

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

John Milton  
**Paradise Lost**

Read by **Anton Lesser**

**POETRY**

**THE  
GREAT EPICS**



NA300212D

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1	Book 1 Line 1: 'Of Man's First Disobedience and the Fruit'	7:50
2	Line 128: 'O Prince, O Chief of many Throned Powers'	4:47
3	Line 242: 'Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime'	6:38
4	Line 375: 'All these and more came flocking; but with looks'	5:31
5	Line 622: 'O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers'	5:35
6	Line 722: '... Th'ascending pile'	4:19
7	Book 2 Line 1: 'High on a Throne of Royal State, which far'	7:31
8	Line 119: 'I should be much for open War, O Peers'	6:45
9	Line 229: 'Either to disinthrone the King of Heav'n'	4:43
10	Line 310: 'Thrones and imperial Powers, off-spring of heav'n'	5:16
11	Line 390: 'Well have ye judg'd, well ended long debate'	2:38
12	Line 430: 'O Progeny of Heav'n, Emphyreal thrones'	3:01
13	Line 506: 'The Stygian Council thus dissolved; and forth'	5:51
14	Line 704: 'So spake the griesly terrour, and in shape'	8:36
15	Line 850: 'The key of this infernal Pit by due'	6:57
16	Line 968: 'T'whom Satan turning boldly thus. Ye Powers'	5:02
17	Book III Paraphrase: God, sitting on his throne	1:54
18	Book IV Line 1: 'O for that warning voice, which he who saw'	7:21

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19	Line 114: 'Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face'	3:17
20	Line 172: 'Now to th'ascent of that steep savage Hill'	3:35
21	Line 246: '... Thus was this place'	6:18
22	Line 358: 'O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold'	5:29
23	Line 440: 'To whom thus Eve repli'd. O thou for whom'	3:16
24	Line 492: 'So spake our general Mother, and with eyes'	3:08
25	Books V-VIII Paraphrase: 'Meanwhile, Uriel, descending'	2:15
26	Book IX Line 1: 'No more talk of where God or Angel Guest'	5:32
27	Line 99: 'O Earth, how like to Heav'n, if not preferr'd'	6:57
28	Line 194: 'And Eve first to her Husband thus began.'	3:46
29	Line 270: 'To whom the Virgin Majesty of Eve'	5:25
30	Line 376: 'So spake the Patriarch of Mankind, but Eve'	7:03
31	Book IX Line 494: 'So spake the Enemy of Mankind, enclos'd'	4:12
32	Line 567: 'To whom the guileful Tempter thus repli'd'	2:35
33	Line 612: 'Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt'	3:40
34	Line 679: 'O Sacred, Wise and Wisdom-giving Plant'	4:12
35	Line 745: 'Great are thy Virtues, doubtless, best of Fruits'	6:56
36	Line 856: 'Hast thou not wonder'd Adam, at my stay?'	2:33

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37	Line 896: 'O fairest of Creation, last and best'	4:41
38	Line 960: 'So Adam, and thus Eve to him repli'd.'	4:43
39	Line 1034: 'So said he, and forbore not glance or toy'	6:18
40	Line 1134: 'Would thou hadst heark'n'd to my words, and stay'd'	3:16
41	Book X Paraphrase: Man's disobedience known'	0:38
42	Line 68: 'Father Eternal, thine is to decree'	9:06
43	Line 229: 'Meanwhile ere thus was sinn'd and judg'd on Earth	4:57
44	Line 354: 'O Parent, these are thy magnific deeds'	3:56
45	Line 460: 'Thrones, Dominations, Princedom, Virtues, Powers	7:19
46	Books XI and XII: Paraphrase: 'Meanwhile Sin and Death rejoice	1:52
47	Book XII Line 553: 'How soon hath thy prediction, Seer blest'	7:50

**Total time: 3:55:45**

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John Milton

# Paradise Lost

**Paradise Lost**, the epic meditated and planned by Milton over many years (years which included the turbulence of the Civil War and the strictures of the Commonwealth), was completed in 1663 and published in 1667. In 1668 he added the prose arguments which provide plot summaries for each of the twelve Books into which the poem is divided.

