

Beginnings and Belongings ***“In the Beginning. . .”***

Lesson #2 for October 14, 2006

Scriptures: Genesis 1; Psalms 33:6, 9; Exodus 20:11; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 14:6,7.

1. A famous evolutionary scientist once wrote: “We’re here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures.” (*Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, October 7, 2006)
2. Genesis seems to suggest that creation took place in seven, contiguous 24-hour time periods. Is there any wiggle room for longer time periods in Genesis 1? Is there reason to compromise with the long time periods evolutionists believe were necessary? Are evolutionists making any effort to compromise with Christians, and Bible-believing ones at that? There are many verses in the Bible that state blatantly that God created “the heavens and the earth”. In modern terms God would probably have said “the entire universe”. The question that some would raise is: Was that all done in the same six-day period.
3. “One could argue that, in many ways, the most important text in the Bible is Genesis 1:1.” (*Ibid*, October 8, 2006) Do you agree with this? Why would it be true? If you don’t agree, why not? Why might this verse be key to your understanding of the rest of Scripture?
4. Look at the logical sequence that God used in creating things here on this earth: Would you expect God to do things in an orderly fashion? What do we learn about God by the sequence of events in creation week? Is this sequence of particular significance? What happened on day four?

Day	The Creative Work of God		Day
1 (Gen. 1:3)	light/darkness	sun/moon/stars	4 (Gen. 1:14)
2 (Gen. 1:7)	sky/water	birds/fish	5 (Gen. 1:21)
3 (Gen. 1:9)	sea and dry land	land animals	6 (Gen. 1:24)
3 (Gen. 1:11)	vegetation	man/woman	6 (Gen. 1:27)
The Seventh Day/The Day of Rest (Gen. 2:2)			

5. **If Satan was cast down to this earth before creation week, (Revelation 12:7-12) what was he cast down to?**
6. What do we learn by reading the following verses: Exodus 20:11; Job 38:4; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2; and Revelation 14:6,7? Is there any question in your mind about the Bible’s position concerning who created our world and even the heavens and the universe?
7. “It’s a fundamental law that nothing created can be greater than its creator.” (*Ibid*) Think about it! Do you agree with this basic concept? What would it mean to suggest that God is greater than the entire universe?
8. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God’s creation in this initial seven-day period is the reason why we worship God on the Sabbath. What is your understanding of the relationship between creation and the seventh-day Sabbath?
9. Look at some of the different creation myths: see appendix. Would you be happier to know that you were the result of some argument between “gods”? Or a reward for winning a battle?

10. Read Genesis 1:1-3. Was there a gap of time between Genesis 1:1,2 and 1:3? How would you go about deciding? When God uses the term “heaven and earth” is he including the entire universe? Genesis 1:2 (compare Revelation 12:9) seems to suggest that there was some kind of earth here before God began his seven-day creative process. How would you describe this earth “without form, and void?” (Genesis 1:2)
11. What do you think Satan was doing during creation week? Was God answering some of his accusations?
12. “One account relegates humanity to a mere by-product of that struggle among the gods. Instead of being created to have dominion over the earth as in the Bible (Genesis 1:26), human beings were made by the higher gods to perform the work that the lesser gods refused to do.” (*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* page 21)
The ancient Egyptians believed that their God, Ptah, created by speaking things into existence as God did. While Ptah may seem a little like the God we worship, notice these very significant differences:
 - 1) He was not eternal and came into being himself through the operation of blind forces in the universe. The cosmos apparently just happened to have in it the ability to originate gods.
 - 2) Ptah did not create anything through any power in himself. When he spoke, he was merely activating something that was already latent in the cosmos. For example, if he said the word “tree”, the word had programmed within itself—like a cosmic DNA or digital code—the capacity to produce a tree when uttered.
 - 3) Neither Ptah nor anything he brought into existence was eternal. Everything, including gods themselves, would someday collapse back into the original chaos from which they had come. (*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* page 21)
13. When discussing creation vs. evolution the cry is often made: “It’s all about time!” Why are there so few Christians that believe the literal, contiguous seven-24-hour-days story of Genesis 1 and 2? Are you comfortable with this timeframe? What was created during the six working days?
14. Remember that these messages were written to a primitive people and writing was just barely a developing science. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Sabbath and the sacredness of the Sabbath is based at least partially on a correct understanding of this first week. If we cease to believe in the Genesis account of creation, do we destroy the Sabbath? Why? Or why not?
15. Did God need to use any power above or beyond or outside of himself to create our universe, or even our world?
16. Thinking about how people perceive the ideas of creation and evolution in our day, why didn’t God do something different back in the beginning? Couldn’t he see what was coming? Could God have created in such a way as to make evolution an impossible theory? Does God seek to remove every possibility for doubt?
17. Why was the devil so determined to attack God’s creation and the Sabbath?
18. Why do you choose to believe in this story of seven 24-hour contiguous days of creation? If these are long time periods, how did the trees survive for a long time period, from “day three” until “day four” when the sun, moon, and stars were created or at least made apparent?
19. When do you think bacteria and viruses were created? Did God create destructive bacteria and viruses? Are there some forms of life which have been modified by the devil’s activity? What do we learn from the creation account that might affect our stewardship of the planet earth and God’s other creatures?

