

Health and Healing

The Atmosphere of Praise

Lesson #8 for May 22, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 1:1,2,9-12,20-26; Psalm 104:29; Daniel 5:23; Luke 15:7; Revelation 21:4.

1. This lesson focuses on the physical, spiritual, mental, and social “atmospheres” in which we live. Physically, pure air is absolutely essential for the health, the growth, and the maintenance of healthy physical bodies. A pure spiritual atmosphere is necessary for our spiritual life, growth, and maintenance. And every one of us carries with us a mental/social atmosphere that affects all around us, and they, in turn, carry atmospheres that affect us.
2. Many stories could be told about individuals and even families whose health has been destroyed or permanently damaged by living in an atmosphere polluted with cigarette smoke, carbon monoxide, or other atmospheric pollutants.
3. Anyone who has been in a situation where his oxygen or air was cut off temporarily knows how desperate the feeling is. Do we feel that same desperate hunger for the life-giving Spirit (atmosphere or air) of heaven? Remember that the word for *Spirit* in the original Hebrew and Greek is the same as the word for *wind* and *breath*. (John 3) While we may be able to survive holding our breath for a minute or two and some can do so even longer, we cannot survive even a second without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit throughout our bodies. Every biological process happens because of God’s power. (*RH*, December 2, 1890, par.15) Everyone recognizes the need of air. Why is it that so few people recognize their desperate need of the pure spiritual atmosphere that God offers?
4. Review Genesis 1. What do Genesis 1:1,2 imply about conditions on this planet before God began His creation week? Every planet in our solar system has some kind of atmosphere. Every one of those atmospheres would be deadly to human beings. In the chaotic, dark, formless mass that our earth was before creation week, was our earth covered by water? If there was no air as we know it, the water would rapidly evaporate producing a water vapor environment unless the water was all in a supercold ice form. When was the water created?
5. A few Adventist scholars have suggested that after sin and sinners are totally gone and God cleans up this earth with fire, He may show us how He created our earth the first time by going through another creation or re-creation week. Try to imagine what it would be like to watch as God once again goes step by step through that re-creation week—day one, day two, day three, etc. Would you like to see that? Would you be ready to celebrate on Sabbath?
6. Read Genesis 1:6-8 in several different translations. What actually happened on day two? Notice that during creation week, God separated the light from darkness, the waters of the firmament (air) from the waters of the oceans, and the land from water. The ancient peoples believed that there was some kind of a “dome” holding up the clouds and the waters above us and separating them from the oceans and rivers and lakes below us. Some translations call that dome the “sky.” Was it at this point that God created our perfectly balanced atmosphere? (See below)
7. Read Genesis 1:9-12. It is very clear that creation was a very orderly process. God took chaos and made beautiful order out of it. Day one (light) prepared the earth for day four

(sun, moon, and stars). Day two (atmosphere) was in preparation for day five (birds and fish). And day three (plants) was in preparation for day six (animals and man). Each of those steps was in preparation for what was coming next. Birds, fish, and animals including humans could not have survived without plants to produce oxygen—the atmosphere—and the sunlight that powers our earth. Recently, I had the privilege of spending two weeks hiking in the mountains of Patagonia at the southern tip of South America in the countries of Chile and Argentina. There are very few people living in that area, and the atmosphere is extremely refreshing and invigorating.

8. It is fascinating to remember that when God “kissed” Adam and breathed into His body the breath of life, the first human cells came to life. Every human cell living today is a direct descendent from those first cells. When God breathed that life-giving air into Adam’s lungs, He had already prepared the perfect environment—that beautiful Garden of Eden—to sustain his life. The sunlight was already in place to energize the plants to transform the carbon dioxide back into life-giving oxygen. Thus, we see that before any human being took a single breath, God had prepared the perfect environment for us spiritually, physically, and socially.
9. Air is a combination of gases in which oxygen forms about 21 percent of the total product. (Our entire atmosphere weighs about five thousand trillion tons!) Other component gases include nitrogen, argon, [water vapor (highly variable amounts), carbon dioxide, Neon,] helium, [methane, krypton,] hydrogen, [xenon] and small amounts of trace gases. The amount of oxygen in the air is the ideal percentage for the breathing requirements of the creatures God made. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, May 17, 2010) [brackets supplied to complete the list in order of quantity]
10. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that our immediate atmospheric environment was carefully tuned by God for our personal benefit.

Astronomer Hugh Ross outlines several atmospherically related conditions that must be fine-tuned in order for life to exist, such as, “23. oxygen to nitrogen ratio in atmosphere—if larger: advanced life functions would proceed too quickly; if smaller: advanced life functions would proceed too slowly. 24. carbon dioxide level in atmosphere—if greater: runaway greenhouse effect would develop; if less: plants would be unable to maintain efficient photo synthesis. . . . 28. oxygen quantity in atmosphere—if greater: plants and hydrocarbons would burn up too easily; if less: advanced animals would have too little to breathe.”—*The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1995), p. 141.
11. When God created Adam and Eve and breathed those first breaths into their nostrils and mouths, He was imparting not only the nitrogen, oxygen, etc. of this earth’s atmosphere but the power of the Holy Spirit which is the essence of the heavenly atmosphere. Those two types of atmosphere are essential for all life. (Acts 17:25)
12. All of us have had the experience of stretching and taking several deep breaths. What happens when we do that? If the air is pure and refreshing, how does that make us feel? Can you remember a time when you were outdoors—perhaps in the mountains surrounded by flowers and trees and very clean, pure air—and you took a few deep breaths? How did it make you feel? Did God intend that breathing the atmosphere of heaven would invigorate

us in the same way spiritually? How do we breathe the atmosphere of heaven?

