satan! After all, the day would finally have to come when God would finally allow Satan permission to come near to Adam and Eve. (Wouldn't the same thing happen in the Book of Job, where Satan needed God's permission before he could go near him?) God does this, not because He wants to see His children tempted, but because He knows that this is the way of love. To love is to set free! There must come a time when we let our children grow up to experience life as adults, with all the trials and temptations that come with it! This, in fact, is the only way that love can be fully proven and tested: **If, through trial and temptation, and multiple failures, our children choose to come back home, it's a sure sign that they know they are loved!**

Isn't this the basic storyline of an endless number of fairytales and movies?

- Think again of **Hansel and Gretel**. Two children have decided to leave home, but are now lost in a dark forest and threatened by an enticing witch. Doesn't their inner longing

for home and the memories of the love of their parents overcome their fears and propel them to escape the evil grasp of the witch?

- And what about **The Wizard of Oz**? Doesn't the journey to Oz cause Dorothy to realise that what she has left behind is far better than anything else in life. Isn't that why she says, three times, "There's no place like home!"?
- Or think about one of Jesus' most loved parables, **The Prodigal Son**. After the prodigal son had squandered his life in the snare of the evil one, didn't his heart cry out for home? Didn't he, at that point, remember the love of his father and long to be even a hired servant in his care?

In the end, the whole point of creating the Garden of Eden was so that God would have time...time to imprint His love deeply on the hearts of His children...in the assurance that, once they were grown up and ready to have children of their own, He could let them go! He could allow Satan to step inside the fortress of His Garden, willingly giving His adult children the freedom to choose to reject Him, **fully confident** that the intimate knowledge of His love would dwell deeply in their hearts wherever they went, no matter where they strayed, and would eventually draw them back home!

And so, in Genesis 3, Satan is allowed in! He is allowed to tempt Adam and Eve. He is allowed to tell them lies about God, the Father. He is allowed to lead them astray and lure them into disobedience. For the fact is: From now on, **God's real battle with Satan will be, essentially, a battle for the heart of humankind!**

And, you know what? Scanning over the next 8 chapters of Genesis, you would think it's a battle that God is desperately losing!

- In **Genesis 4**, Satan wins the heart of Cain and persuades him to kill his brother, Abel.

- In that same chapter, Satan twists the heart of a man named Lamech to believe that polygamy is OK, and that murder is something to boast about!
- Most alarming is the fact that, by the tie we come to **Genesis 6**, Satan has gained such a strong grip on the human heart that God is forced to conclude:
 

**“...every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.”**
- Indeed, the state of the human heart is so given-over to Satan’s lies and deceits that not even the Flood can cure it! In **Genesis 11**, we read the story of how the whole world gathers together on the plains of Shinar. Obviously spurred on by the lies of Satan, they gather to celebrate their self-made independence and their self-defined unity...a unity that comes at the expense of diversity! They have built a tower in the centre of their city that boldly declares their own divinity! In the pride of their centralised power base, they tell themselves that they can do anything they want.

As I said, it doesn’t look like God has won the hearts of many people, does it?

**But before we completely lose heart**, let me remind you of **three truths** found back in **Genesis 3** that I deliberately skipped over. You see, it’s not perfectly accurate to portray God as One who simply waits for His children to remember His love and come back home. The true picture is far more complex than that. For the truth is that, even before the Fall, God had a plan that He would set in motion which would involve three strategies to positively persuade His children to return home.

The first of these strategies (seen in Genesis 3) is the way God goes out to His children, no matter what they do or where they are, to comfort, implore, challenge and reason with them. After all, isn’t this what most parents do when their child falls into

temptation and does something stupid? And so, after Adam and Eve's disastrous foolishness, God calls out to them, "Where are you?" (not because **He** didn't where they were, but because **they** didn't know where they were!) He then asks them questions revealing the extent to which they've been duped by Satan. Finally, towards the end of chapter 3, we read how God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins—obviously, He has made a sacrifice on their behalf, to take away their shame! As you can see, God does not sit at home waiting—He comes out to us!

A second strategy employed in Genesis 3 is to allow His children to reap what they sow! When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, what did God do? He let them experience the full consequences of their foolishness. Not only did they have to leave the Garden, but they then had to cope with life outside the Garden, where there was nothing to reduce the pain of childbirth and where thorns and thistles infested the ground. Outside the Garden, the man and woman would have no one to help them work through their differences... and so, the man would inevitably use his physical strength to dominate her, while she would seek ways to manipulate him.

I say that God used this as a strategy, because, it's only as you reap what you sow that you realise the extent of God's goodness! You finally see how much he protected you and cared for you and helped you through life. Over time, this would surely prompt many hearts to repent and turn back to God.

A third strategy that God introduces in Genesis 3 is to make a promise to the devil...a promise which sets in motion the coming of Jesus! In Genesis 3:15, God tells the serpent about someone who will come in the future...a perfect human being... who will be able to stand firm against his lies and schemes. For even though the devil may have duped Adam and Eve; even though the future of the human race looks bleak; even though the ideal picture of Genesis 1 looks far from being realised; there is Someone, an offspring of Eve's womb, who will eventually come. (It's no

wonder why genealogies become so important in the Bible!) And the promise to Satan is clear and blunt:

**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

In the Bible, God doesn't just sit back and wait for His children to come home. He is a God of action, most perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ! (Luke 10!!!)

So be assured that, in His foreknowledge of Lucifer's rebellion (that took place between Genesis 1 and 2), God has always been fully prepared for this **battle of the heart**.

You can also be assured that **He will win it!**

Let's pray.