

through it," still he has gone on through the ages believing in his heart the falsehood that cost so dreadful a price. Every truth that contradicts this falsehood, he tramples in the dust. Every delusion that fortifies his belief in his possession of immortality, he seizes with eagerness.

What sight more sad do heavenly beings look upon than that of man, the certain victim of a broken law, yet hugging to his heart the very delusion that caused the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden, and even seeking, by arrogant perversion of the Scriptures, to sustain his belief that he is immortal, and "shall not surely die"! What false doctrines have grown out of this mistaken belief! What erroneous theories are built upon it! Into what countless errors has it led even the church of Christ, the professed children of God! Heathenism, Catholicism, and spiritism are all based upon a belief in the immortality of the soul. Not only has this delusive doctrine led man into many pitfalls and mazes, but it has also blinded his eyes to the nature of the heavenly beings and their work of divine ministry—a ministry that is one of the most comforting and beneficent agencies employed by our loving Father in heaven in behalf of His children on earth.

The Fall of Heavenly Angels

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." Revelation 12:7, 8.

THOSE who truly love their fellows, and unselfishly desire their improvement and the betterment of their condition, are appalled as they scan the long record of the dealings of mankind with one another from the dawn of human history till the present hour. With unspeakable longing they look for the day when He who "maketh wars to cease" shall set up His kingdom, and the peoples of earth shall not "learn war any more." Psalm 46:9; Micah 4:3.

Yet familiar as we are with the horrors of earthly conflict, it is almost impossible for us to imagine that heavenly beings, angels created for the glory of God, would enter into a state of rebellion and wage war against Jehovah and those who remained loyal to Him. But that heaven did pass through this dark experience is the record of the infallible word. None of the Bible writers have gone into details concerning this event. Yet glimpses are given of the fall of Satan and his sympathizers; and by a careful study of these scriptures we gain at least a faint idea of that unutterable tragedy.

From all that we can learn from Holy Writ, it would appear that this rebellion occurred prior to the creation of the earth. Before this rebellion, concord and peace prevailed in the courts of Jehovah, and the family of heaven lived in perfect harmony. It was the purpose of God that this condition should continue forever. The angels were created for His glory, and their service before Him was one of pleasure and adoration. Among all the heavenly host there was not one discontented soul, not one whose heart held any thought of bitterness or hatred or jealousy.

When God was about to create this world and place it under the dominion of man, whom He was to bring into existence, a council was held in heaven. The Son of God was in this council, and all the Father's plans were made known to Him. To the angelic throng Jehovah announced that His Son was His representative, and that all the heavenly beings would co-operate with Him in carrying out His benevolent designs. Among other angels present in the councils of heaven was Lucifer. Of all the heavenly host, none was more beautiful than he. In addition to his marvelous personal beauty he was richly endowed with wisdom and occupied an exalted position by the throne of Jehovah. He was, in fact, second only to the Son of God.

But Lucifer was not satisfied with the dignity and glory that had been bestowed upon him. Because he

was not admitted into the councils of Jehovah on an equality with the divine Son, his pride was hurt, and in his jealousy and anger he sought revenge for the slight and insult that he imagined he had received. Mortification and wounded pride filled his heart; and to retaliate for the indignity and humiliation which he chose to assume that he had suffered, he sought to enlist the sympathy of other angels with him against the government of Jehovah. With the subtlety which has since become one of his distinguishing characteristics, he began his evil work, in secret sowing the seeds of discontent and rebellion in the hearts of those associated with him. We can hardly conceive of heavenly angels, spiritual beings, entertaining thoughts of rebellion and hatred against their Maker; yet it appears that it was not difficult for this erring creature to gain a large and important following among the angelic hosts.

Not immediately did these pure and holy ones enter into a state of insubordination against the government of God; but slowly and surely the spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction developed. Wounded pride, evil surmisings, jealousy—what mighty factors are these in changing the life from purity and happiness to hatred and bitterness and strife and every evil work! What awful calamity and sorrow these wicked principles, when allowed to germinate and grow in the hearts of men, have wrought in the human family! What

ties of love and devotion have they rent asunder! What families have they broken up, what warfares waged, brother lifting up his hand against brother, friend against friend, kingdom against kingdom! The spirit of wounded pride and injured feeling is one that ever grows. The more one meditates upon such fancied injuries, the more firmly and deeply the roots of dissatisfaction and bitterness are planted in the heart.

So it was in heaven. Though the heavenly host had always approved of the judgments of Jehovah, and had acknowledged His government to be just and merciful and good, yet as they listened to the doubts and insinuations of Lucifer, and began to harbor in their own hearts the feeling that was animating his evil work, the spirit of jealousy and bitterness spread among them and became more intense and cruel. Erelong it flamed into open rebellion. Then "there was war in heaven; Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." Revelation 12:7, 8.

No imagination of man can fitly picture that scene or conjecture its setting. The holy men of old, through whom the word of God was given to the world, have not attempted to describe it. Inspiration has drawn over that dreadful event a veil of silence that mortal man cannot pass.

In the great conflict then waged, Michael and His

angels prevailed, and Lucifer and his hosts were cast out of heaven. Most overwhelming catastrophe—cast into outer darkness, their very place in heaven no longer found! But their work of evil was not yet finished. In vision John beheld the war of the angelic hosts, and saw them with their mighty leader cast out of heaven; and as he saw their power, and the malignity with which they would seek to destroy the souls of men, he gave utterance to this lamentation: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12.