20. Look particularly at the verses describing the creation of animals in contrast to the creation of man and woman. (Genesis 1:24-27; 2:7,19, 21-23) What do these differences signify?
21. Why was Eve created in a very different way than Adam? Was Eve an afterthought or was she the crowning act of God's creation? Was she somehow different than Adam?
22. Which do you believe would be more difficult: 1) to create all the creatures here on this earth or, 2) to create a system of DNA and RNA to perfectly reproduce them again and again?
23. How much adaptability is built into the DNA system? Is this the explanation for the finches on the Galápagos islands? Why do you think animals were given reproductive power and yet no choice. Why did they have to suffer because of man's sin?
24. The rebellion of Satan in heaven occurred before the creation of man here on earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) Do you believe that our world was created at least partly in answer to Satan's accusations against God? Can you give some examples? Satan had accused God of refusing to share his creative power. What did Satan have to say after creation week? Satan had accused God of being selfish. Did the creation of our world and the Garden of Eden and our first parents say anything about God's attitude toward his other creatures?
25. What does the Bible mean when it says that man and woman were created in the image of God? (Gen. 1:26) Do we look like him/them? Or is it that we have freedom, the ability to choose?
26. If you believe there was something here on earth before creation week began, how do you believe it got here?
27. What is the significance of using a rib from Adam to create Eve? Was it God's intention that men should regard women as their equals? Why was it necessary for God to emphasize that idea?
28. What was God's plan for Adam and Eve?

When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. "God created man in His own image." (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe—the "wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—invited man's study. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator's glory. {*Education* 15.1}

29. Is this still true about us? Given everything you know about science, does the plan of salvation and the creation of our world by God in seven literal days make more scientific sense or does the theory of evolution with its long periods of time and gradual change seem to make more scientific sense?

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Appendix:

“Heaven and Earth. In a tablet cataloging the Sumerian gods, the sea goddess Nammu is described as “the mother, who gave birth to heaven and earth.” In another text she is described as “the mother, the ancestress, who gave birth to all the gods.” Evidently the Sumerians looked upon the primeval sea as the first cause and prime mover of all things, believing that “the heaven and earth” were somehow engendered in that sea. Moreover, in their view the major components of the universe were heaven and earth; their term for universe was a compound word meaning “heaven-earth” (exactly as in the opening verse of the Book of Genesis, where “heavens and earth” designate the entire organized universe). Before Enlil, the air god, separated them, heaven-earth was conceived of as a mountain whose base was the earth and whose peak was heaven.

Enlil, called “the king of heaven and earth” or “the king of all the lands,” was the most important of the Sumerian gods. His creative work in organizing the earth is celebrated in “The Creation of the Pickax,” which describes his fashioning and dedicating that valuable agricultural instrument. In part it reads:

Enlil, who brings up the seed of the land from the earth,
Took care to move away heaven from earth,
Took care to move away earth from heaven.
...He brought the pickax into existence, the “day” came forth,
He introduced labor, decreed the fate,
Upon the pickax and basket he directs the “power.”
Thus Enlil separated heaven from earth, brought seed to fruition, and fashioned the pickax for agriculture.

