

South Pacific

DIVISION



Mission Projects

Our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help the South Pacific Division with these projects:

- 1 Build clinics in at least four isolated areas in Papua New Guinea
- 2 Purchase solar-powered MP3 players (God Pods) for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu
- CHILDREN'S PROJECT: Provide 15,000 Bibles for children in the islands of the South Pacific to use and share with their families

For more information, visit www.AdventistMission.org

Map not drawn to scale

Unions	Churches	Companies	Members	Population
Australian	421	98	56,741	22,674,000
New Zealand Pacific	135	60	17,998	4,970,000
Papua New Guinea	904	2,812	247,756	6,888,000
Trans Pacific	461	581	101,084	2,137,000
Totals	1,921	3,551	423,579	36,669,000

Jan • Feb • Mar 2013

ORIGINS

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide

Jan | Feb | Mar 2013

ORIGINS



SEVENTH-DAY
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CHURCH



Where legally possible, offerings will go to these projects; otherwise special arrangement will be made with the General Conference for distribution of funds based on the laws of the countries where these offerings are collected.



EAQ130101

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**Sabbath
School
Personal
Ministries**

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



IN THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING

Open the Bible to the first book, first chapter, first line. Notice: it says nothing about Christ dying for our sins, nothing about the Second Coming, nothing about His bodily resurrection from the grave. It says nothing about the state of the dead, the Day of Atonement, or even the seventh-day Sabbath.

The first words of the Bible don't talk about these teachings because they, and the truths associated with them, are meaningless apart from what the first words of the Bible do talk about—and that is, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Creation is the foundational truth of Scripture. All other biblical teachings—the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Second Coming—are founded upon the truth that our world was created by the Lord.

That's why Creation appears not only in the opening pages of the Bible but in the first five books of Moses, in the prophets, in the Psalms, in the Gospels, in the Epistles, in Acts, and in Revelation. And, in almost all cases, the theological context demands that it be taken literally.

For instance, Paul wrote that “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come” (*Rom. 5:14, NKJV*). Paul not only links a literal Adam to a literal Jesus, but his context in Romans 5 ties that link to the plan of salvation, a crucial doctrine that we understand in the most literal sense, as well: we are fallen beings who face eternal destruction or eternal life.

And here's Jesus Himself quoting from Genesis 1 and 2: "And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh' " (*Matt. 19:4–6, NKJV*). If Jesus accepted and taught the Creation account as literal, how can those who claim to be His followers do otherwise?

Our name, Seventh-day Adventist, itself bears direct witness to a six-day Creation. Though some voices may urge us to incorporate evolution into our theology, Seventh-day Adventism and Darwinism are inherently contradictory. Logically, one cannot hold both views at the same time.

Thus, this quarter's lessons delve into the doctrine of creation as depicted in Genesis 1 and 2 and explores its implications for a number of our beliefs—including morality, sin, marriage, stewardship, and more. Although working on the assumption that the story is literal, the quarter will show, again and again, how the central message of the Bible is built upon the historical truth of the Creation story.

Take, for instance, the gospel. According to Scripture, humans were created better than we are now. Jesus came to rescue us from death brought by the sin of Adam and Eve. But in an evolutionary model, the Lord incarnates into an evolved ape, created through the vicious and painfully murderous cycle of natural selection, all in order to abolish death, "the last enemy" (*1 Cor. 15:26*). But how can death be the "enemy" if it was one of God's chosen means for creating humans? The Lord must have expended plenty of dead *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, and *Homo neanderthalensis* in order to finally get one in His own image (*Homo sapiens*). If evolution were true, then Jesus came to save humankind from the process that God used to create it in the first place.

We can see here that mixing biblical truths with nonbiblical views generates logical absurdities that should be of concern to the honest seeker of truth. As we go through this quarter, we'll see even more reasons why a literal six-day Creation is essential to all that we believe and why to compromise on Creation is to undermine the basis of the gospel and the teachings that make us what we are.

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Thank you for helping tell the world about Jesus through your mission offerings.



Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3; Ps. 19:1–3; John 1:1–3, 14; Col. 1:15, 16; John 2:7–11.*

Memory Text: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (*Genesis 1:1, NKJV*).

Only something greater than what it creates could have created it. Thus, only a Being greater than the universe could have created the universe. And that Being is the God who is revealed in the Bible, the God whom we worship and serve because, among other things, He is our Creator.

We also learn that this God—the One who created the universe, the One who has spun those billions of galaxies across the expanse of the cosmos—is the same One who came to earth, to live among us as a human being and, even more amazing, to bear in Himself the punishment for our sins.

Sometimes we hear of things that are “too good to be true.” What could be better, though, for us as sinful beings in a fallen, painful world than to know the wonderful truth of our Creator’s love, a love so great that He would come down in the person of Christ and link Himself to each of us with ties that never can be broken?

In response to such a wondrous truth, how are we to live our lives?

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 5.*

In the Beginning

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (*Gen. 1:1*).

There are many deep truths in that simple text, one of the most profound being that the universe itself had a beginning. While that idea might not seem so radical to us today, it goes against the long-held belief in an eternally existing creation. Not until the twentieth century when the “Big Bang” model of origins took hold did the notion that the universe had a beginning gain general acceptance. Until then many believed that it had always existed. Many people resisted the concept of the universe having been created because that implied some sort of Creator. (In fact, the name “Big Bang” was intended to mock the notion of a created universe.) But the evidence that the universe had a beginning has become so strong that nearly all scientists have accepted it, at least for now (scientific views, even those once deemed sacrosanct, are often changed or refuted).

Read Hebrews 11:3. What does this verse tell us about God and the creation of the universe?

As with Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 11:3 is full of mystery and things that are unexplainable by our present knowledge. Yet, the text does seem to tell us that the universe was not formed from preexisting matter. The universe was created by the power of God’s Word; that is, both matter and energy were brought into existence by God’s power.

Creation from nothing is known as creation *ex nihilo*. We often credit humans with the creation of various things, but humans are incapable of creating from nothing. We can change the form of pre-existing matter, but we have no power to create *ex nihilo*. Only the supernatural power of God can do that. This is one of the most dramatic differences between God and humans, and it reminds us that our very existence depends on the Creator.

In fact, the verb *created* in Genesis 1:1 comes from a Hebrew root word that is used only in reference to the creative activity of God. Only God, not humans, can do that kind of creating (*see also Rom. 4:17*).

Why is a supernatural Creator, One who exists above and beyond the Creation, the only logical explanation for the Creation? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

The Heavens Declare

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1–3, see also Rom. 1:19, 20). How have you experienced the truth of these texts? How has modern science helped us to even more appreciate the power and wisdom of God as Creator?

Not just any kind of universe would be capable of supporting life. In fact, it seems that the universe must be extremely well-designed in order for life to exist. First, the building blocks of all matter—atoms—must be stable enough in order for stable material objects to be created. The stability of atoms depends on the forces that hold the parts of the atoms together. Atoms contain charged particles that both attract and repel each other. The forces of attraction and repulsion must be carefully balanced. If the attractive forces are too strong, only large atoms can form, and there would be no hydrogen. Without hydrogen, there would be no water, and thus no life. If the repulsive forces are too strong, only small atoms can form, such as hydrogen, and then there would be no carbon or oxygen. Without oxygen, there can be no water and no life. Carbon is also essential for all forms of life as we know it.

Not only must the atoms be stable, but they must be able to interact with one another in order to form vast numbers of different chemical compounds. There must be a balance between the forces that hold the molecules together and the energy required to break up the molecule in order to permit the chemical reactions upon which life depends.

The precise fitness of our universe for life has gained the admiration of scientists and has led many of them to comment that the universe appears to be designed by an intelligent Being.

The world also must have been wisely designed in order for life to exist. The range of temperatures must be compatible with life; so, the distance from the sun, the speed of rotation, and the composition of the atmosphere must all be in appropriate balance. Many other details of the world must be carefully designed. Truly, God’s wisdom is shown in what He created.

The Power of His Word

Read Jeremiah 51:15, 16 and Psalm 33:6, 9. In addition to wisdom, what other attribute of God is mentioned in the Creation? How was this attribute expressed in Creation? More important, what are the implications of this truth for us?

Though we cannot know exactly how God created, we are told that it was through His powerful Word. All the energy in all parts of the universe had its origin in the Word of God. All the energy in all our fuels came from God's power. All the gravity throughout the universe, every star guided in its course, and every black hole result from God's power.

Perhaps the greatest amount of energy is within the atom itself. We are justifiably impressed by the power of nuclear weapons, in which a small amount of matter is converted into a large amount of energy. Yet, scientists tell us that all matter contains large amounts of energy. If a small amount of matter can produce the vast energy of a nuclear weapon, consider the amount of energy stored in the material of the entire world! But that is as nothing when compared with the energy stored in the matter of the universe. Imagine the power that God utilized to bring the universe into existence.

Many scientists believe that anything God may do in the creation is restricted by the "laws of nature," but this idea is contrary to the Bible. God is not restricted by natural law; instead, God has determined natural law. God's power has not always followed the patterns that we call the "laws of nature."

For example, one of the fundamental "laws of nature" is the "Law of Conservation of Matter and Energy." This law states that the total amount of matter and energy in the universe remains constant. But how could the universe have appeared from nothing if this law were inviolable? God's creative word is not bound by the "laws" of science. God is sovereign over all His creation and is free to carry out His will.

Dwell (the best that you can) on the size of the universe. Think about the incredible power needed in order to create it. And to think that the God who wields such power loves us, even died for us. How can you learn to draw comfort from this amazing truth?

Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth

Read John 1:1–3, 14; Colossians 1:15, 16; Hebrews 1:1, 2. How do the New Testament writers identify the Creator? What are the implications of the answer?

John refers to Jesus as the Word (“Logos”) and equates Him with God. More specifically, Jesus is the One through whom all things were created. In John’s day, the term *logos* was commonly used to represent the creative principle. John’s early readers would be familiar with the concept of *logos* as a creative principle or even as a creator. John applied this familiar concept to Jesus, identifying Him as the true Creator. Jesus, the Logos, the Incarnate One who lived among us, was not only present in the beginning, He was the One by whom the universe was created. This means that we could read Genesis 1:1 as “In the beginning, Jesus created the heavens and the earth.”

Paul’s words in Colossians 1 resonate with those of John in the identification of the Creator as Jesus Christ. By Him, all things were created. Paul adds two other attributes of Jesus. First, He is the image of the invisible God. In our sinful state, we cannot see God the Father, but we can see Jesus. If we want to know what God is like, we can study the life of Jesus (*John 14:9*). Second, Paul calls Jesus the “firstborn” of creation (*Col. 1:15*). In this context, “firstborn” does not refer to origin but to status. The firstborn was the head of the family and the heir of the property. Jesus was the “firstborn” in the sense that, as Creator and through the Incarnation (His taking upon Himself our humanity), He is the rightful head of the human family. Jesus was not a created being; rather, from eternity He was one with the Father.

Hebrews 1:1, 2 repeats the same points as in the Colossians passage. Jesus is appointed heir of all things and is the One by whom the world was created. In addition, He is the exact representation of the Father’s nature, another way of stating that He is the image of God.

How would you respond if someone were to ask you, “What is your God like?” What justification could you give for your answer?

The Creator Among Us

Read John 2:7–11, 6:8–13, 9:1–34. What do these texts reveal about the creative power of God?

Each of these miracles gives us a glimpse of God’s power over the material world that He Himself created.

First, what kind of process would be required to change water directly into wine? None that we know of. Indeed, it took an act outside of the laws of nature, at least as we now know them, to do what Jesus did here.

In the miracle of the fish and loaves, Jesus started with five loaves and two small fish and ended with enough to feed a multitude and have 12 baskets of leftovers. All the food was made of atoms and molecules. At the end, there were many times more atoms and molecules of food than when Jesus started to feed the crowd. From where did the additional molecules come, if not by the supernatural intervention of God?

Furthermore, what physical changes happened to the blind man when he was healed? He was blind from birth; thus, his brain had never been stimulated to form images from the messages sent by the eye through the optic nerve. So, his brain had to be rewired in order to process the incoming information, form images, and interpret their meaning. Next, there was something wrong with the eye itself. Perhaps some photoreceptor molecules were produced incorrectly as a result of a mutation in his DNA. Or perhaps some mutation had occurred at birth in the genes that control the development of the parts of the eye—the retina, optic nerve, lens, and so on. Or perhaps some mechanical damage had occurred that prevented the eye from functioning properly.

Whatever the details of the man’s blindness, the words of Jesus caused molecules to form in appropriate places, forming functional receptors, neuronal connections, and brain cells so that light entering the eye would form an image, and the man would have the ability to recognize images that he had never before seen.

Miracles are wonderful when they happen, but what is the danger of making your faith dependent upon them? Upon what, then, must our faith depend?

Further Study: “The work of creation can never be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?

“The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter. On the contrary, all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice and were created for His own purpose. The heavens and all the host of them, the earth and all things therein, are not only the work of His hand; they came into existence by the breath of His mouth.”
—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 258, 259.

“Just how God accomplished the work of creation he has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as his existence.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 113.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, discuss your answer to Sunday’s final question.
- 2 Science talks about what it calls “anthropic coincidences” (from the Greek word *anthropos* for “man”), the incredibly fine-tuned balance of forces in nature that make it possible for human life to exist. Notice, though, the built-in bias revealed in the word *coincidences*. If you don’t believe in God, you have to attribute these amazing balances to mere coincidence. Why is the belief that these balances were the product of a Creator God a more reasonable explanation than to simply call them “coincidences”?
- 3 Consider the love of the Creator as He formed Adam and Eve and provided them with a beautiful garden home, knowing that He Himself would suffer and die on Calvary at the hands of the race He was creating. What do we learn about God’s love from the decision that He made to go ahead with the Creation anyway?
- 4 How does the “Big Bang” theory compare with the Creation statement in Genesis 1:1? Might the “Big Bang” be a description of the way in which the universe came into existence at God’s Word? What issues or problems do you see in this idea? Why would it be dangerous to link our theology to any scientific theory, especially when science so often changes?

The Powerful Sword

A pastor in a difficult, mostly non-Christian country was studying with a young man who had shown an interest in knowing about Jesus. Things were going well until the boy's father returned home from prison, where he had been serving a sentence for murder.

At first the young man's father was impressed with the changes he saw in his son. But when he learned that his son had been studying with a Christian, he became furious. He felt he had to save his son from the dangerous ideas Christians have.

The father tried talking to his son. When that didn't work, he yelled; then he beat his son. But the young man refused to give up his new faith in Christ. His father knew if he kept on beating his son, he would soon kill him. And what good would that do?

Then the father had an idea. He would kill the pastor instead. It would be worth another prison sentence to save his son from the Christians' heresy.

The father staked out the pastor's house and learned his schedule. He sharpened his long knife. When the time was right, he drove to the pastor's house, waited for him to get into his car, and then blocked the pastor's driveway with his own car. When the pastor got out of his car to see what the problem was, the angry father grabbed him and forced him into his own car.

The pastor recognized the man and guessed why he had attacked him. The pastor tried to share some Bible verses with the man, but the man yelled at him as he reached for his knife. Suddenly the man's hand froze in midair; his arm went numb, and he couldn't move it.

The pastor calmly continued sharing scripture with the man until his attacker began to weep.

A few months later the father was baptized. As the members publicly welcomed him into the church, he asked for the microphone. "I have a gift for the pastor," he said. Carefully he unwrapped the long, sharp knife and said, "This is the sword I was going to use to kill you. But you have a longer, stronger, sharper sword—a two-edged one, which is the Word of God. That sword killed the old man in me. I am now a new man. Praise God!"

Your mission offerings help to reach people for Christ in some of the most difficult regions of the world. Thank you for your support.

HOMER TRECARTIN *is president of the Greater Middle East Union Mission.*

Creation: Forming *the* World



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1:1–13, Isa. 45:18, 1 John 1:5, Rev. 22:5, 2 Cor. 4:6, 2 Pet. 3:5, Job 38:4–6.*

Memory Text: “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the Lord, and there is no other’ ” (*Isaiah 45:18, NKJV*).

Scientists are increasingly impressed by the fitness of the world for living creatures. And no wonder, for design and purpose are affirmed throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis 1. Starting with a planet that was unformed and unfilled, God spent the first three days forming the world for occupation and the last three filling it. This week's lesson focuses on those first three days of the Creation week.

Some scholars have objected to the idea that God would “impose” a purpose on nature, arguing instead that He simply allowed the material world to “be itself” and to develop by natural processes supposedly inherent in itself. This is a common theme among those who promote various forms of “theistic evolution.” Yet, such ideas are not compatible with Scripture or with our understanding of Creation. The universe has no inherent will of its own. The creation is not an entity independent of God, but it is instead God's chosen arena in which He can express His love to the creatures that He has made.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 12.*

Without Form and Void

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1, 2, NKJV). What do these verses reveal about the earth before the Lord began creating life on it?

The Bible starts with the story of Creation, and the Creation story starts with a statement that God is Creator. It then describes the condition of the world when God began to prepare it for occupancy. When the story begins, the planet is already here but unformed, unfilled, dark, and wet. The succeeding verses describe how God first formed the world into an inhabitable place and then filled it with living creatures. The text does not tell us exactly when the rocks and water of the earth came into existence, only that the world had not always been suitable for life. The world became fit for living creatures only because God acted to make it so.

What does Isaiah 45:18 teach us about God’s intention at Creation?

When the earth was first brought into existence, it was unsuitable for life. The Bible says nothing about the time period between the original creation of the rocks and water and the creation of the environment and the creatures. Some scholars think it might have been immediately; others that it may have been after a long period of time.

The simple fact is, we don’t know, nor does it really matter. Whatever the case, the material of the earth was created by God; then, at the time of His choosing, He created a suitable environment for life. The crucial point is that the Lord, who was not dependent upon preexisting matter, used matter that He had at some point already created, something that in its “primeval” state was *tohu vabohu* (“without form and void”). Then, afterwards, through the power of His Word, He created our inhabitable world.

Let There Be Light

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day (Gen. 1:3–5, NKJV). What do these verses teach us about the first day of Creation?

Numerous points can be inferred from this passage.

First, light appeared in response to God’s command. God’s word is effective in determining the state of the Creation.

Second, the light was “good.” We may wonder why the text says that God “saw” the light; is there any doubt that God sees everything? The point is that the light made by God was good, even in God’s eyes. We know that the light is good because God Himself evaluated it as such.

Another point is that God divided the light from the darkness. Both light and darkness are under God’s control, and neither one makes any difference to His activity and knowledge (see *Ps. 139:12*). God gave names to the dark and light portions of time, calling them “day” and “night.” God has the right to give names to periods of time because He is the Creator of time. As Sovereign over time, God is not limited by time. Rather, time depends on God.

Another point of this passage is that there was a period of darkness and a period of light that together comprised a day. Much has been written about the meaning of “day” in the Creation story. We will consider this question later, but we note in passing that the first day was composed of a period of darkness and a period of light, in the same way that we observe days now.

Also, light is one of the features that accompanies the presence of God. We do not need to suppose that light was invented on the first day of Creation, since God existed before the earth was created and His presence is often associated with light (*1 John 1:5, Rev. 22:5*). At Creation, light was introduced to the previously dark planet.

How, though, could there be day and night before the introduction of the sun into the Creation account? Moses surely knew the connection between the sun and daylight. Yet, despite that obvious knowledge, he wrote what he did about the light and darkness on the first day. God must have given him knowledge about Creation that, at present, we don’t understand, knowledge that cannot be discerned from looking at the natural world. Why, though, shouldn’t we be surprised that some things about Creation remain a mystery?

The Heaven Created

“Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day” (*Gen. 1:6–8, NKJV*).

God created the firmament, appointed its function, and gave it a name, heaven. The function of the firmament (heaven) was to divide the water below from the water above it. Today, we would probably use the term “sky” and recognize the division of the sky into the atmosphere, which is a part of our environment and the space beyond our atmosphere where the sun, moon, and stars exist.