13. Read Daniel 5:23; Psalm 104:29; 146:4; Acts 17:25. These verses make it very clear that our very breath is given to us by God. Does that include the spiritual breath as well as the physical breath?
14. Consider the many ways in which our atmosphere protects us. 1) The air—with the water vapor in it—maintains a fairly constant temperature over most of our earth. We do not have huge variations in temperature from exposure to sunlight and then darkness such as we would have if we were in outer space or as occurs on the moon. 2) We are protected from most of the harmful rays coming from the sun. Those include x-rays, cosmic rays, some types of ultraviolet (UV) rays, and probably others that we do not know about. With our earth tipped on its axis and spinning around while it circles around the sun once a year, this earth is able to provide a wide variety of congenial environments for lifeforms of various kinds to exist.
15. The healthiest environment for human beings to live in would be the garden environment that God originally put us in where there would be plenty of plants to convert the carbon dioxide which we produce back into oxygen which we can breathe again. Our lungs survive best and function best in the cleanest air possible.
16. We may not think of this often, but we are still living in the same atmosphere which God put here in Adam and Eve's day. We will pass this atmospheric environment on to our children. Doesn't this suggest that we should take more seriously the responsibility of maintaining clean, pure air for all of us to live in? What are our social and political responsibilities in that regard? Should Christians be foremost in leading movements to clean up our air? Breathing dirty air has a lot of problems connected with it: migraine headaches, nausea, vomiting, as well as eye and respiratory ailments, just to mention a few. Millions of children in our world suffer from serious respiratory problems because they grow up in small, relatively cramped quarters with open fires burning.
17. What provisions has God made for renewing the precious 21% oxygen in our atmosphere? Scientists estimate that 90% of the oxygen that the human race breathes is produced by algae in the ocean! Plants living on the land produce the other 10%. Live plants inside your home or office building can help to provide more oxygen and cleaner air.
18. What provisions has God made to clean our air? What are we doing to minimize pollution of our atmosphere? Some pollution collects in raindrops and descends to the ground. This explains things like the "acid rain" that is sometimes mentioned on the news.
19. It is generally best to exercise outside, especially early in the morning. Where possible, we should sleep with our windows open. That helps to give us good, pure blood to circulate all through our bodies. This good, clean blood supply will soothe the nerves, stimulate the appetite, and aid in digestion. It tends to assist in sound, refreshing sleep as well.
20. The lungs should be allowed the greatest freedom possible. Their capacity is developed by free action; it diminishes if they are cramped and compressed. Ill effects follow the practice so common, especially in sedentary pursuits, of stooping at one's work. In this position it is impossible to breathe deeply. Superficial breathing soon becomes a habit, and the lungs lose their power to expand.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Health and Healing*, pp. 151, 152.
21. Read Genesis 1:26. Do we still have power over the animals, etc? What does this verse

imply about our responsibility to the other creatures living on our planet. Our sin has resulted in their death. Is that fair to them? Did God give Adam and Eve any instruction on preserving the garden and the pure atmosphere there?

22. What things constitute the social environment in which each of us lives? Would that not include our attitudes, feelings, emotions, mutual support of each other, and love for our fellow humans?
23. Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 339.

What kind of atmosphere do we carry with us?

24. What kinds of things lead to pollution of our spiritual atmosphere? The radio and television environment is saturated with materialism, atheism, evolution, narcissism, pornography, etc. Is there anything we can do to improve that atmosphere? What are our responsibilities? The current news media and scientific environment is absolutely toxic towards many of our Christian beliefs.
25. How would you describe the atmosphere of heaven? Do we have any hint in the Bible about the atmosphere of heaven? Read Job 38:6-7; Psalms 103:20-22; 148:2; Luke 15:7; Revelation 21:4. Why do you think God told us, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:7, *GNB*) How much time do the angels spend praising God? What is implied by Revelation 4:8? How many things do the angels have to rejoice about? Can we help to make heaven rejoice by bringing more people to the truth?
26. To what extent can Christians begin to experience the true heavenly atmosphere right now on this earth?
27. Do those with whom you work, your family members, and those who socialize with you recognize that you have a heavenly atmosphere around you?
28. Those who espouse the great-controversy, trust-healing model of the plan of salvation firmly believe that God challenges us to be His friends. How does that impact the atmosphere—socially and spiritually—that we carry with us every day? Do people recognize us as friends of God? Do they wish they could be more like us? Could we ever say as did Paul, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ"? (1 Corinthians 11:1)

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