A detailed and graphic description of the glory and wisdom of Lucifer before his fall is given by the prophet Ezekiel, who thus describes this powerful lost angel under the figure of the prince of Tyrus:

"Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: with thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: by thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy

riches: therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; . . . they shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.

"Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. . . . Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy

brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee." Ezekiel 28:2-17.

This is indeed an exalted description of this powerful fallen angel. No creature that ever came from the hand of God was more beautiful, more perfect, or more wise than he. He had been in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was his covering. He had been the anointed one, and had held an honored place as one of the covering cherubs about the throne of Jehovah. In beauty he was the sum of perfection. In wisdom there was nothing hidden from him as a created being. And not only was he wise and beautiful, but the record declares that he was perfect in his ways from the day that he was created till iniquity was found in him. But his heart was lifted up because of his beauty. His wisdom was corrupted because of his brightness. In his heart he said: "I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas." What a dreadful fall—from a being perfect in wisdom and beauty and righteousness to a creature of darkness and every evil and corrupt work!

Isaiah also briefly describes this powerful and exalted angel, and the unholy ambition that led to his fall: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I

will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." Isaiah 14:12-15.

The Saviour, speaking of the fall of Satan, said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke 10:18. And the beloved John, in describing the same scene, says: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:9.

In describing this fall, Milton says:

As sails, full-spread, and bellying with the wind,
Drop suddenly collapsed, if the mast split;
So to the ground dropped the cruel fiend.

What more pitiable spectacle to contemplate than the fall and ruin of angels! "We have seen the forsaken halls of timeworn and dilapidated castles, have stood in the unroofed palaces of ancient princes, and have gazed on the moss-covered and ivy-decked towers of perishing churches; and the sight of them has filled our hearts with melancholy, as we thought of what had been, and of the changes that had swept over the fair, valiant, and pious throngs whose laugh-

ter, bravery, and prayers once made these scenes so gay and vocal. All is hushed now, and the silence is broken only by the hoot and screech of the owl, or by the rustle of the night bat's leathern wing.

"But how much sadder is the form of the mighty spirit, who once sat regnant among the sons of light, emptied of his innocence, filled with foul, creeping, venomous thoughts and feelings, uncrowned, dethroned only with malignity and throned in evil! The Bible calls him the prince and the god of this world; and everywhere we are surrounded with evidences of his despotic sway. Unlike earthly rulers, whose exhausted natures exact repose, he is ever sleepless, and his plotting never ends. Enter his somber presence chamber, and commotion, bustle, activity, will confront and amaze you. He is continually sending his emissaries forth in every direction. The perpetual wranglings, ceaseless distractions, irreconcilable contradictions, disquieting doubts, discouraging outlooks, inharmonious and jangling opinions, unaccountable delusions, clashing and crashing dissonances, cruel hatreds, bitter enmities, and stormful convulsions, which so largely enter and deface the course of human history, proceed mainly from his influence."

It is the studied purpose of Satan and his hosts to lead men into rebellion against Jehovah. It is their plan to sow the seed of discord among brethren, to plant in human hearts every base and vile impulse

and desire, that the children of men may be as unlike Jehovah as sin and the gratification of evil passions can make them. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12, margin.

With every artifice, every persuasion, every suggestion pleasing to the natural heart, Satan has devoted his time for six thousand years to leading men into sin and rebellion. But he has not stopped here—it was his studied purpose to lead even the divine Son of God into sin, and thus thwart the plan of salvation. Appearing to Jesus after His prolonged fast, the archdeceiver placed before Him his most subtle and specious temptations. Willingly would he have surrendered to Christ his power and influence over this world, if the Son of God would have accepted these from his hand, and so acknowledged his power and sovereignty.

But Jesus conquered. He was tempted in all points "like as we are;" yet, unlike us, He yielded not to the tempter's devices. But as Satan failed to accomplish his purpose, and lead Christ into sin, he has redoubled his efforts to ensnare the sons of men, and lead them into rebellion against Jehovah. The warfare that was waged in heaven against God and His government by Satan and his angel sympathizers, is now carried

forward in this world with every soul who enlists under the banner of Prince Immanuel.

Never should we forget that these evil angels, once in the courts of heaven, giving honor and praise to Jehovah, are real beings, mighty in power, endowed with wisdom, ripe in experience, and with only one purpose animating their acts—to lead men into rebellion against their Maker. For this reason the children of God are constantly assaulted by doubts and fears, they are continually tempted and tried and buffeted, and often they are taken in the snares laid for their feet by the wily enemy of all righteousness.

But man is not left to engage singlehanded in this combat, else were his case indeed hopeless. Just as constant, just as vigilant, just as persevering, and far more powerful than the hosts of evil, are the heavenly angels, sent forth from the throne of Jehovah Himself to guard and protect those who shall be heirs of salvation, and to deliver them from the assaults of these evil ones. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. We should cherish the presence of these holy messengers of God, invite them into our assemblies, train our spiritual perceptions to recognize their influence, and become more and more conscious that they bear our petitions before the throne of God and minister to our needs.