

## ***Health and Healing*** ***The Environment***

Lesson #5 for May 1, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 1-2:7,18-24; 3:7,17-19; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 25:34-46; Mark 2:27,28; 3:4.

1. This lesson focuses on the environment. What do we include with the term, *environment*? Who made our environment? What is His ideal plan for the environment? How should it impact our health and happiness? What do we need to do to use it correctly and protect it? In general, Christians believe that God created an almost perfect environment for our first parents. Did God know in advance that sin would come to this planet? If so, was our world made specifically to deal with the sin issue? How different would the Garden of Eden have been made if God had known in advance that sin would not enter our planet?
2. Adam and Eve, in their untainted purity, delighted in the sights and sounds of Eden. God appointed them their work in the garden, “to dress it and to keep it.” Genesis 2:15. Each day’s labor brought them health and gladness, and the happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons. {*Ministry of Healing* 261.3}

Thousands of years later, God told Moses, “You cannot see my face and live.” (Exodus 33:20; Isaiah 6:5; 1 Timothy 6:16) What had changed? How has sin changed us? This is perhaps the biggest question that is not clearly explained in Scripture. What impact did sin have on the environment? Genesis specifically mentions thorns, thistles, weeds, and an earth that would be more difficult to cultivate.

3. For thousands of years after that, there were relatively few humans living on this earth. Therefore, they had relatively little impact on their environment. But in the last 50 years, the number of humans living on planet Earth has exploded. How has this human explosion impacted our environment? What have we done to the air we breathe? To the water we drink, cook with, and bathe in? To the land that we live on? To the oceans that surround us? How much longer can we tolerate this deterioration of our environment?
4. While Christians should be particularly concerned about the environment because we believe that it is God’s gift to us, we also believe that an endpoint is coming. We believe that Jesus will come back again and re-create this earth much like it was in the beginning. By contrast, evolutionists have no endgame! As they look at the deterioration of the environment and the potential for nuclear war and environmental catastrophe, it must worry them enormously. Their only hope is that we can somehow preserve what we have; but what we have is rapidly deteriorating!
5. Does the fact that we believe Jesus is coming again soon give us permission to ignore caring for God’s gift to us—our earth?
6. Read Genesis 1-2:7; Psalm 33:6,9. Christians believe that God had and has the power to create our world by speaking it into existence. No creature can even dream of doing such a thing. The Devil desperately wishes he had that kind of power, but he does not. The Garden of Eden remained on this earth until the time of the flood. (*PP* 62.2) What did the

skeptics have to say when they went to see it?

7. God created our environment in five days, speaking into existence all sorts of things from light to birds and fish. But after creating animals on the sixth day, He paused; and with a great deal of individual attention, He sculpted the first man. The inhabitants of the universe must have been fascinated as they watched God doing that. After breathing into Adam's nostrils the breath of life—His own Spirit—God allowed Adam to survey his environment and to become a little bit acquainted with the world in which he lived. Soon, Adam realized that unlike the animals, he had no companion suited to his needs. Then, God, the consummate anesthesiologist and surgeon, gave Adam the perfect anesthesia and removed a rib from which He created woman. Then, Adam agreed that God had created for him the very best He possibly could.
8. On the seventh day of creation, God rested. Does that mean God rested His "court" case after He had finished presenting the evidence of creation? Was that intended as an opportunity for the universe to reflect on what He had done in the first six days? Is the Sabbath intended to be an opportunity for us to enjoy our environment and praise God for what He has done for us? How often do we use the Sabbath hours as an opportunity to get out and enjoy the wonders of nature? We need to focus on the best of what God has made.
9. Adam and Eve were given a perfect environment. All their work was pleasant, and God Himself made regular visits to talk with them. The angels also were frequent visitors. Adam and Eve were robed in light. Their surroundings encouraged peace and happiness. God had created an ideal home for them. It was God's plan that they should learn much about Him from that gorgeous natural environment. But then sin entered.
10. Let us remind ourselves that the Bible clearly teaches that this world belongs to God. (Psalm 19:1,2; 24:1; Colossians 1:16)
11. After we sinned, did God consider this world too good a place for us to live in? What is implied by Genesis 3:17. Did God curse the ground because of what Adam and Eve had done? Or was it somehow a natural consequence of sin? (See Genesis 5:29; Romans 8:20-22; Hebrews 6:8) Did God modify the earth for our good?
12. What has Satan done to try to destroy the meanings of the Sabbath? The Jews in Jesus' day had loaded the Sabbath with so many burdens that it was almost impossible to keep. Jesus came along and said that the Sabbath was intended for the use of man. (Mark 2:27,28; 3:4) It was a time for us to do good and not evil. It was not intended to be a burden but a blessing. It should remind us of the One who has done everything for us.
13. Did Adam and Eve really have any idea of the consequences that would result from their sin? What impact has sin had on our environment? (Genesis 3:7,17-19) How often did Adam and Eve go back to the gate of the garden and long to be back in there? Did they talk to the angels at the gate?
14. Recorded thousands of years later are the stories of people like Solomon who seemed to think that everything he owned should be covered with gold. (1 Kings 10:14-22)
15. Think of the time, effort, and expense that went into preparing burial places for the Egyptian Pharaohs who built the great pyramids! Solomon's magnificent temple and his

beautiful home were eventually torn apart at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Thus, we see that the general rule in our world has been that decay, destruction, deterioration, even exploitation have broken down and scattered the resources that God has left us.