The atmosphere appears to be the portion of the “heaven” that was formed on the second day of Creation. The atmosphere provides a method for moving water uphill; water can evaporate and enter the atmosphere, where it can be transported to any place on the earth. Then it can be brought back to the surface, either through the mist as described in Genesis 2:6 or as rain.

God named the firmament, signifying His sovereignty over it. The act of naming implies that God is sovereign over space. Space does not limit God’s actions in any way, because He created and rules it. As with the lighting of the world on the first day, the creation of the firmament was completed before the end of the second day, another dark period of evening and a light period of morning.

Much discussion has centered on the meaning of the word *firmament*. The Hebrew word *raqia* is sometimes used to describe a sheet of metal that has been hammered into a thin sheet, hence the term “firmament.” Critics have argued that the ancient Hebrews actually believed there was a hard surface above the earth; thus, they argue, because no such thing exists, the biblical account is wrong. But this is faulty reasoning. The use of the word *firmament*, in that context, simply applies to the sky above—both the atmosphere and space itself. We only have to look at the immediate context to know what is being talked about. In Genesis the birds are described as flying on “the face of the firmament” (*Gen. 1:20, NKJV*), and in another place the firmament is where the sun and moon are seen (*Gen. 1:14*). Obviously, the birds don’t fly in the part of the *raqia* where the sun and moon are.

Whatever the mysteries of the Creation narrative itself, one point comes through very clearly: nothing is left to chance. Why is that point important for us to know, especially at a time when many believe that chance played a big role in our creation?

Space for Living

Read Genesis 1:9–13. Try to envision the incredible creative power of God as He is doing that which is described in this text. How does this account give a logical answer to the old question, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”

Previous to this time, the earth was covered with water. In order to provide living space for the humans that God planned to create, He changed the surface of the earth to produce basins that received the water and formed seas, allowing continents to appear. This involved a third division of the physical features of the earth. (The first division was between light and darkness; the second division was between waters above from waters below; and the third division was between dry land and seas.)

Also, for the third time, God gives names to the things that He has divided. The dry land is called “earth,” and the gatherings of waters are called “seas,” once again illustrating God’s sovereignty over space. God examines the arrangement of land and seas and declares it “good.”

A second Creation event is recorded for the third day of Creation. The dry land provides space for God to place a food supply for the creatures soon to be created. God calls forth plants from the dry land (earth). Grass, herbs, and fruit trees are mentioned specifically. These are to be the sources of food for terrestrial creatures. The text does not indicate how many different kinds of plants were created, but it does indicate that there was a diversity of plants from the beginning. In fact, from what we see today, we know that there must have been an incredible variety of these life forms. Also, Scripture is clear that there is no single ancestor here from which all plants evolved; instead, right from the start, there is a diversity of plant life. The concept, fundamental to evolutionary biology, of a single plant ancestor is contradictory to the biblical account.

Look at the incredible diversity of fruit and vegetables and other edibles. How do they present powerful evidence of God’s love for us? Why is it absurd to think that all these things were created, as evolution teaches, by random processes?

God's All-Powerful Word

What do the following texts teach us about the power of God's word?

2 Cor. 4:6 _____

Isa. 55:11 _____

2 Pet. 3:5 _____

The Bible teaches that God created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), by the power of His Word and without conflict or resistance in any form. This view of creation is unique to the Hebrews among all the peoples of the ancient world. Most nonbiblical creation stories tell of conflict and violence in creation. For example, the ancient Babylonians had a creation story in which the monster Apsu and his consort Tiamat produce a generation of deities that they then attempt to destroy, but Tiamat is killed in the battle. Her body is divided into two parts, one that formed the heavens and the other that formed the earth.

Modern men have also created a popular story of creation through violence. According to this story, God willfully created a world in which resources would be in short supply, causing competition among individuals, with the result being that weaker individuals would be eliminated by the stronger. Over time, according to this modern story, organisms have become more and more complex, ultimately producing humans and all other living organisms from a common ancestor.

Yet, the "gods" of evolutionary theory (random mutation and natural selection) are not the same as the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is the Defender of the weak and the generous Provider for all creatures. Death, suffering, and other evils were not caused by God; on the contrary, they came as a natural result of rebellion against His good rulership. The gods of evolutionary theory use competition and elimination of the weak by the strong in order to create. Even worse, they are responsible for death and suffering; indeed, death and suffering are their very means of creating.

Thus, Genesis 1 and 2 cannot, in any way, be harmonized with modern evolutionary theory, which at its core opposes the biblical account of Creation.

Further Study: Though Scripture doesn't explicitly say it, we have good biblical reasons for believing that the universe existed long before life on earth began. First, in Job 38:4–6, God states that there were living beings who shouted for joy when God formed the world. This implies preexisting beings who lived in the universe before the earth was created. The reference to an on-looking universe in 1 Corinthians 4:9 may refer to the same group of beings. Second, the serpent was present in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned. In Revelation 12:9, the serpent is identified as Satan, who was thrown out of heaven. Jesus said that He saw this happen (*Luke 10:18*). Ezekiel 28:14, 15 describe the covering cherub, who was perfect at first but eventually rebelled. This implies that there was a period of time before Satan's rebellion and that presumably Satan lived in the universe also. These texts indicate that Adam and Eve were not the first beings created.

“As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged, abounding in terrific steeps and frightful chasms, as they now do; the sharp, ragged edges of earth's rocky framework were buried beneath the fruitful soil, which everywhere produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist. The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace. The angelic host viewed the scene with delight, and rejoiced at the wonderful works of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Identify as many features as you can that show that the world is designed.
- 2 What reasons can you give to show how the theory of evolution cannot be harmonized with the biblical doctrine of creation?
- 3 Without doubt, there are elements in the Genesis Creation account that we can't explain. Why, though, is that not a reason to reject it as a literal account of the way in which God created our world?

A Card, a Garage Door, and a \$50 Bill

When Dennis Hulett stepped into the baptistry that was set up on the lawn of his new home church in Wisconsin in the United States, dozens of his new church friends watched with tears in their eyes. It had been a miraculous journey for Dennis—a journey involving an invitation card, a garage door, and a \$50 bill.

Things had been rough for Dennis. He had lost his job and was going through a divorce. He felt worthless. Looking through his mail one day, he found a card showing a multiheaded dragon with crowns on it. Dennis, who had always been interested in Bible prophecy, recognized the image.

Dennis went to the prophecy meeting. As he listened to the presenter explain the Bible truths of Daniel and Revelation to the audience, Dennis discovered that the Bible presented prophecy very differently from a series of books he had been reading on the Second Coming. Dennis liked the way the presenter let God's Word defend itself. *This is exactly the way Bible studies should be conducted*, he thought.

Dennis made friends with others attending the seminar, including Karl and Karen, members of the Seventh-day Adventist church that was sponsoring the meetings. Dennis rented the house next door to Karl and Karen, who prayed that they would be a good influence on him.

The prophecy seminar ended, but Dennis continued attending the Adventist church on most Sabbaths. Then he noticed something that made everything he was learning fall into place. "Karl has a shop in his garage," Dennis said. "I noticed that the shop door was closed on Sabbath." Dennis was unemployed and was trying to earn money by recycling cans.

One Friday evening Dennis headed out to recycle more cans, hoping to earn some money to spend with his daughter, who was coming for a visit the following Monday. When he saw Karl's closed garage door, he thought, *I can't insult God by working on Friday night*. Dennis didn't know how he would earn the money he needed. *I'll just have to figure something else out*, he decided.

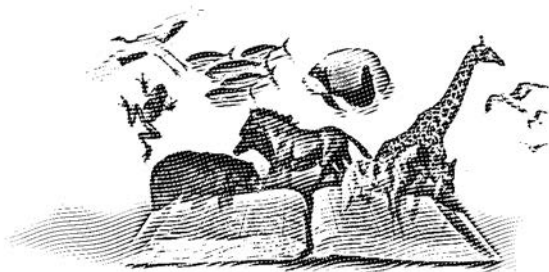
The next morning at church somebody put a \$50 bill in the offering plate with a note that read, "Give to Dennis." When Dennis received the money, he was speechless. "It was enough to buy food and gas and have a nice week with my daughter!"

Since then God has blessed Dennis with a job that gives him Sabbaths off. Dennis says thanks to God by serving Him in any way he can.

Our mission offerings help to promote outreach to neighbors and strangers alike. Thank you for giving.

JUANITA EDGE is communication director of the Wisconsin Conference in the North American Division.

The Creation Completed



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Genesis 1; Ps. 8:3; Rom. 8:19–22; Lev. 11:14–22; Gen. 2:1–3; Mark 2:27, 28.*

Memory Text: “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work” (*Genesis 2:2, NIV*).

This week's lesson reviews the Bible's brief description of the last three Creation days and the Sabbath rest. This description is found in *Genesis 1:1–2:3*, but numerous references to it exist in other parts of Scripture. One of the most striking aspects of the Creation account is its division into days of Creation. Why did He choose to make the seven-day time cycle that we call a week?

Scripture does not tell us directly, but we can look for clues. Perhaps the most important clue is the Sabbath itself, which reserves a special time for communion between God and humanity. It may be that God established the week to provide a period of time suitable for ordinary work, yet with a regular period of time set aside as a reminder of our relationship to God (*see Mark 2:28*). This would help humans to remember that God is the true provider and that we are totally dependent upon Him.

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that the *Genesis* Creation account reveals a Creation done with exceeding care and purpose. Nothing is left to chance.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 19.*

Sun, Moon, and Stars

Read Genesis 1:14–19. What actions are mentioned on the fourth day of Creation? How are we to make sense of this, especially given our present understanding of the physical world?

The fourth day has probably been discussed more than any of the other six Creation days. If the sun was created on the fourth day, what caused the daily cycles for the first three Creation days? On the other hand, if the sun already existed, what happened on the fourth day?

Uncertainty over the events of the fourth day of Creation does not arise from a logical contradiction but from a plurality of possibilities. One possibility is that the sun was created on the fourth day, and the light for the first three days came from God's presence or from another source such as a supernova. Revelation 21:23 is consistent with this idea, as the sun is not needed in the heavenly city because God is there. A second possibility is that the sun, moon, and stars were appointed their functions at that time. Psalm 8:3 seems consistent with this view. Hebrew scholar C. John Collins writes that the Hebrew wording of Genesis 1:14 may allow for either of these two possibilities. (See C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing Co., 2006], p. 57.)

A third possibility is that the sun was already in existence but was obscured by clouds or volcanic dust and was not visible or fully functional until the fourth day. One can compare this possibility with the planet Venus, where a similar situation occurs today.

The text does not seem clearly to endorse or rule out any of these interpretations, although this does not deter strong opinions on the topic. It is probably a good rule not to give a question more significance than the Bible gives it, and we ought to acknowledge that our understanding is limited. This acknowledgment, especially in the area of creation, shouldn't be that hard to accept. After all, think about how many scientific mysteries exist at present; that is, they are right here for experimental science to investigate and yet still remain mysteries. How much more mysterious is something hidden so far in the past?

Creation of Air and Water Animals

Read Genesis 1:20–23. What evidence, if any, exists in the texts that would imply randomness?

The waters and the atmosphere were populated on the fifth day of Creation. Many have seen a relationship between the second and fifth Creation days. The waters were separated by the atmosphere on the second day, and both were filled with living creatures on the fifth day. The Creation events seem to have occurred in a sequence that reflects an intentional pattern, showing the care and orderliness of God's activity. In other words, nothing in the Creation account provides any room for randomness.

Notice that both water creatures and air creatures are mentioned in the plural, indicating that a diversity of organisms was created on the fifth day. Each creature was blessed with the capacity to be fruitful and multiply. Diversity was present from the beginning. There was no single ancestor from which all other species descended, but each species seems to have been endowed with the possibility of producing varieties of individuals. For example, more than four hundred named breeds have been developed from the common pigeon, and at least twenty-seven breeds of goldfish are known. God apparently gave each of His creatures the potential to produce a great variety of various offspring, further adding to the diversity of the Creation.

In verse 21, God saw that the creatures He had made were good. This implies they were well-designed, attractive to the eye, free from defects, and harmoniously participating in the purpose of the Creation.

Few living creatures excite our imagination and admiration more than the birds. Birds are truly amazing creatures and are wonderfully designed. Their feathers are lightweight but strong, stiff yet flexible. The parts of a flight feather are held together by complex sets of tiny barbs that provide strong but lightweight bracing. A bird's lung is so designed that it can obtain oxygen as it inhales and also as it exhales. This provides the high level of oxygen required for powered flight. This result is accomplished by the presence of air sacs in some of the bones. These sacs function to sustain the flow of oxygen and, at the same time, to lighten the body of the bird, making flight easier to maintain and control. Birds are amazingly constructed.

With all this in mind, read Matthew 10:29–31. What comfort can you find in these words?

Creation of the Land Animals

In Genesis 1:24–31, terrestrial animals and humans were created on the sixth day. As with the correlation between the second and fifth days, a correlation is also seen between the division of the land and sea on the third day and the filling of the land on the sixth day. One is reminded again of the orderly and purposeful sequence of Creation events, as is consistent with a God of order (*compare 1 Cor. 14:33*).

As with the creatures created on the fifth day, the wording of the text indicates that a plurality of types was created on the sixth day of Creation. A diversity of beasts, cattle, and creeping things were created, as well.

There is no single ancestor of all land animals; God, instead, created many distinct and separate lineages.

Note the expression “according to their kind,” or similar phrases in Genesis 1:11, 21, 24, 25. Some have attempted to use this phrase to support the idea of fixed “kinds,” an idea taken from Greek philosophy. The ancient Greeks thought that each individual was an imperfect expression of an unchanging ideal, known as a type. Yet, the fixity of species is not consistent with the biblical teaching that all of nature suffers from the curse of sin (*Rom. 8:19–22*). We know that species have changed, as expressed in the curses of Genesis 3 (Ellen G. White wrote about the “threefold curse” on the earth—the curse after the Fall, after Cain’s sin, and after the Flood), and as seen in the parasites and predators that cause so much suffering and violence. The meaning of the phrase “according to their kind” is best understood by examining the context in which it is used.

Read Genesis 6:20, 7:14, and Leviticus 11:14–22. How is the expression “after its kind” or an equivalent phrase applied? How do these examples help us to understand the phrase in Genesis 1?

The phrase “after his kind,” or an equivalent, should not be interpreted as some rule of reproduction. Rather, it refers to the fact that there were diverse kinds of creatures involved in the respective stories. Some Bible translations use the phrase “of various kinds,” which seems more true to the context. Instead of referring to fixity of species, the phrase refers to the diversity of creatures created on the sixth day. From the time of the Creation, there have been many kinds of plants and animals.

The Creation Completed

After the Creation was completed in six days (we will study the creation of humanity later), we find the first mention in the Bible of the seventh day.

Read Genesis 2:1–3. Notice especially verse 1, which emphasizes the completion of all that God had done. Why is this so important in our understanding of the significance of the seventh day?

The Hebrew word for rest in this text is *shabath*, which is closely related to the word for Sabbath. It indicates a cessation of labor upon completion of a project. God was not weary and in need of rest; He was finished with His work of creating and so He stopped. God’s special blessing rests on the seventh day. It is not only “blessed” but also “sanctified,” which carries the idea of being set apart and specially devoted to God. Thus, God gave special significance to the Sabbath in the context of the relationship between God and humans.

Read Mark 2:27, 28. What did Jesus say was the purpose of the Sabbath?

Notice that the Sabbath was not made because God had a need but because man had a need for which God made provision. At the end of that first week, God rested from His acts of creation and devoted His time to relationship with His creatures. Humans needed the communion with their Maker in order to understand their place in the universe. Imagine the joy and wonder that Adam and Eve experienced as they conversed with God and beheld the world that He had made. The wisdom of this provision for rest became even more evident after sin. We need the Sabbath rest in order to prevent us from losing sight of God and getting caught up in materialism and overwork.

God commands us to give one-seventh of our lives to the remembrance of the act of Creation. What should that tell us about the importance of the teaching? How can you learn to have a deeper and richer experience with the Lord through resting on the Sabbath as He Himself did?

The Literal Day

Read Genesis 1:5, 8, 31. What are the components of a creation day? Does anything in the verses imply that these are not literal 24-hour days as we experience them today?

The nature of the days of Creation has been the subject of much discussion. Some have questioned whether the days were ordinary days or whether they might represent much longer periods of time. The text's description of the Creation days provides the answer to that question. The days are composed of an evening (dark period) and a morning (light period) and are consecutively numbered. That is, the days are expressed in a way that very clearly shows that they are days just as we now experience them, an evening and a morning, a period of darkness and a period of light. It is difficult to see how the statement could be more clear or explicit in describing the days of a week. The repeated expression "and there was evening and there was morning" emphasizes the literal aspect of each day.

Read Leviticus 23:3. What indication do we have that all seven days of Creation week were the same kind of days as those that we experience?

The ancient Hebrews were in no doubt as to the nature of the Sabbath day. It was a day of ordinary length but carried a special blessing from God. Note the explicit comparison of God's workweek of six days with our workweek of six days and the corresponding comparison of the day of rest for God and for us (*see also Exod. 20:9, 11*). Even many scholars who reject the idea of these being literal days often admit that the writers of the Bible understood that literal days were meant.

So crucial to our relationship with God is our trust of God and of His Word. If we can't trust the Word of God on something as foundational and as explicitly stated as the Genesis Creation in six literal days, what can we trust Him on?

Further Study: As stated previously, the days of the Creation week are numbered and identified as being composed of a dark period, the evening, and a light period, the morning. There is no reasonable way in which to interpret these days other than as being like the days we experience today. Some have appealed to such texts as Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 when arguing that each Creation day actually represents 1,000 years. This conclusion is not suggested by the text and does nothing to resolve the issue created by those who think that these days represent billions of years.

Also, if the days in Genesis represented long epochs, one would expect to find a succession in the fossil record that matches the succession of the living organisms created in the successive six Creation “days.” Thus, the first fossils should be plants, which were created on the third “day.” Next should be the first water animals and the air animals. Finally, we should find the first land animals. The fossil record does not match this sequence. Water creatures come before plants, and land creatures come before air creatures. The first fossil fruit trees and other flowering plants appear after all these other groups. The only point of similarity is that humans appear last in both accounts.

“Of each successive day of creation, the Sacred Record declares that it consisted of the evening and the morning, like all other days that have followed.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 112.

“But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise.”—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 91.

Discussion Questions:

- ① Even from a nonliteralist interpretation of Genesis, two points are obvious: nothing was random in the act of Creation, and there was no common ancestry for the species. Now, along comes Darwinian evolution, which in its various versions teaches two things: randomness and common ancestry for all species. How, then, does one interpret Genesis through a theory that, at its most basic level, contradicts Genesis at its most basic level?
- ② Why is it important to understand that science, for all the good that it does, is still merely a human endeavor?
- ③ All science has to study is a fallen world, one that is very different in many ways from the original Creation. Why is it important to keep that truth ever before us?

Serving in Small Ways

Nora and Jorge enjoyed the fellowship and outreach activities in their large church home in southern Ecuador. But they wanted to do more. They prayed for a special outreach opportunity, and God called them to serve Him in a smaller way in their own neighborhood.

The family knew many of their neighbors and invited them to worship in their home. Five of their neighbors came, along with several Seventh-day Adventists who lived nearby. The visitors enjoyed the worship service and continued to attend regularly. A few more neighbors joined the group. Some brought their children; so, one of Nora and Jorge's daughters gave up her bedroom so the children could have a Sabbath School room.

Then Nora learned that she needed surgery for a blocked artery. She prayed for the doctors and for a successful outcome. But during surgery her lungs filled up with fluid, and her heart stopped beating. Doctors tried to resuscitate her but weren't successful. So, they were amazed when her heart began beating again on its own. And they were even more astounded when she awakened 12 hours after the surgery. She was in the intensive care unit, but she had survived.