John Milton, born in 1608, was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. He achieved early fame as a scholar, poet and pamphleteer, arguing vehemently for the Puritan cause against King and Church. Political activity then occupied him for many years and he only truly returned to his first love, poetry, after the Restoration in 1660. Meanwhile, his private life had proved almost as controversial as his public life: he married Mary Powell in 1642, but her swift return to her Royalist parents spurred Milton to some provocative pamphlets arguing for divorce. A reconciliation with his wife was followed by the birth of three children. Mary died in 1652 and Milton remarried in 1656: Katherine

Woodcock, however, lived only until 1658. His third marriage, to Elizabeth Minshull, took place in 1663; she outlived him.

**Paradise Lost** is Milton's greatest work: Dryden described it in 1667 as "one of the greatest, most noble and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced". Milton set himself the task of "justifying the ways of God to men": in other words, to tell the story of Man's creation, fall and redemption so that his readers might be moved to appreciate God's wisdom and purpose.

The poem paints unforgettably vivid and powerful pictures, both of characters and places, in a magnificently subtle and sonorous blank verse. One of the most interesting aspects of his epic is the characterisation of Satan, who (in spite of Milton's efforts to disparage him) emerges as a tragic and in some ways heroic figure, evil though his intentions are.

Satan, the fallen rebel angel, defies God and seeks revenge by seducing Adam and Eve into disobedience to their creator. The human pair are poignantly evoked:

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paradoxically frail yet perfect, their sense of their own humanity (after the fall) is Everyman's plight – we find ourselves, our capacity for wonder, love, shame, hope and despair, in them.

### **THIS ABRIDGEMENT**

This abbreviated version of the poem focuses especially on Books 1, 2, 4, 9 and 10. Prose summaries, based on Milton's own, are provided for those sections of the poem not included.

In *Books 1 and 2*, Satan and his comrades arise from their place of punishment, Hell, build the infernal city of Pandæmonium, and resolve to seek the destruction of mankind. Satan undertakes the journey alone, passing through Chaos towards Earth.

*Book 4* describes Satan's penetration of Eden and introduces "our first parents" Adam and Eve, in the perfection of Paradise.

*Book 9* is the dramatic climax of the poem: Satan successfully persuades Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, she in turn draws Adam into sin, and their lustful union (followed by shame) represents the new truth of their situation.

*Book 10* tells the story of God's judgement, and Satan's triumphant return to Hell, swiftly followed by shameful and monstrous transformation.

In *Book 12*, Adam and Eve are consoled by an account of the future redemption of Man by Christ and, gently grieving, the pair depart from Eden to begin human history.

### **Notes by Perry Keenlyside**

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## The music on this recording taken from the NAXOS catalogue

**ALL IN A GARDEN GREEN** JOHN JENKINS

8.550687

Rose Consort of Viols

**THE GREAT MASTERWORKS** MARAIS/SAINTE-COLOMBE

8.550750

Spectre de la Rose

Cover picture: *The Temptation and Fall of Eve*, illustration to *Paradise Lost* by William Blake.  
Courtesy of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

# John Milton Paradise Lost

Read by **Anton Lesser**

*'Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe...'*

*Paradise Lost* is the greatest epic poem in the English language. In words remarkable for their richness of rhythm and imagery, Milton tells the story of Man's creation, fall and redemption – to “justify the ways of God to men”.

Milton produced characters which have become embedded in the consciousness of English literature – the frail, human pair, Adam and Eve; the terrible cohort of fallen angels; and Satan, tragic and heroic in his unremitting quest for revenge.

The tale unfolds from the aftermath of the great battle between good and evil to the moving departure of Adam and Eve from Eden, with human and eternal anguish intertwined in magnificent resonance.



**Anton Lesser** is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. His career has also encompassed contemporary drama, notably *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Oresteia*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Mill on the Floss*.

*“With Anton Lesser's spirited rendering of Paradise Lost playing in your car, road rage will be quite forgotten and traffic jams almost welcome.”*

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Total time  
3:55:45