Sun and Moon. The Sumerians believed that their city Nippur was inhabited by the gods even before the moon and sun existed. One Sumerian myth describes the creation of moon and sun. The “old woman” of Nippur, Nunbarshegunu, preens her daughter Ninlil and teaches her how to win the air god Enlil’s affection. Ninlil succeeds, but Enlil’s advances terrify her. She refuses him, and Enlil then rapes her. Scandalized by that misdeed, the gods banish Enlil to the netherworld (the place of the dead). Ninlil, now pregnant by him with the moon god Nanna, follows him into exile. Regretting that their child, the moon, will thus become a denizen of the gloomy netherworld rather than the sky, Enlil impregnates Ninlil with three other children. Those offspring take up residence as netherworld deities as a substitute for their brother Nanna, the moon god. Freed, Nanna ascends to heaven, where he and his mate Ningal become parents of Utu, the sun god.

Civilization. The water god Enki was also god of the abyss and wisdom. Although Enlil drew up “blueprints” for the universe, Enki did most of the work carrying them out. His efforts went beyond fashioning the natural world to initiating the most important aspects of culture and civilization. In “Enki and the World Order,” the water god makes his way to the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, the two rivers that water the sandy Mesopotamian valley, and fills them with life-giving rains and winds. Then, preparing the earth for cultivation, he “turns the hilly ground into fields, ...directs the plow and ...yoke, ...opens the holy furrows, and grows the grain in the cultivated field.” Then the god lays the foundations of houses, stables, and sheepfolds, and builds them. He fixes the “borders” and sets up boundary stones. Finally he invents weaving, called “that which is woman’s task.” Having organized the earth, Enki entrusts each place and element to a special deity.

Sumerian Eden. Another myth, “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” bears a remote resemblance to the

biblical story of the garden of Eden. The myth seems to take place before the creation of animals or humans in Dilmun, a land in the east where the gods reside—“pure,” “clean,” “most bright,” and probably without sickness or death. Having filled that land with fruitful fields, Enki successively impregnates three goddesses: Ninhursag, “the mother of the land”; Nimmu, his daughter by that union; and Ninkurra, his granddaughter by Nimmu.

Ninhursag seems to use Enki’s semen to make eight new plants. Evidently they are “forbidden fruit,” because when Enki eats them, Ninhursag curses him and leaves the garden, adding, “Until he is dead I shall not look upon him with the eye of life.” Under the curse, the garden languishes and the gods mourn. Enlil, the king of the gods, seems unable to cope with the situation. Enki lies dying. The fox, evidently already present in Dilmun, saves the day by luring Ninhursag back to Dilmun, where she heals Enki and revives the garden.

Humankind. Regarded as the mother of all gods, Ninhursag may have personified Earth. In “The Creation of Man,” she plays an important role along with Enki. Having come into existence before there was meat or bread for them to eat, the gods face a dilemma:

They knew not the eating of bread,
Knew not the dressing of garments,
Ate plants with their mouth like sheep,
Drank water from the ditch.

To relieve that situation Enlil and Enki fashion a cattle god and a grain goddess. Cattle and grain suddenly abound, but the gods are unable to utilize them. Something is still needed to tend the animals and make grain into bread. The gods complain to Enki and command him to create servants to take care of their needs.

Coming to their aid, Enki takes “clay that is over the abyss” and with Ninhursag oversees its fashioning into human beings who are pressed into the gods’ service, especially to make them bread. At a feast afterward Enki and Ninhursag get drunk and ineptly make several abnormal human types, including the barren woman and the eunuch. But whole or flawed, man and woman are the clay of the abyss and are related by nature to chaos. Moreover, their individual fates are decreed by the gods. That partly explains why the Mesopotamian kings ruled as gods and reigned with absolute authority. Only a god’s rule could maintain order in the state and check the human tendency toward chaos.” (*Baker’s Encyclopedia of the Bible* - Creation myths)

Enuma Elish: “In this narrative, because of a primeval contrempe, a group of young gods was threatened with destruction by Tiamat (“Sea”), who had her own group of followers. To prosecute her plan, she created a number of monsters which she put under the command of her spouse Kingu. Of the younger gods, Anshar, their king, first sent Ea and then Anu to do battle with Tiamat and her host, but both withdrew at the first glance. Marduk, Ea’s son, was persuaded to take up the cause. He, however, imposed a condition that, were he to return victorious, the existing divine government would abdicate in his favor, and this was agreed. Duly armed he set out, and after falling back at the first sight of the enemy, he recovered his nerve and advanced to victory. Immediately after victory he rearranged the universe according to the Babylonian concept of the author’s day and made Babylon the first city. In his newly built temple there he was celebrated by the gods as their king.” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*)