One of her doctors stopped by her room the next day and asked, "Nora, you shouldn't have survived. Who is your God?" Because of a tube in her throat, Nora couldn't talk; so, her husband explained that during the surgery Christians across the city were praying for her. "Our God can be your God too," her husband told the doctor.

Three other doctors quizzed Nora's husband about the couple's faith. One said, "In thirty years I've never seen someone whose lungs filled with fluid and whose heart stopped beating survive and respond so well the next day." Nora's miraculous recovery prompted the doctors to reexamine their own faith. Some of them asked more questions, and Jorge gave them copies of *Steps to Christ*.

After Nora left the hospital, two doctors called her to see how she was doing. "They seemed so surprised that I was alive and doing well," Nora said. "I told them that God is my God, and He chose to save me. This miracle has helped our house church grow, as well," Nora added. "Now we don't have enough room in our home for our congregation. We're looking for another place to worship."

We are God's chosen instruments to tell the world. Sharing our faith and our mission offerings helps to grow God's family.

NORA VARGAS DE ARELLANO and JORGE ARELLANO and their daughters share God's love in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Creation, a Biblical Theme



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Genesis 2, Matt. 19:4–6, Psalm 8, Job 38:1–21, 42:1–6, Isa. 45:18, Acts 17:22–31.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ ” (*Revelation 14:6, 7, NIV*).

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is the foundation for many Creation texts found in Scripture. Some references to Genesis 1 are clear, others are more indirect. The more indirect references often involve a repetition of certain words or ideas without directly quoting the text, such as 2 Corinthians 4:6: “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (*NKJV*). A direct reference, in contrast, is Hebrews 4:4: “For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works’ ” (*NKJV*), a quote from Genesis 2:2.

This week we will look at various references that point back to the Genesis account and show how other Bible writers understood it as a literal depiction of human origins.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 26.*

Creation in Genesis 2

“These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” (*Gen. 2:4*).

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is the first account of God creating our world. It forms the foundation of all the other truths that we, as Christians, believe.

But the Creation account doesn’t end there. From Genesis 2:3 to the end of the chapter, we are given more details, specifically regarding the creation of Adam and Eve. Thus, we should interpret Genesis 2:4 (above) as the introduction to a more detailed history of the creation of Adam and Eve, an act that is briefly summarized in Genesis 1:26–29. Some modern scholars have argued that a conflict exists between Genesis 1 and 2, but this would have been a surprise to Moses and the other biblical writers. If the stories were seen as conflicting, Moses would never have written them, especially so close together. The conflict isn’t with the texts; it’s with those who read a conflict into them.

Read Matthew 19:4–6. How does Jesus affirm the historical truth of Genesis 1 and 2?

In response to the Pharisees’ question about divorce, Jesus quoted from both Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, showing that He considered both to be discussing the same historical event, the Creation of the world and humanity. How much more proof do we need that Genesis 1 and 2 are harmonious accounts of Creation, the doctrine and teaching that forms the foundation of our existence and purpose? We are not here by chance, we are not here by fluke; we are beings made in the image of God—and the Genesis Creation account, as revealed in chapters 1 and 2, is God’s special revelation to us of our origins.

Read Genesis 2. How does it help us to better understand what it means to be human, to be made in the image of God, and to be given free will?

Creation in the Psalms

Read Psalm 8. What links do you find with Genesis 1?

Read Psalm 104. Note how this psalm praises God for His goodness as seen in both Creation and providence. Identify the links with Genesis 1 in the following verses from Psalm 104:

Vs. 2 _____

Vss. 5–7 _____

Vss. 7–9 _____

Vs. 14 _____

Vs. 19 _____

Vs. 25 _____

Note how the psalm’s topical sequence seems to be crafted to follow the topical sequence of Genesis 1. Poetic imagery is vividly presented throughout the verses, and its message clearly includes the power, wisdom, and goodness of God and the dependence of all the Creation on the Creator. Nothing in the psalm hints that the Genesis account was not to be taken literally.

Note the following examples from the Psalms that correlate with Genesis 1.

Ps. 24:1, 2 _____

Ps. 33:6 _____

Ps. 74:16, 17 _____

Ps. 89:11 _____

The Psalms are full of praise for the Creator. Sometimes this is expressed in language reminiscent of Genesis 1, other times the language is more general; but in all cases, the description of Creation is consistent with Genesis 1 and reminds us of the foundational role of Genesis in our understanding of our origins as sons and daughters of God.

Creation in the Book of Job

Read Job 38:1–21. Note the creation topics in the following verses.

Vss. 4–7 _____

Vss. 8–11 _____

Vs. 12 _____

Vs. 16 _____

Vs. 19 _____

It's important to remember the context of the book of Job. Great tragedy struck, and Job was struggling to understand how this could happen to him, a faithful follower of God. In chapter 38 up through chapter 41, the Lord continues to talk about His creative power, all in response to Job's pained questioning.

Read carefully Job's response to the Lord in Job 42:1–6. Why did Job respond as he did, and what can we learn from his response that could help us to trust God in our own personal tragedy?

Job's inability to explain features of the Creation led him to recognize the greatness of God and to trust Him, despite everything that had happened. We also find ourselves unable to answer many questions about the Creation, and Job's example should encourage us to trust God, no matter what. Many questions about everything in life will remain unanswered, at least for now. We will have an eternity to get explanations for what now seems incomprehensible.

The point is that through the marvels of Creation—which we today understand so much better now than Job ever could—we should learn to trust in God's incredible love and power.

We, today, living after the Cross, have a view of the Creator also as our crucified Redeemer, something that Job never had, at least not as clearly as we do. How much more, then, should we trust in the Lord's goodness toward us, knowing what He did for us?

Creation in the Prophets

“For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else” (*Isa. 45:18*).

Isaiah 45:18 emphasizes God’s intention to prepare a place for humans to live; thus, the fitness of the earth for life is not an accident.

Consider some of the features of Earth that make it a fit place for human life in contrast to the other planets in our solar system. First, water is present in abundance. There is some evidence of water activity on Mars, but there are no standing bodies of water on Mars or on any other planet aside from Earth. Another unique feature of Earth is the composition of the atmosphere, about 21 percent oxygen and 78 percent nitrogen. Other planets have atmospheres dominated either by carbon dioxide or by helium, but only Earth has an atmosphere suitable for life. The range of temperatures on Earth is suitable for terrestrial life, unlike any of the other planets in our solar system. This is due to a combination of factors, including our distance from the sun, the composition of our atmosphere, the mass of Earth, and the speed of its rotation—which determines the length of days and nights. All these features, and more, make Earth the only known planet suitable for sustaining life.

How do the following texts relate to the events described in Genesis 1?

Isa. 44:24 _____

Isa. 45:12 _____

Jer. 51:15, 16 _____

Amos 4:13 _____

Jonah 1:9 _____

Zech. 12:1 _____

Think through the implications of our origins and why getting them right is so important to our understanding of who we are, why we are here, and what we can hope for in a world that, in and of itself, offers no hope at all.

Creation in the New Testament

Read Acts 17:22–31. What were the circumstances of this sermon? After Paul had introduced his topic, what was the first topic he brought to these learned men? *Vss. 24, 25*. What does Paul say is the relationship between the Creator God and humans? *Vss. 26–28*.

The audience here no doubt included the two groups of philosophers known as Stoics and Epicureans. The Stoics affirmed the reality of design in nature, while the Epicureans denied it. Neither had a knowledge of the true God, but their arguments about design were similar to many of the arguments still discussed in our day.

The important point here is that, in his witness to these pagan thinkers and intellectuals, Paul reverts directly to the argument of the Lord as the Creator of all things and all humanity. Paul had little in common with these people; so, he went right to what they did have in common—the fact that they existed—and from that undeniable reality he sought to build his argument. Hence, we see Creation as, again, a crucial theme in Scripture.

Look at the following texts: Matthew 19:4–6, Mark 2:27, Luke 3:38, John 1:1–3, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Hebrews 4:4, James 3:9, 2 Peter 3:5, Jude 11, 14. What’s fascinating is that each one of these New Testament authors either directly or indirectly make reference to the Genesis Creation account, more evidence proving just how universally accepted the Genesis account of origins was to all the Bible writers.

Read Revelation 4:11 and 10:5, 6. What do the heavenly beings say about God’s creatorship?

Creation was not an accident but occurred by the will of God. The second passage contains a clear allusion to Exodus 20:11. Once again, as in John 1:1–3, John shows his familiarity with, and confidence in, the Creation story. How foolish for us to do anything less.

Further Study: The Bible is a book about God and His relationship to us humans and our world. The events of Creation week are unique and supernatural. They are outside the realm of scientific inquiry for at least two reasons. First, they are singularities. Singularities are events that occur only once. Science has a difficult time dealing with singularities because they cannot be repeated and tested under differing circumstances. Second, the Creation events were supernaturally caused. They were not the natural result of the way that God sustains the Creation; they were special, direct acts of God. Science deals only with secondary causes and does not—at least as now practiced—accept any explanation that depends on God’s direct action. Because the Creation events are unique and supernatural, they lie outside the reach of science.

One’s view of origins has important implications for one’s view of human nature and self-identity. Understanding our origins is so important that God had it placed as the first subject in the Bible, and the message of the Bible is based on the historicity of the Creation account. To claim that we can learn the true history of our world through science is to claim that it can be explained without appealing to any direct action by God, an error that has led to more error.

“Men will endeavor to explain from natural causes the work of creation, which God has never revealed. But human science cannot search out the secrets of the God of Heaven, and explain the stupendous works of creation, which were a miracle of almighty power, any sooner than it can show how God came into existence.”—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 89.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Creation is a dominant theme throughout the entire Bible. Is there any evidence that Bible writers had different views of Creation or that any of them had doubts about the veracity of any part of Genesis? Why is this answer important?
- 2 What reasons do you think someone might give to justify the rejection of the idea that nature is designed?
- 3 Jesus endorsed the authority of Moses (*Luke 16:29–31*), including the story of Creation (*Mark 2:27, 28; Matt. 19:4–6*). Given this background and the example of Jesus, what should be our attitude toward the story of Creation?

The Missionary Café

Sixteen-year-old Anya's heart raced as she and her father stepped into the small café in the heart of Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. Could she ask a complete stranger to turn a business over to some teenagers—even for a few hours?

The adventure for God had begun months earlier when Anya and her teenage friends had visited a sister church in Siberia. The teens there were running a successful café outreach. Anya and her friends returned home with a dream to start a similar outreach in their own city.

The youth prayed and planned. When they shared their dream with other church members, some tried to discourage them. "This will be expensive," one said. "No one will come," another added. "You're wasting your time," another protested. But Anya's father, the pastor, encouraged the youth to let God lead.

Anya and her father stepped into the café and greeted the owner. They sat together at an empty table. "We are Seventh-day Adventist Christians," Anya began. "Our youth group would like to use your café one Sunday morning a month to host a Christian program for about thirty young people. We can pay for food, but we can't pay rent."

Anya waited for the café's owner to respond. "Business isn't good on Sunday morning," the woman said as she considered the request. "Yes, you can use the café for two hours. Just put things back where you found them and don't make a mess."

Anya smiled. *God surely has gone before us*, she thought.

Anya and her friends prepared advertising for Café Orange, finalized their program, and prayed for a good attendance. The doors opened, and people streamed in. The youth had planned for 30 people, but 55 came, including 15 who were not Seventh-day Adventists.

Anya noticed that the café waiters and the few other customers were listening to the program too. She realized that their mission field stretched beyond those they had set out to reach. *How like God to give us more than we asked for!* she thought.

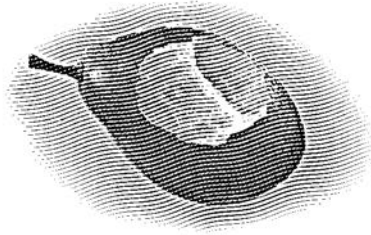
The youth invited those who came to Café Orange to attend youth meetings at the Seventh-day Adventist church, and several came.

Today the church supports the café ministry, though it is still operated by the youth. "We want others to know that Christians can have fun. We want to give them a chance to become children of God."

Anya cites one of her favorite Bible texts to sum up her philosophy of youth ministries: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers, in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" (*1 Tim. 4:12, NIV*). "That's our goal," she says.

Your mission offerings are helping the Seventh-day Adventist youth in Krasnoyarsk, a city in the heart of Siberia, to reach out for Christ. Thank you.

Creation *and* Morality



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 1:26–28; James 3:9; Acts 17:26; Prov. 14:31; Matt. 5:44–48; Rev. 20:11–13.*

Memory Text: “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’ ” (*Genesis 2:16, 17, NIV*).

People love to talk about “human rights.” From the Magna Carta (1215) to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) to various United Nations declarations, the idea is promoted that human beings possess certain “inalienable rights,” rights that no one can rightfully take away from us. They are ours by virtue of being human (at least that’s how the theory goes).

The questions remain: What are these rights? How are we to determine what they are? Can these rights change, and if so, how so? Why should we, as humans, have these rights, anyway?

In some countries, for instance, women were not given the “right” to vote until the twentieth century (some nations still deny it). How, though, can a government grant to people something that is their “inalienable right” to begin with?

These are hard questions, and their answers are inseparably linked to the question of human origins, the study for this week’s lesson.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 2.*

Our Dependence on the Creator

Genesis 2:7 depicts God as creating Adam individually and represents him to be an intelligent, moral being rather than as an animal. The text does not say, but one can imagine God using His hands to form the dust into the intended shape and size. One might think that the great Sovereign of the universe would not stoop to get His hands dirty in the making of man, but the Bible reveals the Creator as One closely involved with the Creation. Scripture records many occasions when God willingly interacted with the material creation. Examples include Exodus 32:15, 16; Luke 4:40; and John 9:6. Indeed, the incarnation of Christ Himself into humanity, into human flesh, where He day by day interacted with the created world in much the way we do, refutes the notion that God would not stoop to “get His hands dirty” among humanity.

Read Genesis 2:16, 17. **What command did God give to Adam? What is implied in this command?**

We may ask, What right did God have to make rules for Adam and Eve? Compare this situation to that of a child in a family. The child’s parents provide the child with a home and all of life’s necessities. They love the child and have the child’s best interests in mind. Their greater experience and wisdom can spare the child much misery if that child will accept their guidance. Some children find this guidance difficult, but it is universally recognized that as long as the child is dependent on parents for necessities, the child is obligated to accept the parents’ rules. In like manner, because we are always dependent on our heavenly Father for life and its necessities, it is always appropriate for us to accept God’s guidance. Because He is a God of love, we can trust Him to always provide what we need for our own good.

Read Psalm 95:6, 7 and Psalm 100. How does the psalmist express our dependence on God? What obligations does that dependence automatically place on you, especially in regard to the way in which you treat others?

In the Image of God

Read Genesis 1:26–28. What special attribute was given to humans that was not given to the animals?

What exactly is “the image of God”? This question has generated a great deal of discussion, and opinions vary. But the verses provide some clues regarding the nature of the idea. First, note that to be made in the image of God implies that we resemble God in certain ways. One important aspect of the image of God is that God gave to humans dominion over the other creatures. As God is sovereign over all, He has appointed to humans a share of sovereignty by giving them dominion over the fish, the birds, and the land animals.

Notice, too, that God purposed to make man in “our” image—that is, an image involving the plurality of the Godhead. Then He made humans male and female. The image of God is not fully expressed in an individual but in relationship. As the Godhead is manifest in three Persons in relationship, the image of God in humans is expressed in relationship of male and female. The ability to form relationships is part of the image of God. Relationships, of course, imply responsibility and accountability, which means morality. Hence, right here we are given a strong hint as to how morality finds its basis in the Creation story.

Read Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9. In what way is the idea of humans being made in the “image of God” clearly linked to the concept of morality?

Humans have wrestled for millennia with the question of morality. Even before one gets into what is the right kind of morality, the whole idea of morality itself raises a host of deep issues. Why should humans, as opposed to beetles, fleas, or even chimps, have a moral conscience, a concept that distinguishes between right and wrong? How can beings, made essentially of amoral matter (quarks, gluons, electrons, and so forth) be aware of moral concepts? The answer can be found in the early chapters of the Bible, which reveal humans to be moral creatures made “in the image of God.”

Made of One Blood

In Genesis 2:23, Adam is given the task of naming his wife, whom he called *Havah*. This word is related to the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which means “to live” (Jews sometimes use the related expression *lehayim*, “to life!”). The Hebrew word for “Eve” (*Havah*) can be translated as “life-giver.” Eve’s name represents the fact that she is the ancestor of all humans. We are all one family in the most literal sense.

Read Acts 17:26. How does Paul link the brotherhood of all humanity to the Creation? Compare with Matt. 23:9.

We are united in that we all descended from one woman, Eve, and from one man, Adam. And God is the Father of us all. This fact is the basis of human equality. Think how different human relations would be if all people recognized this important truth. If we ever needed proof of how far fallen we are, of how badly sin has damaged us, we have it in the sad fact that humans often treat one another worse than some people treat animals.

Read Proverbs 14:31 and 22:2. How do these texts help us to understand the link between morality and the fact that we are created by God?

Many factors have divided the human race: political, national, ethnic, and, of course, economic. The economic factor is, arguably, one of the most consequential (though never to the degree that Karl Marx envisioned: the workers of the world never did unite; instead, they warred against each other based on their nationality). Today, as always, the poor and the rich often regard one another with suspicion and disdain. How often these sentiments have led to violence, even war. The causes of poverty and the solution to it still continue to baffle us (*see Matt. 26:11*), but one thing is sure from the Word of God: rich or poor, we all deserve the dignity that is ours by virtue of our origins.

Years ago, after Darwinism became fashionable, some justified the exploitation of the poor by the rich on the grounds of “social Darwinism,” the idea that in the natural world the strong overcome and exploit the weak, so why should not the same principle apply in economics? How is this another example of why a correct grasp of origins is crucial to the understanding of morality?

The Character of Our Creator

God created us in His image, which means, among other things, that He intended for us to resemble Him in character. That is, we are to be like Him as much as is humanly possible (notice, to be like God is not the same thing as to aspire to be God, a crucial difference). In order for us to be like God, in the sense that we reflect His character, we must have a proper understanding of what that character is.

Read Matthew 5:44–48. What do these verses reveal not only about God’s character but also about how we should reflect His character in our own lives?

Read Luke 10:29–37. Again, what does this reveal about the character of God and how it should be reflected in humanity? *See also Phil. 2:1–8.*

The story Jesus told involved two men from different people groups, groups that were antagonistic toward each other. But Jesus showed that they were neighbors. Each was within the other’s sphere of responsibility, and God was pleased when their differences were set aside and one treated the other with kindness and compassion.

What a contrast is seen between the principles of God’s kingdom and the principles of Satan’s rulership. God calls the strong to care for the weak, while Satan’s principles call for elimination of the weak by the strong. God created a world of peaceful relationships, but Satan has distorted it so thoroughly that many regard survival of the fittest as the normal standard of conduct. If the vicious process of natural selection (in which the strong overpower the weak) were the means by which we came into existence, why should we do differently? If we accept this view, are we not following God and the dictates of nature as He ordained it when we advance our own interests at the expense of the less “naturally selected”?

What are other ways in which you can see how an understanding of our origins can affect our moral concepts?

Morality and Accountability

In an earlier lesson, we looked at Paul’s sermon to the men in Athens (*Acts 17:16–31*). Follow the line of reasoning he used, noting not just where he started but where he ended. What’s so important about the conclusion he came to, particularly regarding the question of origins and morality?

Paul’s sermon to the men of Athens began with Creation and ended with judgment. According to Paul, the God who made the world and everything in it has fixed a day on which He will judge the world. To be endowed with morality implies accountability, and each of us will be held responsible for our actions and our words (*see Eccles. 12:14 and Matt. 12:36, 37*).

Read Revelation 20:11–13 and Matthew 25:31–40. What is clearly taught in these texts that is directly tied to morality?