16. Now, fast-forward to our day. Because we are such small individuals in relation to the size of our planet, we sometimes forget that our planet—with the exception of the sunshine that we receive through space—must be a self-contained unit. The exchange of heat must be almost perfectly balanced to support life as we know it. The water we use must be recycled again and again and again. As we breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide, the plants breathe in the carbon dioxide and replace the oxygen. It was God's intent that there should be a perfect balance. What are the most serious things we have done to upset that balance?
17. In about the last half-century, we have developed the capacity to destroy life on this planet. How long do you think it will be before we would destroy ourselves if God does not step in? There are enough nuclear weapons to destroy our world multiple times over.
18. Read 1 Corinthians 4:9. Our little world is the theater of the universe. What is the universe learning about us from our use of the environment? Do any of the other worlds in the universe have environmental problems?
19. What are the major areas of our responsibility that we see in the environment around us?
  - 1) First of all, we are responsible to the other people that share our planet.
  - 2) We are responsible for the relatively small amount of pure, clean water that we must share with all other living creatures.
  - 3) Our world can only produce a certain amount of food. It has been estimated that it requires ten times as much space and resources to produce a pound of nutrition in the form of meat as it does to produce a pound of food in vegetarian form. Do developed nations have the right to demand that huge overexpenditure of the earth's resources to satisfy their appetites?
  - 4) God has provided incredible ways of purifying our air. We should thank Him for that. But, are we producing so much pollution that we are poisoning our atmosphere? What can we do to reduce the hazards in our environment?
  - 5) When there is a good balance between animal life and plant life, oxygen and carbon dioxide are kept in good balance. Because of the explosion of the human population, plants are being cut down, burned, used, and not being replaced sufficiently. As a consequence, we are seeing a buildup of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. What are the potential hazards of that? Are these issues so enormous that we as individuals just have to throw up our hands and say there is really nothing that we can do?
20. Read Matthew 25:34-46. In the judgment God will judge each one of us based on how we have treated others. Does that include the ways in which we use or abuse our environment? Do those of us who know the biblical history of our world have a greater responsibility for the environment than those who are ignorant of that history? Should creationists be more environmentally-friendly than evolutionists? What kind of world are we passing on to our children?
21. The sun is an enormously powerful energy source that keeps our world fueled. Sunlight not

only has enormous benefits but also poses a potentially serious hazard. Many ancient cultures recognized the benefits that the sun gives us, and they worshiped it. (2 Kings 23:1-5; Jeremiah 8:1,2; Ezekiel 8:16) Worship of the sun had become so rampant just before the Babylonian captivity that people were worshipping the sun right in Solomon's Temple!

22. Let us review some of the positive and negative benefits of sunlight. Too much sun exposure can produce skin cancers. On the other hand, we all need the vitamin D that can be produced in our skin using sunlight and its energy. How much sunlight should we get? For lighter-skinned people in relatively tropical environments, five minutes a day is adequate. Darker-skinned people may need up to 30 minutes a day to produce the same amount of vitamin D. As we get older, we produce less and less vitamin D in our skin. Some research suggests that after the age of 55, we produce almost no vitamin D at all. Americans have become so conscious of the hazards of skin cancer that the excessive use of sun blockers, etc., has resulted in an epidemic of vitamin D deficiency. Very few Americans today are getting enough vitamin D. It is almost impossible to get too much vitamin D from natural sources.
23. Sunlight also kills bacteria. It is one of the very best ways of preventing the spread of tuberculosis. The tuberculosis bacteria is exquisitely sensitive to sunlight.
24. But there are many other benefits of sunshine that we do not fully understand. People who get a very limited amount of sunshine are more prone to seasonal depression or seasonal affective disorder.
25. As Christians, we are looking forward to the time when God will re-create our world. Do you think God will say anything to us about preserving the environment when He does that? How do you think God and His children who have finally returned to live with Him will celebrate their first Sabbath together? Will it be an opportunity to marvel over the fabulous environment that God has made for us? As we live our lives day by day, shouldn't we be doing the little we can do to promote a better environment as a thank you to our Creator?

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