

A CHRONOLOGY FOR *PARADISE LOST*

Books 1-2 correspond to Books 11-12: Permanent fall of Satan vs. fortunate fall of Adam and Eve

Books 3-4 correspond to Books 9-10: God's prophecies; Satan's enterprising trips and temptations; focus on dialogue between Adam and Eve; explanation of relations between heaven and earth.

Books 5-6 correspond to Books 7-8: Books 5-8 make up a separable, yet combined, block Adam and Eve are instructed about events in heaven and about their place in the created order The whole block 5-8 concerns the War in Heaven and its consequences Christ appears as a warrior in 5-6; he appears as the Word in 7-8 (Courtesy of Prof. Harold Toliver, UC Irvine)

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift / Than time or motion, but to human ears /
Cannot without process of speech be told, / So told as earthly notion can receive (*P.L.* VII.176-79)

In the best epic tradition, Milton begins *in medias res*, in the middle of things According to Shirley Zivley's account, the entire action takes 4 heavenly (H) days (of whatever duration) and 33 regular earthly (E) ones, measured from evening to evening as in *Genesis* The chronological order of key events is given below: the figures on the left indicate the "day" of the incident, and those at the right designate the book/s in which the action is either dramatized or described in retrospect We should keep in mind that no temporal scheme can really capture the complexities of either time or theme in *Paradise Lost*, and indeed that Milton might well be said to deliberately frustrate our attempts to reduce it to an easy schematic or diagram With that caveat duly noted, here is one account of the epic's basic chronology:

<u>Day</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Book</u>
H 01-01	The heavenly council: exaltation of the Son; Sin born.	Books V-VI, II
H 02-04	The battle in Heaven, narrated by Raphael; the rebels are defeated on the fourth heavenly day.	Books V-VI
E 01-18	Satan and his allies drop down to Chaos and Hell for nine earthly days, then lie stunned on the burning lake nine more.	Books VI, I
E 13-18	The six days of creation, as Raphael recounts Adam and Eve created on Day 18.	Book VII
E 19-19	Satan arises, stirs up rebels, builds Pandemonium, holds Infernal Council; at the gates of Hell he encounters Sin and Death, breaks out and travels through Chaos. God explains Grace and the Incarnation to the Son, exalts him a second time	Books II-III
E 20-20	Satan alights on Mount Niphates on earth; views Adam and Eve in Eden.	Books III-IV
E 21-21	Adam and Eve pray; Gabriel, warned by Uriel, finds Satan tempting a sleeping Eve with an evil dream; Satan departs, orbits earth God sends Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan.	Books IV-V
E 22-30	Satan orbits earth three times easterly (ecliptic path), four times northerly (colurian), twice again close to earth to find the right animal disguise for the temptation of Eve.	Book IX
E 31-31	In the form of a serpent, Satan successfully tempts Eve; soon, she convinces Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, too The Father rearranges the axis of the fallen earth and sends the Messiah to judge Adam and Eve; Satan departs earth.	Books IX-X
E 32-32	Satan returns to earth, meets Sin and Death in Chaos, reports back to Hell Sin and Death complete their trip to earth Adam and Eve are repentant.	Book X
E 33-33	Archangel Michael arrives on earth, sedates Eve, prepares Adam for visions of fallen humanity's future Michael promises a Messiah, escorts Adam and Eve from Eden.	Books XI-XII

Source Consulted: Zivley, Sherry Lutz "The Thirty-Three Days of Paradise Lost." *Milton Quarterly* 34.4 (2000) 116-126 I have also incorporated some material from a guide by Prof. Vicki Silver of UC Irvine.