Everyone who ever lived will meet together in God’s presence to face the judgment. The difference between the two groups in Jesus’ parable is how each person treated those who were in need. The Creator is interested in how His creatures treat each other, especially those who are needy. There is no place in heaven for the principle of natural selection; it is contrary to the character of the God of peace.

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that the justice so lacking in this world will one day be meted out by God Himself. More so, the whole idea of judgment implies a moral order: why would God judge, much less punish, if there were no moral standards to which people could be held?

Think through the reality and certainty of judgment. Why, then, is the gospel and the promise of salvation in Christ so crucial in order for us to have assurance in that judgment?

Further Study: According to Scripture, Adam was the first man and was specially created from the dust by God. Our understanding of the origin of morality is founded in the origin of Adam. Biblical concepts of morality are, then, inseparable from biblical concepts of origins.

Recognizing Adam as the first human also refutes the possibility that any fossils were ancestral to Adam or other humans. From where, then, did these fossils come? Several other possibilities exist.

First, the humanlike fossils might be forms of humans with normal intelligence but with growth patterns unlike any present-day human. A second possibility is that the fossils may have been degenerate due to their own lifestyle or environmental stress or other factors. A third possibility is that they may be the results of Satan's direct attempts to corrupt Creation in ways we do not understand. Another possibility is that they were not humans but were similar in morphology. Different people may prefer different explanations but, because we do not have direct evidence to settle the matter, it is best to avoid being dogmatic in our speculations. Fossils do not come with labels attached that say, "Made in China 500 million years ago" or the like. Our understanding of earth history, which varies greatly among scientists, provides a frame of reference within which we interpret fossils, but we do not have proof of our interpretations. They are, in the end, only that: interpretations, nothing more.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Think through the implications of what it would mean if there was no Creator who imposed a moral order on humanity. Where would moral concepts come from? Many people who don't believe in God nevertheless do hold to some strict moral standards. On what basis, other than God, might a person be able to develop a moral code? What are some possible scenarios that they could come up with? What, though, would be the ultimate weakness in them all?
- 2** How does our view of Creation inform our opinions regarding current issues such as euthanasia, cloning, abortion, etc.?
- 3** A local citizen who volunteered his time to give tours at the Nazi concentration camp of Dachau began the tour by talking about Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, implying that Darwin's theory led to Dachau and the like. What's the obvious logic of that line of reasoning? In what ways might it be flawed?

The Two Paths

Chief Asang was weeping, and no one could console him. I had no idea why he was upset, but I asked God to help me to comfort him. I am a student missionary teaching the children of the chief's people.

As I approached the chief, he reached out and hugged me. "Thank you for coming," he said when he saw me. "Something is bothering me, and I know you can help." Confused by his greeting, I wondered what I could do to help him.

"I had a dream and saw two pathways," he said. "One path was wide and brightly lit. The other was a narrow trail, rugged and dark. My people were walking on the wide road, laughing and drinking as they traveled. On the narrow path I saw you, and some children from the village, including my own grandchildren. Thistles on the narrow path tore your skin, but you didn't seem to mind. You were singing some of the songs you, and the children sing at morning worship.

"Then, suddenly, everything changed! The wide road became steep and dark, while the narrow trail became bright. Suddenly the wide road ended, and my people fell into a ravine, screaming in terror.

"I looked toward the narrow path and saw you and the children entering a pearly gate. Then I saw the face of Jesus that you showed us in the picture roll. He was welcoming you and my children to the city you call heaven. Most of my people were lost," the chief mourned. "And I was among them! Please tell me what this dream means."

I prayed for God's help to answer the chief's tearful plea. Then I said, "Your dream of the two pathways was written a long time ago in God's Word." Opening my Bible, I showed him Matthew 7:13 and 14.

"How can my people and I get on this narrow trail?" the chief asked with a pleading voice.

"You must decide to follow Jesus now, while there is still time, Chief," I encouraged.

"Please, tell me what we must do. I will tell my people to listen to you," he responded, hope filling his voice.

I explained God's plan of salvation to the chief. I told him that his people are God's children, and He wants to welcome them all into His kingdom. Chief Asang is receiving Bible studies and plans to be baptized soon.

Your mission offerings help to support Seventh-day Adventist schools that send missionaries like me to people still living in darkness. Thank you for helping us to reach God's children everywhere with His love.

RENEBOY AUTENTICO is a student missionary from Mountain View College in the Philippines.

Creation *and the* Fall



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 3:1–15; Matt. 4:3–10; Col. 2:20–23; John 3:17; Rev. 14:6, 7.*

Memory Text: “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” (*Genesis 3:15, NIV*).

A comic used to play a female character called Geraldine. In one monologue she was a minister's wife who had come home with an expensive new dress. Her husband (played by the same comedian) got angry. Geraldine then shrieked in response: “The devil made me buy this dress! I didn't want to buy the dress. The devil kept bothering me.”

That was supposed to be funny. But our world, and the evil in it, shows that Satan is no laughing matter.

For some people, the idea of the devil is an ancient superstition not to be taken seriously. Scripture, however, is unequivocal: though Satan is a defeated foe (*Rev. 12:12, 1 John 3:8*), he is here on the earth, and he is determined to wreak as much havoc and destruction as possible against God's creation.

This week we'll look at Satan's original attack and what we can learn from it so that while we are still under his assault, we can claim the victory that's ours in Christ.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 9.*

The Serpent Was More Cunning

Read Genesis 3:1. How is Satan, in the form of a serpent, described? How is the truth of that depiction revealed even in that one verse?

The cunning of the serpent is seen in the way he introduces his temptation. He does not make a direct attack but attempts to engage the woman in conversation. Note that the serpent's words include at least two problematic aspects. First, he asks if God really made a particular statement. At the same time, he phrases his question to raise doubt about the generosity of God. In effect, he asks, "Did God really withhold anything from you? Did He not give you permission to eat from every tree in the garden?" By intentionally misquoting God's instructions, the serpent entices the woman to correct his statement and successfully draws her into conversation. The serpent's strategy is certainly "cunning."

Of course, none of that should be surprising. Jesus called the devil a liar and the father of lies (*John 8:44*). In Revelation 12:9 the devil deceives the whole world, which means that none of us, even as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, are safe. Satan has, obviously, lost none of his cunning or deceptiveness. He still uses the strategy that was successful with Eve. He raises questions about God's Word and God's intentions, hoping to raise doubts and draw us into "conversation." We must be vigilant (*1 Pet. 5:8*) in order to resist his devices.

Compare Matthew 4:3–10 with Genesis 3:1. What similar ploy did Satan try on Jesus, and why did it fail? What lessons can we learn from how Jesus responded to the devil's attacks in the wilderness? In what ways does Satan try the same thing with us, now?

The Woman and the Serpent

Read Genesis 3:2, 3. How did the woman respond to the serpent? What mistakes did she make?

Though Eve clearly knew the command of God, which shows her culpability, she does make a statement that goes beyond what God had said, at least as recorded in the Bible. God had clearly instructed Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree; nothing was said about not touching it. Because we don't know what prompted her to say that, it's best not to speculate about its origins. No question, though: by thinking she shouldn't touch the fruit, she would have been less inclined to eat it, because she couldn't eat what she couldn't touch.

How often do we face the same thing today: someone comes with teachings that, on most points but not all, are in harmony with Scripture? It's the few points that aren't that can ruin everything else. Even mixed with truth, error is still error.

Read Matthew 15:7–9. What reproof did Jesus give the scribes and Pharisees concerning the addition of human thinking to the Word of God? Compare this with Revelation 22:18 and Colossians 2:20–23. What dangers arise from making up rules that we think will protect us against sin? *Vs. 23.*

The problem with sin is not a lack of rules but a reprobate heart. Even in secular society, we often hear calls for more laws against crime when there are already sufficient laws in existence. We do not need new laws so much as we need new hearts.

In what ways might we be in danger of following the things warned about here? Standards based on biblical principles are crucial. The question is, How can we be sure that the standards and rules we apply aren't going to lead us astray? Bring your answer to class.

Deceived by the Evidence

Read Genesis 3:4–6. What are the principles that led to Adam and Eve’s downfall? What can we learn from their experience that can help us to deal with whatever temptations we face, as well?

Satan was successful in drawing Eve into conversation and in raising doubts about what God had said and why. Now he tells Eve that God is not telling the truth and provides an explanation for God’s motive behind His forbidding them to eat of the fruit. According to Satan, God is withholding something good in order to keep Adam and Eve from reaching their full potential. In doing so, Satan builds on his previous question about whether God has withheld some of the trees from them.

Eve uses three lines of evidence that lead her to the conclusion that she would benefit from eating the fruit. First, she sees that the tree is good for food. Perhaps she has observed the serpent eating the fruit. He may have commented on how good it tasted. It’s interesting that though Adam and Eve had been told not to eat of it, she notices that it is “good for food.” Talk about a conflict between the senses and a clear “Thus saith the Lord!”

A second line of evidence that convinces Eve to eat the fruit is that it is pleasant to the eyes. No doubt all the fruit in the garden is beautiful, but for some reason, Eve is especially attracted to the fruit that Satan is offering her.

The supposed power of the fruit to make one wise is a third reason that Eve wants to eat of the fruit. The serpent has assured her that eating the fruit will expand her knowledge and make her like God. Of course, the sad irony here is that, according to the Bible, she already is like God (*Gen. 1:27*).

We are told that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (*1 Tim. 2:14*). If Adam was not deceived, why did he eat? Adam consciously disobeyed God, choosing to follow Eve rather than God. How often is this same kind of behavior seen today? How easily we can be tempted by what others say and do, regardless of how contrary their words and actions are to the Word of God. Adam listened to Eve instead of to God, and the rest is the nightmare known as human history (*see Rom. 5:12–21*).

Grace and Judgment in Eden: Part 1

In Genesis 3, after the Fall, the Lord’s opening words are all questions: “Where are you? . . . Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? . . . What is this you have done?” (*Gen. 3:9–13, NIV*).

In contrast, God’s first declarative statement in chapter 3—His first statement of fact—follows these questions. What does God say to the serpent, and what is the meaning of His words? See *Gen. 3:14, 15*.

Think through the implications of what is happening here. God’s first declarative statement to the fallen world is, in fact, a condemnation of Satan, not humanity. Indeed, even in that condemnation of Satan, God gives humanity the hope and promise of the gospel (*vs. 15*). As He declares Satan’s doom, He proclaims humanity’s hope. Despite their sin, the Lord immediately reveals to Adam and Eve the promise of redemption.

Notice, too, that only after this promise, only after hope of grace and salvation is given in verse 15 (known also as the “First Gospel Promise”), does the Lord pronounce judgment on Adam and Eve: “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children. . . .’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife . . .’” (*Gen. 3:16, 17, NKJV*).

Don’t miss this point: the promise of salvation comes first, followed by judgment. Only against the backdrop of the gospel, then, does judgment come; otherwise, judgment would mean nothing but condemnation, but Scripture is clear: “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (*John 3:17*).

Why is it so important always to dwell on the fact that God’s purpose is to save us, not to condemn us? How does sin in our life cause us to lose sight of that crucial truth? That is, how does sin cause us to turn away from God?

Grace and Judgment in Eden: Part 2

In Genesis 1 and 2, God utters imperative statements such as: “Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven. . . . Let the earth bring forth living creatures. . . . It’s not good for man to be alone.” All these declarations deal with Creation and with establishing humanity in that Creation. As we saw yesterday, the next declarative statement recorded in the Bible occurs in Genesis 3:14, 15, in which the Lord offers humanity the gospel.

Thus, in Scripture, God’s initial statements deal with Creation and then with redemption—and this redemption occurs in the context of judgment itself. It would have to. After all, what’s the purpose of the gospel, what’s the good news, if there were no judgment, no condemnation from which to be spared? The very concept of the gospel carries within itself the concept of condemnation, a condemnation that we don’t have to face. That’s the good news!

Though we have violated God’s law and though God will judge those violations, in Christ Jesus we are spared the condemnation that this judgment would, inevitably, bring.

Creation, gospel, and judgment appear not only in the early pages of the Bible but in the latter, as well. Read Revelation 14:6, 7. In what ways are these verses linked to the first three chapters of Genesis? That is, what parallel ideas are found in all these verses?

In Revelation 14:6, 7 we see a declaration of God as the Creator, a key theme in the opening pages of Genesis. In Revelation 14, however, the “everlasting gospel” comes first and then is followed by the announcement of judgment, as in Genesis 3. Judgment is there, but not before the gospel. Thus, the foundation of our present-truth message has to be grace, the good news that, though we deserve condemnation, we can stand pardoned, purified, and justified through Jesus. Without the gospel, our destiny would be the same as the serpent’s and his seed, not the destiny of the woman and her seed. And, fascinatingly enough, this great news appears even in Eden, in God’s first words to a fallen world.

Further Study: “God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church*, p. 228.

“Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

“But man was not abandoned to the results of the evil he had chosen. In the sentence pronounced upon Satan was given an intimation of redemption. . . . This sentence, spoken in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. Before they heard of the thorn and the thistle, of the toil and sorrow that must be their portion, or of the dust to which they must return, they listened to words that could not fail of giving them hope. All that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 27.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In class, go over your answer to Monday’s final question. What kind of rules do we make that could turn us into the very people Jesus condemned? At the same time, how can we make commitments that might help us better to follow the principles of truth as revealed in the Bible?
- 2** Eve trusted her senses instead of a very clear command from God. Why do we find it so easy to do the same thing?
- 3** Dwell on the obvious contrast between the Creation story and the various evolutionary ideas that depict natural evil as being part of God’s original creative process. Why is it impossible to harmonize such conflicting views of our origins without ultimately destroying the plain meaning of the Bible? Why is a correct understanding of Creation important in order to gain a correct understanding of the Fall?
- 4** Some cultures find the idea of a literal devil nothing but foolishness; others, in contrast, can be obsessed with the power of evil and evil spirits. What about your culture? What’s the tendency, and how can you learn to strike the right balance when dealing with the reality of the supernatural battles in which we find ourselves?

Kayaks on a Mission

They're off! Thirty-one kayakers wearing life jackets, hats, and eager smiles embarked on a five-day mission adventure down the Rospuda River in Poland.

Their colorful kayaks were crammed with sleeping bags, tents, clothes, and food, and their most important cargo—magazines and books to share with people they would meet along their route. Their goal was to bring the people hope found only in Jesus.

When the kayakers came to a village, they docked their boats and set out to visit every home, praying with people and offering them literature about Jesus. Along their route they shared 3,500 copies of the newspaper edition of *Signs of the Times* and sold hundreds of books, including *Messiah* and *The Great Controversy* on CD. They even met people who remembered buying books from them on a previous trip down the river. "It's wonderful to hear that people have read our books and received a blessing," says Piotr Stachurski, church pastor and kayaker.

This was the fourth kayak mission trip for members of a Seventh-day Adventist church near Warsaw and some of their friends. This time almost half the group was young—between the ages of 7 and 15. "It's great to see our young people eager to become involved in mission," says Pastor Stachurski. "They learn from the adults how to share Jesus' love, and their enthusiasm encourages the rest of us."

The 41-mile (60-kilometer) river trip took kayakers through pristine forests and marshy meadows. Paddling about eleven miles a day, the team made plenty of time for outreach and Christian fellowship. At night they gathered around a campfire to worship God and pray for the people they had met that day.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland is small, with about fifty-seven hundred members. That's one Seventh-day Adventist for every 6,600 people. "The work is difficult in Poland," says Pastor Roszkowski, Global Mission director for the Polish Union Conference. "Poles want to catch up with Western Europe, often working two jobs. They have little time to read the Bible."

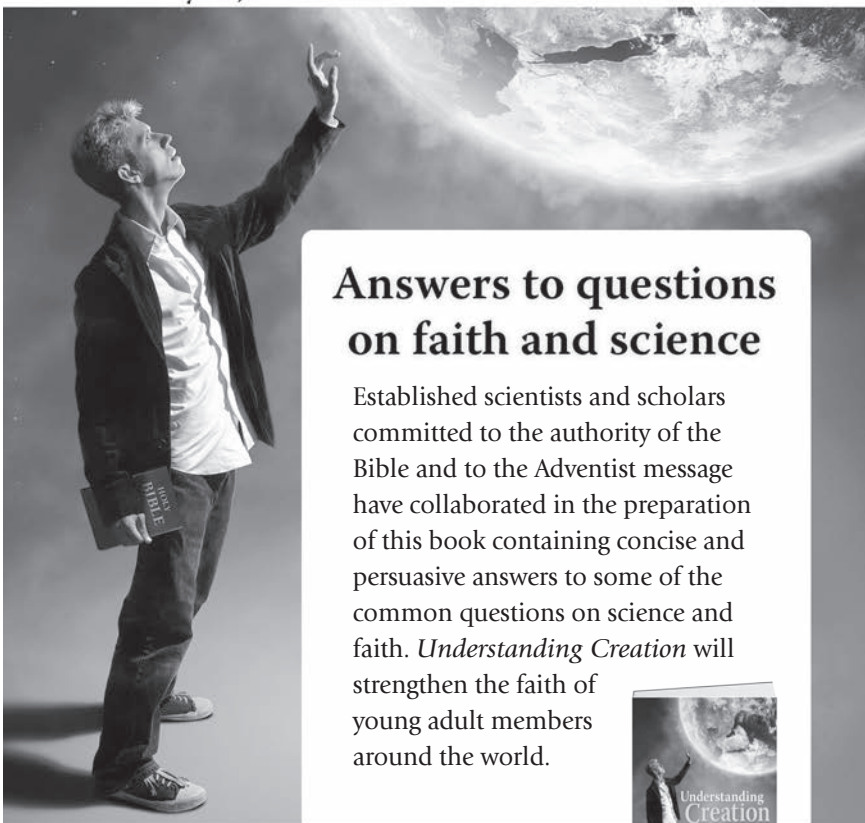
For many of the villagers the mission team members were the first Seventh-day Adventists they had ever met. The trip was funded in part by the mission offerings you give each week in Sabbath School.

"Our church is so thankful for the opportunity to share the hope we have in Jesus," says Pastor Stachurski. "We know people are reading the material we've given them, and some have requested Bible studies. It's my hope that our kayak mission story will help you know that your support of mission is making an incredible difference in people's lives."

PIOTR STACHURSKI is secretary of the South Polish Conference.

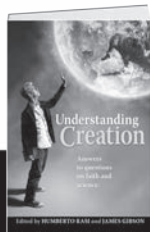
UNDERSTANDING CREATION

Edited by L. JAMES GIBSON *and* HUMBERTO M. RASI



Answers to questions on faith and science

Established scientists and scholars committed to the authority of the Bible and to the Adventist message have collaborated in the preparation of this book containing concise and persuasive answers to some of the common questions on science and faith. *Understanding Creation* will strengthen the faith of young adult members around the world.



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THEY MAY NEVER SEE A DOCTOR



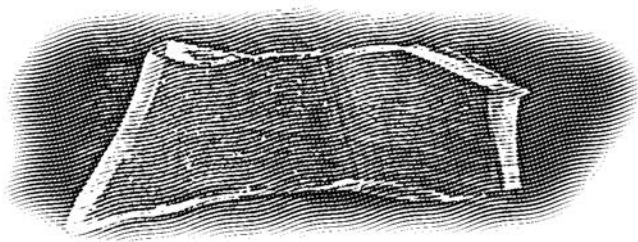
People in remote regions of the South Pacific live without conveniences we take for granted. Most will never visit a hospital or see a doctor in their lifetime. If they fall ill from malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, or pneumonia, or if they are injured, the nearest help could be several hours—or even days—away.

Adventists are responding to these needs. Dozens of simple clinics staffed by Adventist nurses provide the only medical care available to thousands of people in isolated regions of

the South Pacific Division. But thousands more still need clinics and nurses to treat their life-threatening injuries and illnesses. I'm glad that our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help provide more clinics to the people of Papua New Guinea and across the South Pacific. I want these people to know that God—and Adventists—care for them. For me it's personal.

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Through *a* Glass, Darkly



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Job 41:11; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Gen. 3:17; John 12:31; 1 Cor. 1:18–21.*

Memory Text: “The wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’ ” (*1 Corinthians 3:19, NIV*).

Theologian William Paley wrote a book in 1802 entitled *Natural Theology*, in which he argued that one can use observations of nature in order to develop an understanding of God’s character. He wrote extensively on the ways in which the features of animals exhibited the care and skill of the Creator. Paley may have made too much of some features, however, because he failed to recognize the effects that both sin and the Fall have had on nature, but his general argument has never been refuted—despite numerous and vociferous claims to the contrary!

Charles Darwin, in contrast, argued that a God who designed every feature of nature would not be good. As evidence, he referred to a parasite that feeds within the living bodies of caterpillars and the cruel way in which a cat will play with a mouse. For him, these examples were evidence against the existence of a loving Creator God.

Though Paley was obviously closer to truth than was Darwin, this week’s lesson will examine what the Bible has to say regarding the question of what it is that nature reveals, and does not reveal, about God.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 16.*

The Earth Is the Lord's

A scientist once challenged the need for God; he argued that he could create humanity just as well as any God could. God said, "OK, go ahead and do it." The scientist began to gather some dirt, but God said, "Wait a minute. Make your own dirt!"

Though this story is only a fable, the point is clear: God is the only One who can create from nothing. God made all the material of the universe, including our world, our possessions, and our bodies. He is the legitimate owner of every thing.

What's the basic message to us in these texts? More important, what does this message tell us about the way in which we should relate to the world, one another, and to God? *Ps. 24:1, 2; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10; Isa. 43:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.*

A favorite Christian hymn begins with the words, "This is my Father's world." It truly is our Father's world, because He created it. There is no more legitimate claim to ownership than creatorship. God created and therefore owns the entire universe, the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them.

Not only does the world belong to God, He claims ownership of every creature on earth, as well. No other being (at least that we know of) has the power to create life. God is the only Creator and, as such, the ultimate owner of every creature. We are all completely dependent on God for our existence. We cannot give God anything except our allegiance; everything else on earth is His already.

More so, we are God's not only by creation but, even more important, by redemption. Though a wonderful gift from God, human life has been greatly damaged through sin, and it will end in death, a prospect that denudes life of all meaning and purpose. Life, as it now exists for us, isn't all that great. Our only hope is the wonderful promise of redemption, the only thing that can make things "right" again. Thus, we are Christ's by creation and by redemption.

A Fallen World

One thing is certain: the world in which we now live is vastly different from the one that came forth from the Lord at the end of the Creation week. Certainly, powerful evidence of beauty and design exist almost everywhere; however, we are sin-damaged beings living in and trying to understand a sin-damaged world. Even before the Flood, the world had been negatively impacted by sin. “In the days of Noah a double curse was resting upon the earth in consequence of Adam’s transgression and of the murder committed by Cain.”—Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage*, p. 32.

How was the world “cursed,” and what were the results of those curses? *Gen. 3:17; 4:11, 12; 5:29.*

The curse on the ground for Adam’s sake must have involved the plant kingdom, because its results would include the production of thorns and thistles. The implication is that all of the creation is affected by the curses resulting from sin. The Ellen G. White quote above states very clearly that the curse upon Cain was not limited merely to him but rested on the whole world.

Unfortunately, the curses due to sin didn’t end here—because the world faced another curse, which greatly damaged it. That, of course, was the worldwide Flood. “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (*Gen. 8:21*).

The Flood disrupted the system of watering that God had established at Creation, stripping the soil from parts of the earth and depositing it in other parts. Even now, rain continues to leach the soil, robbing it of its fertility and further reducing the crop yield. God graciously promised not to curse the earth again, but the soil we have inherited is a far cry from the rich, productive soil God originally created.

Read Romans 8:19–22. Though these are difficult verses, how do they relate to what we have looked at today? More important, what inherent hope can we derive from them?

The Ruler of This World

“The Lord said unto Satan, ‘Whence comest thou?’ Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it’ ” (*Job 1:7*).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (*1 Pet. 5:8*).

As we have seen, the world belongs to God, both by creation and by redemption. But we mustn’t forget, either, the reality of Satan, the reality of the great controversy, and the reality of Satan’s attempt to wrest control over all that he possibly can. Even though, after the Cross, his defeat was made certain, he’s not going down quietly or gently. His wrath and destructive power, though limited to a degree by God in ways that we certainly don’t understand now, must never be underestimated. We mustn’t forget, either, that however often issues may come to us in shades of gray, the ultimate battle boils down to only two forces: Christ and Satan. There is no middle ground. And, as we know, so much of this world falls under the banner of the wrong side. Is it any wonder then that the world is so damaged?

Read John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2, 6:12. What important truth about the reality and power of the evil one is found in these texts?

In the book of Job, some of the veil that hides the reality of the great controversy is pulled back, and we can see that Satan does have the ability to cause great destruction in the natural world. Whatever the phrase “the prince of this world” entails, it’s clear that in this role Satan still exerts a powerful and destructive influence on the earth. This truth gives us all the more reason to realize that the natural world has been greatly damaged, and we need to be very careful about the lessons that we draw from it regarding God. After all, look at how badly Darwin misinterpreted the state of the world.

In what ways can you see, clearly, the destructive influence of Satan in your own life? Why is the Cross and the promises found in it your hope?

The “Wisdom” of the World

As humans, we have gained an incredible amount of knowledge and information, especially in the last two hundred years. Knowledge and information, however, are not necessarily the same thing as wisdom. We have also gained a much greater understanding of the natural world than our forefathers ever had. A greater understanding, however, isn’t the same thing as wisdom either.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–21, 3:18–21. How do we see the powerful truths of these words manifested in our time and context today, almost two thousand years after they were written?

There is so much in human thought that challenges God’s Word. Whether the issue is the resurrection of Jesus, the creation itself, or any miracle, human “wisdom” (even when buttressed with the “facts” of science) must be deemed “foolishness” when it contradicts the Word of the Lord.

Also, as stated earlier, so much science today, especially in the context of human origins, begins from a purely naturalistic perspective. Even though many of history’s greatest scientific geniuses—Newton, Kepler, Galileo—were believers in God and saw their work as helping to explain the work of God in creation (Kepler once wrote, “O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee”), such sentiments today are often mocked by segments of the scientific community.

Some even seek to explain away the miraculous stories in the Bible by arguing that they were really naturally occurring phenomena that the ancients, ignorant of nature’s laws, misinterpreted as divine action. There are, for instance, all sorts of naturalist theories that seek to explain the parting of the Red Sea as something other than a miracle of God. A few years ago, one scientist speculated that Moses was on drugs, and so he just hallucinated the idea that God gave him the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone!

However silly some of this might sound, once you reject the idea of God and the supernatural, you need to come up with some other explanation for these things; hence, the “foolishness” that Paul so clearly and prophetically wrote about.

Through the Eye of Faith

Psalm 8 is one of the best loved of the psalms. To David, as a believer in God, the Creation spoke of the Lord’s majesty and love. What specific lessons did David see in the creation, as recorded in Psalm 8? Also, considering what we know about the creation today—the moon and the stars and so forth—in contrast to what was known back then, why should David’s words seem even all the more remarkable?

Only in the last hundred years have we really come to begin to grasp the vastness of the cosmos and, hence, our physical smallness in comparison. One can’t even imagine someone like David, apart from divine revelation, having any idea of just how big the “heavens” were. If he was in awe back then, how much more so should we be, knowing that, despite the size of the universe, God loves us with a love that we can’t even begin to fathom?

Read Psalm 19:1–4. What did David see in the heavens?

Many have looked up at the stars at night and recognized the greatness of God and the smallness of humanity and have praised God for His care. Others have focused on the problem of evil in nature and blamed God for the problems that are, in fact, the result of their own choices or of the devil’s activities.

To the believer, the creation truly speaks of God’s care, even amid the evil introduced by Satan. Yet, even as powerful of a testimony and witness that the created world is, the revelation is incomplete, especially due to the results of the Fall and the curses it has brought.

Read John 14:9 and then think about Jesus on the cross. Why must the Cross always be the main revelation to us of the nature and character of God?

Further Study: “I have been warned [1890] that henceforth we shall have a constant contest. Science, so called, and religion will be placed in opposition to each other, because finite men do not comprehend the power and greatness of God. These words of Holy Writ were presented to me, ‘Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.’”—Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 98.

Discussion Questions:

1 Think about the “threefold curse” (Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 88) on this earth (the curse from Adam’s fall, from Cain’s sin, and from the Flood). The cumulative effect of these curses, compounded over thousands of years, means that our present world is much different from the way that it was when God first created it. Why, then, must we be careful regarding the conclusions that we draw from the present world about what it was like in the beginning?

2 Think about the work that science does, especially in the area of origins. There are no written labels to explain what we see. Science is entirely a human undertaking, and the human mind is limited in its scope and is prone to resist divine authority. Furthermore, Satan’s influence is strongly felt in nature, so that much of what we see is incompatible with God’s self-revelation in the Bible. Why is it so important that we place greater confidence in Scripture than we do in science, especially when considering unique events such as the Creation of our world?

3 We do not understand all aspects of the tension between Scripture and science, but God is far wiser than we are, and we must acknowledge that there is more to the creation than science can ever discover. Why should we, in fact, not be surprised to find some tension between the supernatural events recorded in the Bible and the materialistic approach of science?

4 Look at the Ellen G. White quote above. In what ways are we seeing this being fulfilled in our own church? How can we deal with these dangerous challenges to our mission and message in a way that—while never compromising our position on Creation and the Word of God—still keeps the church a “safe place” for those who are struggling with these difficult questions?

5 Read Romans 11:33–36 and Job 40:1, 2, 7, 8. How reliable is human wisdom when attempting to understand the ways of God? What should be our attitude toward the difficulties that we encounter when trying to find harmony between science and Scripture?

The Rebel Rebels

Prakash was a Maoist terrorist living in the jungles of Asia. Although only in his 20s, he had risen to the position of commander for his political party in his village and the surrounding area. He had been taught to torture or kill anyone who did not follow the teachings of his political party or give in to his demands. His word was law!

He left his home and lived with his troops in the mountain jungles. They raided the nearby villages and terrorized the people. When the rebels needed food or money, they would simply enter a village and take what they wanted.

One day Prakash and his troops entered a Seventh-day Adventist church, planning to steal the offering, terrorize the members, and burn down the church. But God had other plans. When Prakash demanded that the pastor give him the offering, the pastor answered bravely, “Take God’s money, but if you give your life to Jesus, He will change you completely.”

Prakash thought little of the pastor’s words, but some of his troops deserted his command and joined the church. When Prakash talked with these former rebels, he noticed remarkable changes in their characters. *Could Jesus change me too?* he wondered.

Then Prakash discovered a program on the radio called *Ashako Bani*. The speaker talked about Jesus. As Prakash listened, he sensed that his life was changing, just as the pastor said it would. Prakash became aware that life was precious; he could no longer torture or kill.

Prakash knew that he must leave the rebels, but he had taken an oath. “Keep your promise or be killed,” he was told. But Prakash gave his life to Christ; he was not afraid.

One day Prakash called the studio of Adventist World Radio, which produces the program that had brought him to Jesus. “I believe in Jesus and know that you teach from the Bible,” he said. “I listen to your programs, and I tell my friends to listen, as well. Because of your program the word of God has reached my village, and people all around have come to know about the true God.”

Recently Prakash was baptized. His mother, seeing the changes in her son, now believes in Jesus too.

Adventist World Radio is an effective tool for reaching people who may never come to know Jesus in any other way. Your mission offerings help to support the work of Adventist World Radio and other outreach programs in every corner of the world.

DOWELL CHOW is president of Adventist World Radio.

Jesus, Provider *and* Sustainer



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Job 42; Matt. 5:45; 6:25–34; 10:28.*

Memory Text: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (*Philippians 4:19, NIV*).

God sustains the creation in such regular ways that the universe is sometimes compared to a machine that God left to run on its own.

Rather than a machine, however, a better metaphor is that the creation is like a musical instrument that God uses to produce the desired “melody.” That is, He is constantly involved in sustaining what He has created.

Nothing in the universe exists independently of the Lord. He created everything that was created. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (*John 1:3, NIV*). Not only that, He is the One who sustains it all. Even more astonishing, the One who created and sustains it all was the One who was crucified for us.

“The apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declares of Christ that ‘all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.’ Colossians 1:16, 17, R.V., margin. The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 132.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 23.

The Sustainer

Read Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, 17. What is the role of Jesus in the ongoing existence of the universe?

The implication here is that Jesus continues to sustain the existence of the universe by His power. The universe is not independent; its existence depends on the continuous exercise of divine will. This is a refutation of deism, the philosophy that teaches that God created the world to govern itself and then left it to evolve without any further action on His part. The Bible rules out such theories.

Also, God is not within the creation, constantly creating it, as in the false theories of pantheism (God and the universe are the same thing) or panentheism (God inhabits the universe as though it were His own body). God is not dependent on the universe in any way. He is separate from the universe. He existed and continues to exist, independently of it. The universe depends on God; God does not depend on the universe.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Acts 17:28. How does Paul describe our relationship to Jesus?

We are dependent on God's sustaining power, moment by moment, day by day. It is because of His love that we continue to exist and are able to act and also form relationships. This is true in a special way for those who have committed themselves to God and who are, as Paul would describe it, "in Christ" (*2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:10; note the references to creation in these texts*). It is also true that even those who reject salvation are, nevertheless, dependent on God's sustaining power for their existence. Daniel made this point very poignantly to King Belshazzar when he said, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (*Dan. 5:23*).

With all this in mind, how do we understand the reality of free will and free choice? Why are these elements of our existence so important to all that we believe?

The Generous Provider

Genesis 1:29, 30 shows that when God first created living creatures, He provided food for them. Herbs, fruits, and seeds were the food chosen for both humans and animals. Nothing is said of predation or competition for resources. The generous Provider made plenty of food for everyone to partake in without any need for violence.

What a contrast to the common models for existence proposed by evolutionary theory, which teaches that human life, indeed all life, exists only through a violent process of predation and survival of the fittest. The early chapters of Genesis know nothing about that. On the contrary, they reveal a world that was, literally, a paradise from the beginning. That's why, when the Lord had finished creating it, the Bible records these words: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (*Gen. 1:31*).

Read Genesis 2:8, 9. What does this passage indicate about God's special interest in providing for Adam and Eve?

We already noted that God had provided food for all His creatures, including humans. Now we see God going a step further. Not only does He provide food in abundance throughout the earth, but He has prepared a special Garden for Adam and Eve, with trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food (*see Gen. 2:9*). The Garden, with its beauty and its variety of food, was a provision of God's extravagant love and grace. It was a gift of grace because Adam and Eve had done nothing to earn it, but it was freely offered and abundantly furnished.

As stated in an earlier lesson, we are far removed from the original Creation. Ours is a greatly damaged world. Nothing on the earth, it seems, has been spared either. Yet, even amid the damage, powerful evidence of God's love exists.

"Nature is a power, but the God of nature is unlimited in power. His works interpret his character. Those who judge him from his handiworks, and not from the suppositions of great men, will see his presence in everything."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884. Look at nature; in what ways do we see "his presence in everything"?"

Natural Evil

Of course, one of the great questions that all believers in a loving God have had to deal with is the question of evil; not just human evil but what is called “natural evil.” This natural evil occurs when bad things happen in nature (floods, hurricanes, drought, earthquakes, etc.) that cause so much pain and suffering, not just for humans but for animals as well.

How are we to understand these things? After all, if God is in control of the creation, why would such things happen?

One of the earliest books of the Bible is the book of Job, where these questions (and others) became painfully real for Job (see week four).

Read Job 42. What does this chapter answer for us? What questions remain unanswered?

Anyone who has ever read the book of Job came away with, perhaps, more questions than answers. The book does reveal important truths about the great controversy (*see also Rev. 12:12*), which help to form a background crucial for us to even begin to understand the existence of evil. The great controversy scenario, however, doesn't explain every instance of evil. In fact, to explain evil would in a sense be to justify it, and we can never do that. The great controversy can reveal the grand issues behind evil; the motif tells us little, if anything, about each instance of evil.

Job did not understand, and neither do we when we face such catastrophic losses. Although God spoke to Job, He did not provide the answer to Job's questions, nor did He explain the cause of what happened. He simply reminded Job that there were things beyond his knowledge and that he would have to trust God, which Job did. Our experience is often similar; we may not receive an answer to our questions. But the story of Job does give us important insight into the nature of evil, and it shows us that God is not unaware of the struggles that we face.

Go back to Sabbath's introduction and read the Ellen G. White quote. How does that help us to come to grips better with the question of evil, knowing that God Himself suffered greatly from it, as well?

Governing a Damaged Creation

Read Matthew 5:45 and Psalm 65:9, 10. How does God act in creation in order to maintain the creatures that He created? What does this tell us about God's interest in the created world?

We are familiar with sunshine and rain, and scientists have provided explanations for the processes involved in each. Yet, there is more to the story than science can tell. Behind the scenes, God is actively providing for the necessities of His creatures. We may not understand His ways, but we know He is in control. Just as a skilled musician may play an instrument to produce music so beautiful that one's attention is focused on the music rather than on the musician, so God orders the creation so that we often see the order and are impressed with the majesty of the creation. At the same time we may not recognize that God is behind the scenes, ordering events according to His will and intending that all things will eventually work together for the good of those who love Him (*Rom. 8:28*).

What similar phenomenon is noted in the following texts? *Gen. 8:1, Exod. 10:13, Num. 11:31.*

Wind is a common event, and we generally understand what causes it. But in these texts, the winds occur in special circumstances. We might call them "providential winds." They occur at specific times and places and accomplish specific purposes. Though they may appear "natural," there is an unseen Cause working out the purposes of His own will, using features of the world that He created to accomplish His own purposes.

In 2 Kings 20:9–11, we see one of the most unusual miracles of the entire Bible. The relationship of sun and earth and day length seems like one of the most stable and predictable features of human experience. Imagine the reaction of today's scientific community if a similar event should occur in our day. Yet, we must ask, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (*Gen. 18:14*). What this miracle and others should tell us is that there is much about the creation, and God's actions in His creation, that is way beyond our understanding. That's why it's so crucial that we come to a personal knowledge of God and know for ourselves the reality of His love. That way, we learn to trust Him despite all that we don't understand.

Provider for a Damaged Creation

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (*Matt. 6:26*).

Even after Adam and Eve sinned and could no longer enter the Garden, God provided for their immediate physical needs (*Gen. 3:21*). Sin brought a new need, the need for clothing. Adam and Eve tried to provide clothing for themselves, but fig leaves were quite unsatisfactory. Something better was needed, which God provided in the form of skins. (We will consider more of the meaning of the skins in another lesson.) The point is that God provided for their needs, even though they had fallen into sin. This is another example of God’s grace providing for us despite our unworthiness.

Read Matthew 6:25–34. What crucial message is Jesus giving us with these words? How are we to understand them in the face of the trials and tragedies that are such a part of so many lives?

These are very comforting words, and we need to cling to them with all our hearts, souls, and minds, especially in times of great suffering, loss, and need. Jesus died for us, not for the lilies or the birds. We can be sure of His love for us, regardless of the circumstances. And yet, as we all know, circumstances can at times be quite appalling. We see famine, drought, floods, epidemics, and death all around, and Christians are not immune to these tragedies either.

God does not promise His people a life of luxury without pain, but He does promise to provide for our needs and to strengthen us so that we may cope with our challenges. We just can’t forget the reality of the great controversy and that we are in a fallen world.

Read Matthew 10:28. How could this verse, read in conjunction with the verses for today, help us to deal better with the harsh realities that we often face?

Further Study: “Yet men of science think that they can comprehend the wisdom of God, that which He has done or can do. The idea largely prevails that He is restricted by His own laws. Men either deny or ignore His existence, or think to explain everything, even the operation of His Spirit upon the human heart; and they no longer reverence His name or fear His power. They do not believe in the supernatural, not understanding God’s laws or His infinite power to work His will through them. As commonly used, the term ‘laws of nature’ comprises what men have been able to discover with regard to the laws that govern the physical world; but how limited is their knowledge, and how vast the field in which the Creator can work in harmony with His own laws and yet wholly beyond the comprehension of finite beings!”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 114.

(See also Ellen G. White, “Laws of Nature,” pp. 259–261 in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8.)

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read carefully the Ellen White statement above. What is she saying? In what ways do we see many scientists today doing exactly what she says?
- 2 Modern science today is much better than it used to be at explaining, through natural means, why certain things happen or why they don’t. The problem isn’t with “natural means” or “natural laws” but with the idea that these means and laws are all that exist—that there is nothing, and certainly no supernatural forces, ultimately behind them. What’s wrong with this assumption? Why does it make no logical sense (ask yourself, From where did these laws originate?), and why is that idea so contrary to the most basic teaching of the Bible?
- 3 How does the image of creation as a musical instrument provide a more accurate picture of God’s relationship to the creation than does the image of creation as a machine?
- 4 What other examples can you find in Scripture where God caused special events in what we would consider to be merely “forces of nature”? See, for example, 1 Kings 19:11, 12.

Ministry to the Military

Kitoli is a Global Mission pioneer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). His unique ministry is to members of the military in the DRC. He has worked in several military camps and has brought many soldiers to Christ, often hiring motorcyclists to take military personnel to evangelistic meetings in their area.

Recently Global Mission pioneers joined local pastors in the DRC to reach the people in Beni, a city of about a half million people located on the edge of a thick forest. Few Seventh-day Adventists live in the region, and the local Adventist mission planned to blanket the city with Bible studies and prayer as part of Global Mission's Hope for Big Cities program. The Global Mission pioneers met in Beni to go from door to door, sharing the gospel and inviting the people to take Bible studies. Kitoli, true to his calling, focused his efforts on reaching members of the military stationed in Beni. He made friends and shared his faith with a number of soldiers. When evangelistic meetings were arranged, Kitoli was asked to hold meetings near the military barracks.

Following the efforts to blanket the city with Bible studies and visits, Global Mission pioneers joined local pastors to hold evangelistic meetings in several strategic locations throughout the city. Kitoli held his meetings near the military installations around the city. Many soldiers attended Kitoli's meetings. When the meetings had ended, more than two hundred fifty people across the city of Beni made decisions for Christ and prepared to be baptized. One of them was an army lieutenant colonel named Sikiliza, who had been touched by the messages of hope and power in Jesus Christ. Sikiliza stepped forward to be baptized, wearing his military uniform. In his testimony before his baptism, he acknowledged the hand of God in his life and vowed to remain faithful to his newfound faith.

Following the evangelistic series, Kitoli returned to his work, where he reaches out to as many soldiers as he can. His goal is to provide Bibles and Bible study lessons to as many members of the military as possible, and he hopes to plant several churches near military bases.

Your mission offerings help to maintain church groups planted by Global Mission pioneers in the DRC and throughout the world. Thank you for faithfully supporting the mission of the church through your offerings.

NOAH K. MUSEMA is the Adventist Mission coordinator in the East-Central Africa Division, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

Marriage: A Gift From Eden



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:18–25, Mark 10:7–9, Eph. 5:22–25, Matt. 5:27–30.*

Memory Text: “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him’ ” (*Genesis 2:18*).

Think of the blessings of a happy marriage and a loving home. How fortunate are those who have such an experience! Unfortunately, for too many people marriage has been an experience of mostly pain and anger rather than of joy and peace. This is not how it was intended or how it should be. The sad state of so many marriages is a powerful expression of the degradation that sin has brought to the human race.

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

What a wonderful ideal. This week’s lesson looks at some of the principles behind it.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 2.*

Lo Tov

Out of a primeval abyss God created our world through the supernatural power of His Word. All through the Creation account, everything was “good” until the work was completed, at which point everything the Lord had created was pronounced “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*).

In the midst of all this, however, one thing was *lo tov*, “not good.” Read **Genesis 2:18**. What was “not good,” and why? What are some of the implications of this text?

God had declared all aspects of the Creation “good” up to the time that He created Adam. At that point, Adam was the only human. Although he was made in the image of God, in his aloneness he could not reflect the full image of God, who exists in relationship with other parts of the Godhead. The Godhead, of course, is composed of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Adam needed someone like himself with whom he could form a relationship of mutual love and cooperation, reflecting the loving relationship exemplified within the Godhead.

Read **Genesis 2:19–21**. After what act does God cause Adam to sleep and then, from his flesh, create a wife? How might the previous act be related to God’s creation of a wife for Adam?

Perhaps the key here is found in the last phrase of verse 20. As he named the animals, Adam must have noticed that they came in pairs (male and female) unlike himself, who was a singular creation. We can be sure that the Lord all along intended for Adam to have a wife. Perhaps the Lord intended to create a longing in Adam, the sense that something was missing in his own existence, which would make him that much more appreciative of the gift that the Lord was going to give him in a wife.

Consider the contrast between the “good” of the rest of the Creation and the declaration of “not good” in regard to Adam’s solitude. What does this indicate about the value of relationships? What can you do to help to strengthen whatever valuable relationships that you are in now?

A Companion for Adam

Genesis 2:20, in which Adam names the animals, helps to reveal the great gap between humans and other earthly creatures. There was no animal that was comparable to Adam. Not even among the apes was there any creature like Adam, because Adam was not like an ape. This is an important point for us to remember because so many in our society promote the idea that humans are nothing more than advanced apes. We are not apes, and an ape was no more suitable as a companion for Adam than it would be for one of us.

Read Genesis 2:21, 22. What significance is found in the method by which God created a companion for Adam?

As God had personally crafted Adam's body from the dust of the ground, so He personally crafted Eve's body, using one of Adam's ribs. God did not need Adam's rib to create Eve; He could have created her as He had created Adam or even spoken her into existence.

But God had a reason for forming Eve out of one of Adam's ribs. If the two had been created completely separately, it could indicate that by nature they were completely independent individuals. But the sharing of flesh in both persons indicates that the two were to be united and were intended to be "one flesh."

After being created, Eve was brought to Adam to be his helper (*vs. 18*). She was made from Adam (*vs. 22*) and given to Adam (*vs. 22*). The process by which God created Eve showed clearly that God could provide any companion that Adam needed. This point became important later when Adam faced the temptation of whether to join Eve in the eating of the fruit or to trust God to take care of the situation. Adam had ample reason to believe that God could take care of him, and this made his sin the more grievous.

Read Genesis 2:23. What was Adam's response to Eve?

Adam was so excited when he saw Eve that he sang out in poetry. This is the first poem in the Bible and reflects Adam's regard for his wife and the closeness of their relationship. She was to be his equal, another aspect of Creation that was damaged by the Fall.

Ideal Marriage

Author William Faulkner once called marriage a “failure” and wrote that “the only way to get any peace out of it is . . . to keep the first one [wife] and stay as far away from her as much as you can, with the hope of some day outliving her.” What a sad commentary on the state of many marriages.

Read Mark 10:7–9. What texts did Jesus quote in this passage? What characteristics of a good marriage can be found in the words of Jesus here?

The benefits of leaving one’s parents in order to create a home with one’s spouse are so well known that they hardly need to be mentioned. Problems with in-laws are one of the leading causes of marital discord. One of the first steps to take when establishing a happy home is to respect the independence of the marriage partners by the establishment of a home separate from their parents when at all possible. In cases when it is not possible, the privacy and intimacy of marriage should still be respected.

Unity is another feature of a good marriage. Unity does not mean that the two partners should give up the use of their separate brains but that they should be united in their purpose to do the very best for each other and for their union.

Jesus also emphasized the lasting nature of marriage. Marriage is not a casual relationship to be entered into or dismissed at will. It is a lifetime commitment. Those who are not prepared to commit themselves for life should postpone such a step until they are ready.

Read Ephesians 5:22–25. In what way do these verses reveal the principles of a good marriage?

It is the husband’s privilege to give himself to his wife in loving service, as Christ gave Himself for the church. In turn, the wife is to respect her husband and to cooperate in their work toward their mutual goals. Here is the solution to the discord that sin has brought into the marriage relationship. Self-sacrificing love will be met by loving respect and mutual happiness. Our homes can be a foretaste of heaven.

Protecting What's Precious

One of the greatest examples of God's love for humanity can be found in human sexuality. It is truly a wonderful gift from God. Yet, as with all the gifts that we have been given, it doesn't come unconditionally. That is, it's not something we can just do with as we please. God has set some rules. Indeed, He is very clear: sexual activity is to be between a husband and wife, male and female, and only in the context of marriage. Anything outside of that is sin.

Read Matthew 5:27–30. Look at how seriously Jesus takes the issues with which He is dealing here. What is, ultimately, at stake?

However much we like to focus (and rightly so) on all the grace and forgiveness that Jesus bestows upon sinners, we can't forget the high standards of morality that He lived and preached. It's hard to imagine how Jesus could have expressed more strongly the warning against sexual immorality as revealed in these few verses. Plucking out your eye? Cutting off your hand? If this is what it takes to be pure, then it's worth it; otherwise, you are in danger of losing your eternal life.

"If all who profess to obey the law of God were free from iniquity, my soul would be delivered; but they are not. Even some who profess to keep all the commandments of God are guilty of the sin of adultery. What can I say to arouse their benumbed sensibilities? Moral principle, strictly carried out, becomes the only safeguard of the soul."—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, pp. 621, 622.

However strong Jesus' warning is here, we must not forget the story about the woman caught in the act of adultery (*John 8: 1–11*). How do we strike the right balance between the upholding of the standards that Jesus talked about in the above verses, while at the same time showing grace and compassion to those who fall, as revealed in this story?

Marriage as a Metaphor for the Church

It is well-known among students of the Bible that, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, marriage is used as a symbol of the relationship between God and His covenant people. That's why, for example, on numerous occasions the Bible uses the image of an unfaithful woman to symbolize the apostasy and backsliding that were prevalent in ancient Israel. For instance, back in Exodus, the Lord said to His people that they should not enter into any kind of close relationship with the pagans around them because the pagans were a very perverse people who could lead Israel astray.

Read Exodus 34:15, 16. What image does the Lord use in this specific warning? How can this be understood in the context of God's people being "married" to Him? See *Jer. 3:14*.

At the same time, the image of the church as the bride of Christ points toward unity among believers and with Christ, especially when understood in the context of the biblical ideal for marriage: one man and one woman in a loving, self-sacrificing relationship.

Read Ephesians 5:28–32 and Revelation 19:5–9. What are these texts teaching?

In these texts, the relationship within the ideal marriage is compared with the relationship of God and His people. God invites His people to join with Him in an intimate relationship. This is an amazing picture of God's interest in His people and His desire to bring us into His fellowship.

What choices can you make that will draw you closer to the Lord and closer to the ideal represented in the biblical concept of marriage? Why is it a matter of the choices that you, and you alone, can make?

Further Study: In many ways a proper understanding of morality, especially sexual morality, is clearly tied to a proper understanding of our origins. For example: evolutionary philosophy does not provide an objective basis for any link between sexual activity and morality. Animals have many different types of “mating systems.” Some species are polygamous; many are promiscuous. A few species are mostly monogamous, but genetic studies have revealed that many species that appear to be monogamous are not actually so. In many species, a female may give birth to a group of offspring that are not all fathered by the same individual. Without the objective standard of morality given by the Creator, we would have no basis for the evaluation of sexual behavior as morally good or bad. The current push to approve homosexual partnerships illustrates this point. It is only in the light of Creation that marriage is properly understood.

“In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when He shall bring home His bride to the Father’s house, and the redeemed with the Redeemer shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Darwinism denies anything like the biblical Creation. What rules for sexual behavior, if any, does Darwinism provide, and how do they contrast with the biblical ideal?
- 2 What are some biblical examples of good marriages and happy homes? Name some biblical examples of unhappy marriages and homes. What can we learn from both?
- 3 Review the description of the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31:10–31. What should be the character of the husband of such a wife?
- 4 In what ways can your local church be a place that can help to affirm and strengthen the ideals of marriage? What practical things can your church do in order to accomplish that goal?

Small Projects Make Big Impact

Part of our mission offerings are set aside to fund specific small outreach projects around the world. These are separate from the larger Thirteenth Sabbath Offering funds. Two recipients report on how they used these special project funds to reach out to their communities.

Egypt has fewer than 750 Seventh-day Adventists among a population of more than 80 million people. The vast majority of Egyptians are Muslims. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, observant Muslims fast during the day and break their fast with an evening meal after sunset. In a gesture of goodwill, the Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted an evening meal during Ramadan for members of the Muslim community. They invited a number of Seventh-day Adventists and prominent Christians to mingle with their Muslim guests.

More than twenty non-Adventists attended the meal, including government assistant ministers, a general, a police colonel, representatives from two political parties, leaders of an Egyptian human rights organization, and journalists. After the meal the guests expressed appreciation and good will toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some indicated that they had been unaware of Seventh-day Adventists before the occasion.

Egypt Field President Llewellyn Edwards spoke to the guests, expressing how living among Muslims had changed his understanding of Muslims from one of fear created by Western media to one of friendship and hospitality. “Muslims are people to be loved,” he said.

The small projects mission offering helped to build a bridge of understanding between Christians and Muslims in an important political center of the Muslim world.

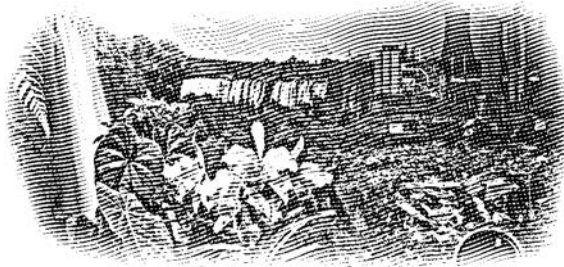
Halfway around the world lies the tiny South Pacific island nation of New Caledonia. The easternmost island is Mare, only about 20 miles (30 kilometers) from shore to shore. It lies almost 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) east of Australia and is home to about 6,000 people.

In July of 2011 Pastor Jean-Noel Adeline led in a series of evangelistic meetings sponsored in part by the small outreach project funds. As many as 200 people from across the island attended the evangelistic meetings. Following the meetings a small group numbering ten people began meeting on Sabbaths and preparing for baptism.

The islanders and the New Caledonia Mission are moving forward to build a place of worship so that these tender new seeds of faith can grow strong and root deeply in one of the farthest corners of the world.

The new believers on the island of Mare in New Caledonia thank you for sharing your mission offerings and helping them to discover God’s plan for their lives.

Stewardship *and the* Environment



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Psalm 8; Gen. 2:15; Rev. 4:11; Exod. 20:8–11; 1 Cor. 16:19, 20.*

Memory Text: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ ” (*Genesis 1:28, NKJV*).

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from ‘Him who made heaven and the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons, and the surrounding world. Therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him. . . .

“Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs. . . .

“In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God’s creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.”—Excerpted from “Caring for Creation—A Statement on the Environment by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.”

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 9.*

Dominion Given at Creation

According to Genesis 1:26, Adam’s dominion extended to all other created entities—in the sea, on land, and in the air. Dominion includes the idea of ruling or having power over these creatures. Nothing is said about dominion over the forces of nature themselves, only over the creatures. And, according to the text, this rule was universal: Adam was to be, essentially, the ruler of the earth.

Read again Psalm 8. What is David’s response to the honor that God gave to humans? What does it mean that we have been given “honor and glory,” especially in the context of humans having been given dominion over the earth?

According to Genesis 2:19, one of Adam’s earliest tasks was to name the animals. Names had great meaning in biblical times. One’s name represented one’s person and, often, one’s status. The authority to give names to the birds and beasts was confirmation of Adam’s status as ruler over the animals.

Read Genesis 2:15. In what ways do you see the principle of stewardship revealed here?

Adam was assigned the task of caring for the Garden, to manage it and tend to its needs. The Hebrew root, *smr*, translated here as “keep” it, often means “to watch over” or “to protect.” The Garden was a gift to Adam, an expression of God’s love, and Adam was now given responsibility over it, another example of the dominion that Adam received at the time of Creation.

How should our understanding of God as the Creator, or even, more specifically, our understanding of the Creation story itself, impact the ways in which we treat the environment? Why should our understanding of these things protect us from either gross indifference toward the environment or, in contrast, a fanatical devotion to it?

Caring for Other Creatures

“For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills” (*Ps. 50:10*). What in this text touches on the topic of our stewardship of the earth?

Read Revelation 4:11. How does this text contrast radically with the common atheistic notions of a creation without a creator, a creation that comes into being purely by chance alone?

Creation of the animals was not an accident or an afterthought. God intentionally created them. It was His will that they should exist, and it is this principle that should guide our treatment of them (*see also Exod. 23:5, 12; Prov. 12:10; Luke 14:5*).

Indeed, cruelty toward animals and indifference toward their suffering are widely recognized as symptomatic of personality disorders. Many organizations have been established to promote good treatment of animals, and rightly so.

However, at the same time, some people have gone so far as to claim that humans are not intrinsically more important than animals, and so humans should not be given preferential treatment. In many ways, this is a train of thought that flows logically from an evolutionary model of human origins. After all, if we and the animals are separated only by time and chance, why should we be any more special than they are? One philosopher has even argued that a chicken, or even a fish, has more “personhood” than does a fetus in the womb or even a newborn infant. However ridiculous these ideas might sound, they can be derived with a fair amount of logic from an atheistic evolutionary model of human origins.

Of course, such ideas are not supported in Scripture. Humans have special status in God’s plan, in contrast to the animals. (*See Gen. 3:21, Exod. 29:38, Lev. 11:3*.)

Put yourself in the mind of an atheist evolutionist and work through the reasons for why you think that animals should be treated no differently from humans. What should this tell you about how important our presuppositions are in determining the outcome of our thought?

The Sabbath and the Environment

As we have seen, the concept of stewardship, in the context of the way in which we take care of the planet, is tied directly to the creation. Our views on Creation will influence our views on the way in which we should relate to the creation.

For some, the creation is to be exploited, used, even pillaged to whatever degree necessary in order to fulfill our own desires and wants. Others, in contrast, all but worship the creation itself (*see Rom. 1:25*). Then there is the biblical view, which should give us a balanced perspective on the way in which we relate to the world that the Lord created for us.

Read Exodus 20:8–11. What do we find in this commandment that relates to stewardship?

“God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment.”—Excerpted from “Caring for Creation—A Statement on the Environment.”

By pointing us to the fact that God created us and the world that we inhabit, the Sabbath is a constant reminder that we are not wholly autonomous creatures, able to do whatever we wish to others and to the world itself. Sabbath should teach us that we are, indeed, stewards, and that stewardship entails responsibilities. And, as we can see in the commandment itself, responsibility extends to how we treat those who are “under” us.

Think about how you treat other people, particularly those who are under your dominion. Are you treating them with respect, fairness, and grace? Or are you taking advantage of the power that you have over them? If the latter, remember, you will one day have to answer for your actions.

Stewards of Our Health

As we have seen throughout this quarter, God’s original creation was “good,” even “very good.” Everything and everyone came forth from the hand of the Creator in a state of perfection. There was no sickness, no disease, no death. Contrary to the evolutionary model—in which disease, sickness, and death are part of the very means of creation—these things came only after the Fall, after the entrance of sin. Thus, it is only against the background of the Creation story that we can understand better the biblical teaching about health and healing.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. What is our responsibility to God regarding the care of our bodies?

Our bodies are the vehicles for our brains, and it is through our brain that the Holy Spirit communicates with us. If we wish to have communion with God, we must take care of our bodies and brains. If we abuse our bodies, we destroy ourselves, both physically and spiritually. According to these texts, the whole question of health itself, and how we take care of our bodies, the “temple of God,” is a moral issue, one filled with eternal consequences.

Care of our health is a vital part of our relationship to God. Obviously, some aspects of our health are beyond our power. We all have defective genes, we all are exposed to unknown chemicals or other damaging agents, and we are all at risk of physical injury that may damage our health. God knows all this. But to the extent that lies within our power, we are to do our best to maintain our bodies, made in the image of God.

“Let none who profess godliness regard with indifference the health of the body, and flatter themselves that intemperance is no sin, and will not affect their spirituality. A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. The standard of virtue is elevated or degraded by the physical habits. . . . Any habit which does not promote healthful action in the human system degrades the higher and nobler faculties.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 25, 1881.

Stewardship Principles

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (*James 1:17, NIV*). How does this text help to set the foundation for a biblically based concept of stewardship?

We often tend to think of stewardship in terms of money. As we’ve seen this week, however, stewardship involves much more than just that. Yet, whether dealing with money or with environmental concerns or our own health, there are certain principles involved in good stewardship, principles that have their ultimate foundation in the Creation, as depicted in Genesis. In the end, because God is our Creator, and because everything we have is a gift from Him, we are obligated before Him to be good stewards of whatever has been entrusted to us.

Read Matthew 25:14–30 to see how this parable illustrates the rewards of good stewardship. What is the message of this parable regarding the principles of stewardship in general?

“To His servants Christ commits ‘His goods’—something to be put to use for Him. He gives ‘to every man his work.’ Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 326, 327.

What are you doing with the talents with which you have been entrusted (remember—everything good comes from “the Father of the heavenly lights”)? What choices can you make that will enable you to use these gifts in better service for the Lord’s work?

Further Study: “Christ’s followers have been redeemed for service. Our Lord teaches that the true object of life is ministry. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow men. Here Christ has presented to the world a higher conception of life than they had ever known. By living to minister for others, man is brought into connection with Christ. The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 326.

Discussion Questions:

❶ Some secularists have proposed that the value of life should not be measured by whether the life is human but by its potential to live a pleasant life. They might value a young, healthy chimpanzee more than they do an old, diseased human.

For instance, read the following quote from Australian Peter Singer, who argues that, in certain cases, humans shouldn’t have any more rights than some animals do: “Far from having concern for all life, or a scale of concern impartially based on the nature of the life in question, those who protest against abortion but dine regularly on the bodies of chickens, pigs and calves show only a biased concern for the lives of members of our species. For on any fair comparison of morally relevant characteristics, like rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, autonomy, pleasure, pain, and so on, the calf, the pig, and the much-derided chicken come out well ahead of the fetus at any stage of pregnancy—while if we make the comparison with a fetus of less than three months old, a fish would show more signs of consciousness.” —Peter Singer, *Writings on an Ethical Life* (New York: The Ecco Press, 2000), p. 156.

Singer, of course, is an evolutionist; thus, he believes that there’s really no overt qualitative difference between us and the animals. We just have evolved into something different from what they did, that’s all.

What is radically wrong with this picture? How should we as Christians respond to this kind of thinking?

❷ If you can find it, bring to class the entire text of “Caring for Creation—A Statement on the Environment.” (This statement can be found at adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat5.html.) Otherwise, use the sections quoted in this week’s Sabbath study. Focus on how it ties in the Genesis Creation to the environment. Dwell more on how a proper view of Creation can protect us from taking an extreme position.

A Heart Full of Thanks

Ujjal is a young man, but a hole in his heart had left him chronically tired and subject to fainting spells. He couldn't work or even ride his bicycle.

One day Ujjal's friend Panalal told him that he was learning about Jesus, the powerful and loving God whom Christians worship. Panalal invited Ujjal to a meeting in his home. Ujjal went, hoping that the God of the Christians would heal him. He listened intently as Gopal, the Global Mission pioneer, explained that God forgives our sins if we believe and ask Him.

When Gopal finished his talk, he invited those with special prayer requests to stand. Ujjal stood. Gopal asked what his prayer request was, and Ujjal described his heart problem. Ujjal bowed his head while Gopal prayed. Immediately Ujjal felt an energy surge through him. He told Gopal that he believed he had been healed and that he wanted to become a Christian.

Gopal came to Ujjal's home to study the Bible. Soon Ujjal, his parents, and his two younger brothers accepted Jesus as their Savior.

The family attended a Seventh-day Adventist church in town, but Ujjal wanted to share his faith with others living in a nearby village. With his heart trouble gone, Ujjal rode his bicycle to the village and began sharing the gospel. He met a man with chronic stomach trouble and told him, "I know who can heal you without medicine." He told the man about Jesus and offered to pray for him. Ujjal took his pastor and Gopal to pray for the man, as well; soon this man and his family accepted Jesus as their Savior and asked to be baptized.

Ujjal asked the family to open their home to hold prayer meetings. The other villagers had been watching the family and had seen the changes in their lives. One by one the man and his family invited their neighbors to let Ujjal visit them and pray for them. As the people learned about Jesus, they began taking Bible studies and preparing for baptism.

Ujjal became a lay evangelist, and so far has led more than fifty people in this village to Christ. He also has begun working in another village where more people are learning about the loving and all-powerful God and accepting Jesus as their Lord.

Our mission offerings help to support the work of Global Mission workers such as Gopal and Ujjal in Southern Asia and around the world.

Gopal and Ujjal and hundreds more like them work as Global Mission pioneers and lay evangelists in the Calcutta region of India.

Sabbath: A Gift From Eden



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Gen. 2:1–3; Heb. 4:3, 4; Deut. 5:12–15; Ezek. 20:12; Mark 2:27, 28; 2 Pet. 3:3–7.

Memory Text: “For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day” (*Matthew 12:8*).

At the end of the sixth day, the Creation had been completed (*Gen. 2:1, 2*). The world had been formed into a habitable place, and it had been filled with living creatures. Adam and Eve had been created in God's own image and had been given a beautiful, well-provisioned Garden in which to live. They had formed the first marriage and established the first home. God was satisfied with what He had made. Something else, however, was added to this paradise: the seventh-day Sabbath (*see Gen. 2:1–3*).

Genesis 2 disproves the common notion that the seventh day is the “Jewish Sabbath.” Why? Because God “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” back in Eden, before the Fall and certainly before any Jews existed.

In addition, the Sabbath is a memorial to the creation of *all* humanity (not just the Jews); all humanity should enjoy the blessings of the Sabbath day.

This week we will explore the biblical teaching on this, another gift from Eden.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 16.*

Creation and the Seventh-Day Sabbath

In Exodus 20:8–11, the fourth commandment refers directly to the Creation week. This is important because it points back to Eden itself, to a world without sin, a perfect world coming fresh from the Creator. “The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator’s work.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

Read Genesis 2:1–3. How is the seventh-day Sabbath tied directly to the Creation itself? How do these verses help to reinforce the idea that God did, indeed, create our world in six days, as opposed to the long ages postulated by theistic evolution?

In those three verses, it’s worth noting that reference is made to the seventh day five times: in three of these five it is specifically called “the seventh day,” and twice the day is referred to with the pronoun “it.” In these verses, we are left with no ambiguity about either the day or what it is specifically referring to, and that is the six days of Creation that preceded the seventh.

Read Hebrews 4:3, 4. In his discussion of rest, the author of Hebrews is pointing to what event?

This is a clear New Testament reference to the Genesis Creation account, and it provides additional evidence for the historical truth of Creation in six days, followed by a day of rest.

Many today resist the idea that Creation took place in six days. They demand scientific evidence that the record is true. But science itself comes with many contingencies, uncertainties, and presuppositions. Plus, how could a literal six-day Creation be proved, anyway?

God “has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 169. What are the reasons you have for faith? Why do they trump all the reasons to doubt?

The Rich Meaning of Sabbath Rest

Read Deuteronomy 5:12–15. How does the emphasis of the Sabbath commandment here differ from Exodus 20:8–11?

Here Moses reminds the Israelites that they should keep the Sabbath, and he states that they should do this because God delivered them from Egypt. The texts say nothing about the six days of Creation or about the Sabbath being God's rest. Instead, the emphasis here is on salvation, on deliverance, on redemption—in this case the redemption from Egypt, a symbol of the true Redemption we have in Jesus (*see 1 Cor. 10:1–3*).

In other words, there is no conflict between the texts, no justification for trying to use one passage to deny the truth of the other. Moses was showing the people that they belong to the Lord, first by Creation and then by redemption.

Read Ezekiel 20:12 and Exodus 31:13. What is another reason for observing the Sabbath?

The passages that mention sanctification remind us that only God can make us holy. Only the Creator can create a new heart within us.

Consider, then, three reasons given for Sabbath observance and how they are related. We observe the Sabbath on the seventh day in recognition of the fact that God created in six days and rested on the seventh. We also observe the Sabbath on the seventh day because God is the one who redeemed us, saved us in Christ. And also He is the One who sanctifies us, which comes only from the creative power of God, as well (*see Ps. 51:10, 2 Cor. 5:17*).

Theories, therefore, that deny the six-day Creation tend to diminish God's grace and magnify the value of our own efforts to be good enough in order to be saved. The Creation story reminds us of our total dependence on grace and the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ in our place.

Dwell on the fact that we are as dependent upon God for Redemption as we are for existence (after all, how much say did you have in your own birth?). How can the Sabbath help us to better understand our absolute need of God's grace for everything in our lives? How should this knowledge influence the way in which we live?

Jesus and the Sabbath

Read Mark 2:27, 28. What crucial truth about the Sabbath does Jesus reveal here? How can we take this principle and apply it to our own Sabbath experience?

Jesus and His disciples had just walked through a field of grain, and the disciples, hungry, had picked some of the grain and eaten it. The act of picking grain while one was passing through a field was not a problem, as the rules of the society permitted this. Food is a necessity, and it was perfectly acceptable for the disciples to relieve their hunger by eating what they found as they walked along. The problem was that religious leaders regarded their own made-up rules for Sabbath observance as being more important than human need. This was a continuing point of controversy between Christ and the Pharisees. Jesus' response indicated that their priorities were wrong. The Sabbath should be a day for human blessing, not used as an excuse for prolonging suffering.

What other activity did Jesus do on the Sabbath, despite the controversy that it engendered? *See Matt. 12:9–13, Luke 13:10–17, John 5:1–17.*

Nowhere in all the Sabbath controversies recorded in the Gospels does the question of the validity of the Sabbath ever arise. The issue, instead, was how the seventh day should be kept, not whether it was to be abolished or superseded by something else.

Jesus' example shows not only that the Sabbath remains something that should be observed but also how the Sabbath should be kept. And one thing we can clearly see from His example is that work done on the Sabbath to help relieve human suffering does not violate the Sabbath. On the contrary, if anything, His example shows that doing good for others is exactly how the Sabbath should be kept.

In what ways could your Sabbath keeping better reflect the principles seen in Jesus' example to us?

Sabbath and the Last Days

Read 2 Peter 3:3–7. Compare the description of the last-day scoffers with our contemporary society. What do the scoffers deny, and why?

The scoffers claim that nature has continued on without interruption, a claim known among scientists as “uniformitarianism.” This is equivalent to denying that miracles occur. This claim is then used to deny that the Lord is going to come as He promised.

Notice, though, how Peter links their denial of the second coming of Christ with their denial of the Creation account (plus the Flood, as well). Denial of one leads to denial of the others!

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. Amid the doubts and caviling of the scoffers, what message will be proclaimed with heavenly power?

The scoffers are wrong. Judgment is coming, and we are called to worship the One who “created the heavens and the earth, the seas” and everything else. This is Creation language. The text alludes to Exodus 20:11 and points out the significance of Creation and Sabbath in the end times. As the Sabbath symbolizes the biblical story of Creation and Redemption, so rejection of the Creation story leads to rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath and to the establishment of a man-made substitute. The result, indicated in Revelation 14:8–10, is spiritual fornication and separation from God.

God is calling people to worship Him as the Creator, and nowhere in the Bible do we find anything that points so fully to Him as the Creator as does the seventh-day Sabbath. It is no wonder, then, that we see the Sabbath, the original sign of God as Creator, as being pivotal in the last days.

Think it through: how does a rejection of a literal six-day Creation weaken the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath? And if our understanding of the seventh-day Sabbath is weakened, why adhere to it when persecution comes?

A Psalm for the Sabbath

Read Psalm 92. What does this tell us, at least in part, about what the experience of Sabbath keeping should be like? Why, when thinking about the Lord, should we express the kind of joy expressed in this psalm?

The psalmist obviously knew the Lord, knew what the Lord was like, knew what the Lord had done, and knew what the Lord was going to do one day. And it is for these reasons that he expresses the joy that he does.

Look, too, at the rich themes expressed in this, a “psalm for the Sabbath day.”

First and foremost, there is praise and thankfulness to God for His loving-kindness and faithfulness. Plus, any “psalm for the Sabbath” would, of course, include acknowledgment of God as Creator, which we see here, as well.

Also, look at the theme of judgment here. In the Bible, God’s judgment is not just against the wicked but also in favor of the righteous (*see Dan. 7:20–28*). These two aspects of judgment are revealed here in the psalm, as well. Even if we don’t see these promises fulfilled now, we have the promise that this judgment ultimately will come at the end of time, when God creates all things new (*Rev. 21:5*).

If we get nothing else out of this psalm, we should see that the Sabbath, however sacred, is a time to delight in the Lord, to rejoice in Him and in all that He has done for us and has promised to do. The whole tone of the psalm is that of praise, joy, and happiness, not because of anything that the psalmist had done but only because of all that the Lord had done and promised to do.

What a gift to be given: one-seventh of our lives set apart every week to rest and to be able—free from the busyness and stress of mundane existence—to rejoice in the works of the Lord for us.

How can you learn to rejoice in the Sabbath as does the psalmist here in this psalm? If you are not having that experience, why not?

Further Study: “God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved by slow degrees of development from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man’s narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. He who set the starry worlds on high and tinted with delicate skill the flowers of the field, who filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power, when He came to crown His glorious work, to place one in the midst to stand as ruler of the fair earth, did not fail to create a being worthy of the hand that gave him life. The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

Discussion Questions:

1 Why is the relationship between Sabbath and Creation so significant in these last days? How is this truth expressed in Revelation 14:6, 7? Look again at the question at the end of Wednesday’s lesson as you discuss the above question.

2 At about the same time that Charles Darwin started promoting his theory of evolution, God raised up a church that upheld the seventh-day Sabbath as a distinctive belief. More so, God raised up that church to proclaim the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, which calls upon us specifically to worship the One who created the heavens and the earth. What could be more tragic, or a deeper fall from faith, than for those professing to be members of that church to argue in favor of evolution?

3 In recent years, science has revealed a complexity in life that boggles the mind. Charles Darwin had no clue whatsoever about just how complicated even the so-called “simple” cell really is. We know now that even the most “simple” cell is more complicated and more intricate than Darwin probably ever imagined.

Look at the irony here: many scientists believe that life arose by chance alone. Yet, the more complexity that science finds in life, the less likely it becomes that chance could have done it. That is, the more that science reveals about the complexity of life, the less likely science’s grand theory about the origin of life, atheistic evolution, becomes. Discuss.

Embracing the World's Cities: Part 2

As we look at the mission field, we must look through the compassionate eyes of Jesus. We're not looking at a target group or mere statistics; we're looking at real people. They may have given up on church and religion, but they're open to those who follow Christ and show the love and sympathy of their Master.

And if we're going to minister to needs, we need to know what those needs are. We need to study our communities. What are people reading, what are they watching, what are they listening to? How do they spend their spare time? What's causing them pain? What's bringing them joy?

A few years ago, Wayne Krause, the pastor of a church near Sydney, Australia, discovered that some students were arriving at the local public school each day without breakfast. He presented the challenge to his church, and soon the church members were providing food to these hungry children. Later, when the school decided to hire a chaplain, they turned to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Today, Rochelle Madden serves as the school's chaplain.

"I see my role as chaplain to be a window to Jesus," says Rochelle. "I want the students, parents, and teachers to see a Christian as someone who really cares about them and about what's going on in their lives."

Seventh-day Adventists should make cities better places. Are people hungry? Let's feed them. Are immigrants struggling to adapt? Let's help them. Does a city park need a cleanup? Let's roll up our sleeves.

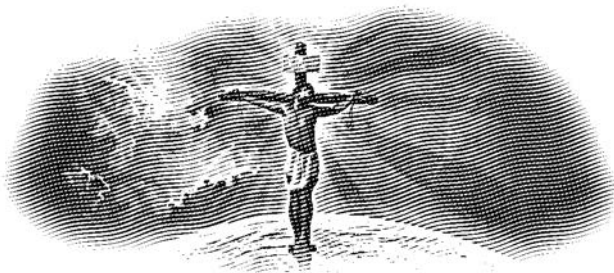
In the book of Jeremiah, God instructed the Jewish exiles how to live when they got to Babylon: "But seek the welfare [*shalom*] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for its welfare [*shalom*] and you will find your welfare [*shalom*]" (*Jer. 29:7, ESV*).

The Hebrew word *shalom* conveys thoughts of peace, well-being, and prosperity. God is urging the exiles to work and pray for the good of the city. We must do the same today.

Jesus modeled a wholistic ministry that balanced the spiritual and the physical: "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (*Matt. 9:36, NIV*). We should use Christ's ministry as our example and care for physical as well as spiritual needs.

Adapted from Adventist World; used with permission. Gary Krause is director of Adventist Mission at the General Conference. The first part of this article appeared in the fourth quarter 2011, "Inside Stories."

Creation *and* the Gospel



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 3:21; Ps. 104:29, 30; John 1:4; Rom. 5:6–11; Gal. 3:13; Matt. 27:46.*

Memory Text: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (*1 Corinthians 15:22, NIV*).

In the biblical account, Adam and Eve were created in God's image without any moral defect. But they did have free will, a prerequisite for them to be able to love. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they fell under Satan's power (*see Heb. 2:14*), an act that brought the whole world under the enemy's power, as well. Jesus, though, came to destroy the works of the devil (*1 John 3:8*) and free us from his power. He did this by dying in our place and offering us life. On the cross, Jesus became sin for us (*2 Cor. 5:21*) and experienced the separation from His Father that sin causes. By His death, Jesus restored the relationship between God and humanity that had been broken by the sin of Adam and Eve.

All these points are logically linked to the Creation story. Creation comes into the picture again as the power of the Creator God is exercised to create a new heart in His children (*2 Cor. 5:17*), renewing the image of God within us and restoring our relationship with Him.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 23.*

Grace in the Garden

As we all know so well, the first humans, perfect beings created in the “image of God,” fell into sin, which brought death. They had been warned, and they understood what they had been told. Eve even repeated to the serpent what God had said. Yet, they sinned anyway. At times we, like Eve, are led into sin by deceit; while, at other times, like Adam, we sin intentionally. Either way, we are sinners, guilty of transgressing God’s law.

Read Genesis 3:9–15. What was God’s response to the sin of Adam and Eve?

God held a trial, an “investigative judgment” even. The purpose of the trial was not so that God could learn the facts. He already knew them. The purpose was, instead, to give the couple an opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions, the first step toward repentance and restoration. God asked them what had happened, and they confessed, although reluctantly. Though they were guilty and though their sin brought immediate consequences—the first gospel promise was given (see lesson 6) to them in Eden.

Read Genesis 3:21. What further act of grace was revealed?

Death came in a most unexpected way. Instead of the immediate death of Adam and Eve, one or more animals died. Imagine Adam’s feelings as the animal died, perhaps in his place as a sacrifice. It was the first time that Adam had seen death, and it must have brought him enormous mental pain. Then the animal was skinned, and a tunic was fashioned from the skin. The skin was placed over Adam’s body to cover his nakedness. Every time he looked at it, or felt it, he was surely reminded of what he had done and what he had lost. More important, it was a reminder of God’s grace.

No doubt we all should be very appreciative (to say the least) of God’s grace to us. What better way to reveal that appreciation than to show grace to others. To whom could you show some grace right now however undeserving he or she may be?

Sin and Death

In Genesis 3:19, Adam was told that at death he would return to the dust from which he was made. The same thing happens to us. Notice—we do not return to being apes, because we were not made from apes. We were made from dust, and it's to dust, at death, that we return.

Read Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:29, 30; John 1:4; Acts 17:24, 25. What is the ultimate significance of these texts for us? How should this truth influence the way in which we live?

Life is a marvelous phenomenon. We are all familiar with life, but there is still something mysterious about it. We can take apart a living organism, but in the end we find nothing there except various kinds of atoms and molecules. We can collect the molecules in a container and heat it or pass an electric spark through it or try any number of other experiments, but we do not get life again. There is no entity called “life” that exists within a living body or a living cell. Life is a property of the entire living system, not an entity that can be separated from the cells.

On the other hand, we know much about how to produce death. We have devised many ways of killing living things. Some of these methods reveal in astonishing detail the violence and cruelty of our sinful hearts. Death we can produce, but the creation of life is beyond our grasp. God alone has the ability to create living organisms. Scientists have tried to create life, thinking that if they could do so they would have an excuse for why they do not believe in God. So far, all such efforts have failed.

Read Isaiah 59:2. How does sin affect our relationship to the Life-Giver?

If life comes only from God, then separation from God cuts us off from the Source of life. The inevitable result of separation from God is death. Even if one lives 969 years, as did Methuselah, the story still ends with “and he died.” Sin, by its very nature, causes separation from life, and the result is death.

While We Were Yet Sinners . . .

All throughout the Bible we find that God’s response to human sinfulness is redemptive in nature and motivated by genuine, unselfish love. He would have been fully justified in giving Adam and Eve up to Satan’s destructive power; after all, they had made their choice. But God knew that Adam and Eve did not understand the full meaning of what they had done, and He determined to give them an opportunity to become better informed and to be able to choose again.

Read Romans 5:6–11. How do these verses help us to understand what God’s grace is all about?

When we are wronged, we like to have an apology before we accept the offender back into a good relationship with us. Of course, an apology is appropriate in such circumstances. Complete healing of a damaged relationship includes an expression of sorrow and acceptance of responsibility for the misdeed. But God did not wait for us to ask for forgiveness; He took the initiative. While we were yet sinners, He gave Himself to die on our behalf. This is a wonderful demonstration of divine love.

How does our behavior compare with God’s behavior? How often are we offended and angry and seek revenge rather than restoration? We should be eternally thankful that God does not treat us in that way.

God’s treatment of sinners shows the true meaning of love. It is not a mere feeling but a principled behavior in which every effort is made to reconcile the offender to the offended and restore the relationship. God’s treatment of Adam and Eve is an illustration of how He relates to our sin.

“The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. That Christ, so excellent, so innocent, should suffer such a painful death, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, our thoughts and imaginations can never fully comprehend. The length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of such amazing love we cannot fathom.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 213. Maybe we can’t fathom this love, but why is it so important that we try?

The Sin-bearing Substitute

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (*Gal. 3:13, NKJV*). Dwell on the amazing implications of this text, keeping in mind the deity of Christ as you do. What does this tell us about what God was willing to do in order to save us? More so, what does this tell us about how tragic it is for anyone not to accept the provision that Christ made in our behalf?

In taking the guilt of our sins upon Himself and dying in separation from God, Jesus fulfilled the promise originally made in the Garden of Eden that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head. His sacrifice made possible the reconciliation of God and the human family and will eventually result in the final elimination of evil from the universe (*Heb. 2:14, Rev. 20:14*).

Keeping Galatians 3:13 in mind, read Matthew 27:46. What do Jesus’ words reveal about what He went through on the cross?

On the cross, Christ accepted the curse of sin in our behalf. This was a change in His standing with the Father. The sacrificial lamb, when brought to the altar, became a substitute for the death of the sinner. Likewise, when Christ went to the cross, His status before the Father changed. Shut out from the Father’s presence, He felt the curse that our sin had caused. In other words, Jesus, who had been One with the Father from eternity, experienced a separation from the Father, in what Ellen G. White called “the sundering of the divine powers” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 93, 1899). However hard it is to fully comprehend exactly what was happening, we can know enough to realize that an amazing price was paid in order to redeem us.

A New Creation

The great news of the gospel centers around the death of Jesus as our substitute. He took our sins upon Himself, bearing in Himself the penalty that would, otherwise, justly be ours. As we have seen, too, the whole idea of Christ as our Substitute, dying for the sins of the world, is inextricably linked to the Creation story. Death is an alien intruder in God's creation, and Christ came to destroy it. If evolutionary theory were the chosen way that God used to create humans, it would mean, then, that death, far from being an aberration and an enemy, would instead be part of God's original plan for humanity. Indeed, death would play an important role in the way in which God created us. It's no wonder, then, that Christians must reject theistic evolution as a viable way of understanding the Creation story.

The Genesis Creation account, however crucial in helping us to understand Christ's death in our behalf, also helps us to understand another aspect of the plan of salvation, that of God's work of creation in us, as we partake of His holiness now.

Read Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Colossians 3:10; and 2 Corinthians 5:17. **What promises are given to us here that are linked with the concept of God as Creator, as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2?**

A new heart is a creation that only God can do. We cannot do it ourselves but must depend on the same Creator who formed the world and created our first parents. David recognized his need and asked God to solve the problem by an act of creation.

Indeed, the person who is "in Christ" is a new creation. The old way of thinking must be taken away and replaced with a newly created mind. Our new mind is created for good works, in accordance with God's will. This kind of creation is a supernatural process, accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. The original Creation gives us confidence that God's creative power is able to change our lives and to bring us back into relationship with Him.

How have you experienced what it means to be a new creation in Christ? What does this mean in a daily, practical sense? What is it that changes in the life of someone who has had this experience?

Further Study: “‘The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.’ [Deuteronomy 29:29.] Just how God accomplished the work of creation he has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as his existence.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 113.

“In that thick darkness God’s presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father’s presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 753, 754.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How is the gospel related to the story of Creation? What specific aspects of Genesis 1–3 are foundational to the gospel? How is the story of Jesus based on the historical veracity of Genesis? How would one tell the story of Jesus if there were no Adam and Eve?
- 2 The Bible maintains that the Creation was accomplished by supernatural processes that are not accessible to science but that can be learned only by special revelation. Tension between the Bible and science is, therefore, not a surprise. Why is it a mistake, then, to expect science to be able to explain all of God’s creative works?
- 3 What links exist between the gospel, Creation, and judgment as indicated in Revelation 14:6, 7?
- 4 Critics of Christianity will often argue that Jesus knew beforehand that, though He would die, He would be resurrected to life. Thus, they ask, what was the big deal about His death when He knew it would be only temporary? How does Matthew 27:4, supplemented by *The Desire of Ages* statement in Friday’s Further Study, help to answer that objection?

Finding Hope, Finding Jesus

Amir Ghali, director of the Al-Waad Media Center in the Middle East, is delighted to share the following e-mail that he received from someone who came to love Jesus by listening to Hope Channel.

“Through its amazing programs, Hope Channel North Africa/Middle East [N.A.M.E.] has played a major role in comforting me during my time of mourning. I especially mention the program entitled *Road to Salvation*. This particular program has introduced me to Jesus Christ, His miraculous birth, His holy life, and His true nature. This program also introduced me to the Holy Spirit. I didn’t know there was a Holy Spirit before. Now I know that He is the One who comforted me during my time of distress. I know that He is with me wherever I go.

“I live among people who don’t believe in Jesus, and my life may be in danger. If my family learns that I have accepted Jesus as my Savior, they may kill me. In spite of that, I feel happiness and peace in my heart. I have found a treasure which I will never give up. I used to be so afraid before, but now I am not afraid of anything.

“I now know that Jesus Christ is the door to God the Father. I now pray in Jesus’ name, and I know that He will hear my prayer. Not long ago I had a big problem in my life. I prayed in the name of Jesus, and the problem was solved in an unexpected way. I believe in Jesus Christ and in His grace for me.

“Thank you for Hope Channel. Without it, I would have been lost.”



Please pray for Hope Channel, especially its North Africa/Middle-East center and the ministry it is carrying out to reach the people in a part of the world that is difficult to reach. Your mission offerings are another important means to support and promote the work of the Hope Channel around the world.

A Middle East Hope Channel host

Creation, Again



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Rev. 21:1–5, Gen 3:19, 1 Cor. 15:52–58, Gen. 6:11–13, Isa. 11:6–9, John 14:1–3.*

Memory Text: “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13, NIV).

In 2 Peter 3:10–13, Peter describes the fate of heaven and earth. Both, along with all that they contain, will be destroyed. But that's not the end of the story, not by a long shot, because a new heaven and a new earth will be created in their stead.

Look at the contrast between the two existences. Sin has dominion in the old one; righteousness dwells in the new. Death rules in the old one; life in the new. The contrast couldn't be more striking or absolute.

As we can see in these promises, too, God's role as Creator didn't end with the first Creation of the earth. It doesn't end with the work that He does in us, to make us new creatures in Christ either. No, it continues. The same Lord who through the supernatural power of His Word created the world once will create it again, and with His supernatural power too.

Indeed, without this last act of creation, all the previous ones would come to nothing. The new heavens and the new earth are the culmination of God's promises to us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 30.*

A New Beginning

One thing that science and the Bible do have in common is the belief that this earth, as we know it now, is not going to last forever. For science (at least some versions of it), the same cold and mindless forces of chance that brought the earth and life on it into existence are the same cold and mindless forces of chance that are going to, eventually, destroy it. The Bible, too, teaches that this earth isn't going to last forever but will, indeed, be destroyed. In the scenario that science offers, however, that destruction is the end of everything forever; in contrast, in the biblical scenario, it's the start of something brand new and wonderful and that lasts forever, as well.

Read Revelation 21:1–5. What picture of the future is presented here? What wonderful promises await us? Why is this something that only God can do for us?

No question, one of the best promises of our new existence is that death and suffering will be forever gone. It is clear that God does not regard these experiences as positive. They were not in the Creation that God pronounced “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). They are alien intruders; they were never meant to be part of the original Creation, and they won't be part of the new one either. Jesus came to destroy these things, and we will never have to experience them again.

The new creation brings a new beginning. This wretched experiment with sin will be over. The results are in, and they are clear: sin brings death and suffering, and God's law is the law of life.

As God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and with them we are all offered a new beginning. Only God, only the Creator, could do this for us. And it all comes to us through the work of Jesus in our behalf. Without the plan of salvation, we'd have no hope for anything beyond that which this life now offers, a pretty dismal thought.

Why are these promises of a new existence so crucial to us? What would our faith be without them?

From Dust to Life

Read Genesis 2:7 and 3:19. From what was Adam made, and what was the result of his sin?

God created Adam from the dust, and he became a living being. As long as he maintained his relationship with God, his life would continue. When Adam sinned, he became separated from the Source of life. As a result, he died and returned to dust.

Read Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. What will happen to those who sleep in the dust?

The promise of the resurrection provides hope for the Christian. Job expressed this hope, saying, “And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (*Job 19:26, NKJV*). For the faithful, death is only temporary. The God who formed Adam from the dust and breathed life into him has not forgotten how to create humans from dust. The resurrection will be an act of creation just as much as was the original creation of Adam.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:52–58. What is taught here that is so inextricably linked to the Genesis Creation account?

The resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Jesus is going to happen instantaneously. As with the first creation of humankind, it will be a supernatural event in which God does everything. All this is in blatant contradiction to theistic evolution. After all, if God isn't going to use millions of years of evolution to re-create us, but does so in an instant, then He certainly could have created us without evolution in the first round. Thus, as with everything else in the Bible, the hope of the resurrection is more biblical evidence that refutes theistic evolution.

What should it tell us about the limits of science that, regarding something as crucial and fundamental as the resurrection, science offers us little light?

Restoration of Human Dominion

Compare Genesis 1:28 with John 12:31. What was the status of Adam and Eve in the newly created world? Who seized power and became the ruler of this world?

Adam was given the responsibility to be ruler of the world. When he sinned, Adam’s dominion was compromised. Satan now exercised his power in the creation, causing the corruption and violence that we see everywhere.

After the Cross, however, Jesus won back the earth from Satan’s dominion (*see Matt. 28:18, Rev. 12:10, John 12:31*). And even though Satan is still allowed to operate on the earth and do damage, we can rejoice in the knowledge that Satan’s days are numbered: Christ’s victory on the cross guarantees that.

Read 2 Timothy 2:11, 12 and Revelation 5:10. What truths can we glean from these texts? *See also 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.*

Those who are saved will be given authority as kings and priests. The idea of kingship implies some kind of authority; the idea of priests carries with it the implication of acting in communication between God and other creatures, perhaps even with those from other created worlds, those who have never known the experience of sin and the woe that it brings.

“All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God’s redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 677. What do you think it means to “enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings”? What could we learn from unfallen beings? And they from us?

More Restoration

In the world that we know, predation is a common way of life among the animals. The term “food chain” is a familiar reminder of the importance of predation in our ecology, and we have difficulty imagining a world without it. But in the beginning, all land creatures ate green plants (*Gen. 1:30*). No animals fed on other animals. Genesis 1:30 does not mention the food of the sea creatures, but the same principles would likely apply, so that God could review the entire Creation and declare it “very good.”

Read Genesis 6:11–13, 9:2–4. **By the time of the Flood, what changes had occurred in nature? What further deterioration occurred in the relationship between humankind and beast after the Flood?**

What had started as a peaceful kingdom had become filled with corruption, violence, and evil. These are the results of sin. The world that once was “very good” had become so bad that it called for its own destruction.

After the Flood, the animals became afraid of humans. This included the creatures of land, air, and sea. This is obviously in contrast to the previous situation. It appears that the dominion of humans over the animals was reduced at this time.

Read Isaiah 65:25, 11:6–9. **How are the relationships among the creatures in our present world different from those promised by God in the future?**

Through the beauty of this poetic language, Isaiah shows us that there will be no violence in the new world. Corruption and violence, those characteristics of the pre-Flood world that called for their destruction, will both be absent from the new one. It will be a world of harmony and cooperation, a peaceable kingdom. We are so used to violence, predation, and death that it’s hard for us to imagine anything else.

As we can see, the gospel is so much about restoration. Though, of course, God alone can do the final restoration, what choices can we make that can help to bring about some needed restoration now?

The Restoration of Relationship With God

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 7. After the Fall, however, that close relationship was radically altered in many ways.

Read Genesis 3:24, Exodus 33:20, and Deuteronomy 5:24–26. What did sin do to the close relationship that existed between humanity and God?

Sin had broken the relationship between God and humanity. God sent the couple away from His presence for their own protection. Humans could no longer see God’s face and live.

The Lord, though, of His own initiative, brought in the plan of salvation, through which the broken relationship could be healed, even at a terrible cost to Himself.

Read John 14:1–3 and Revelation 22:3–5. What promise did Jesus extend to His disciples just before He went to the cross, and what will be the result?

God and humanity are to be reunited, at peace, and meeting face to face. The earth will be without any curse, and all that has been lost will be restored. The redeemed will be given a new environment, a new life, a new dominion, a new peace with the rest of the creation, and a new relationship with God. The original purpose behind the creation of humans will now be fulfilled. God, the human race, and the creation will be in harmony, and that harmony will last forever.

Even now, before the re-creation of heaven and earth, how can we learn to enjoy a close communion with God? What choices do we make that affect our relationship with God, either in positive or negative ways?

Further Study: “And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. . . .

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Gather as many texts as you can (especially from the book of Revelation) that talk about what the restored earth will be like. Discuss in class what these texts are saying. What aspects of the restored earth do you find the most appealing? What aspects are hardest to understand?
- 2 How is the doctrine of Creation as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2 related to the doctrine of the re-creation of the heavens and the earth? How are we supposed to understand this re-creation if theistic evolution were true?
- 3 Read Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16, 17. What is Paul saying here, and how can we draw comfort from these words for ourselves?
- 4 Dwell more on this whole concept of the gospel as “restoration.” What does the word imply? What is restored? How is it restored? And what role do we have, if any, in the whole process?
- 5 What does the promise of a new heaven and a new earth reveal to us about the character of God?

God and the Devil Worshiper

Benjamin Sam was a Global Mission pioneer in a primitive highlands region on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. While visiting the ailing village chief, he faced down soldiers with guns pointed at his head and prayed for healing for the chief. God helped him to raise up a small congregation in the highland village, and today a school and a small church stand as testimonies of God's power to change hearts.

Benjamin transferred to a region on the southern plains of the island. There he visited the people and found many who wanted to know more about Jesus. He held two weeks of evangelistic meetings in the village.

On the first night of the meetings a devil priest named Bem and his wife entered the meeting area and sat down. The next night they returned, but that night the devil whom Bem worshiped became angry and wouldn't let Bem sleep. Bem's joints swelled and became painful, and the devil told him, "I will kill you if you leave me." Bem became fearful and cried out, "I'm going to die!" Then he told his startled wife that the devil was attacking him and had threatened to kill him.

Early the next morning Bem's wife came to tell Benjamin what her husband had said the night before. Benjamin visited Bem's home and told him that the devil was a defeated enemy of God, and Bem didn't have to fear his power. Benjamin told Bem and his wife that Jesus had cast out many demons during his lifetime. "Jesus even raised a dead child and a dead man," he said, referring to Jairus's daughter and Lazarus. Bem and his wife listened in awed silence.

Benjamin invited the couple to kneel with him while he asked Jesus to cast out the demon from Bem's life. Benjamin prayed for Bem and his family. When Benjamin ended his prayer, Bem told Benjamin that the devil had left him.

Following the evangelistic meetings Bem and his wife asked to be baptized. At the baptismal service, Bem shared how Jesus had cast out the demons he had once worshiped. "Now I am a follower of the true God, Jesus Christ," he said.

Bem shares his new faith with those he used to serve as a devil priest. A small congregation of believers now worships in this village, evidence of God's redeeming love.

Our mission offerings help to reach people everywhere who need to hear God's message of love and forgiveness.

BENJAMIN SAM served as a Global Mission pioneer until he was asked to pastor a congregation near Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands.

Although the 12 books that end the Old Testament are referred to as the “Minor Prophets,” their message is a powerful one. Over and over again in these books, the Lord pleads with His people to repent, to put away their sins, to return to Him to find life, not death, to find salvation, not damnation, to find hope and not despair. The second quarter lesson study entitled “Seek the Lord and Live!”: Major Lessons From Minor Prophets by Zdravko Stefanovic will explore this powerful message of God’s grace toward undeserving sinners. There is nothing “minor” about the messages in these books. The message contained in them is present truth, God’s message to us today just as it was to those who lived in the time of these prophets who, though long gone, still speak. Our response should be to heed these valuable lessons.

Lesson 1—Spiritual Adultery (Hosea)

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **A Strange Command** (*Hosea 1:2, 3, NIV*)

MONDAY: **Spiritual Adultery** (*Hosea 2:8–13*)

TUESDAY: **A Promise of Restoration** (*Hosea 2; Hosea 3:1, 2*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Case Against Israel** (*Hosea 4:1–3*)

THURSDAY: **A Call to repentance** (*Hosea 4:6*)

Memory Text—*Hosea 2:23, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: Even amid spiritual adultery and divine judgment, God’s love for His people never wavered.

Lesson 2—Love and Judgment: God’s Dilemma (Hosea)

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Easily Deceived and Senseless** (*Hosea 7:11, 12, NIV*)

MONDAY: **A Trained Heifer** (*Hosea 10:11–13*)

TUESDAY: **A Toddling Son** (*Hosea 11:1, 3, NKJV*)

WEDNESDAY: **Compassion Stronger Than Anger** (*Hosea 11:8, 9, NASB*)

THURSDAY: **Healed, Loved, and Nurtured** (*Hosea 14*)

Memory Text—*Hosea 12:6, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: Hosea reveals more of God’s love for His wayward people.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.