

Glimpses of Our God ***God as Artist***

Lesson #11 for March 17, 2012

Scriptures: Isaiah 64:5-8; Psalm 51:10; 1 Chronicles 23:5; Hebrews 8:1-5; Romans 11:33-36; Acts 9:1-22.

1. This lesson is about God as artist, sculptor, creator, author, and musician. Have you had the privilege of visiting a good zoo and observing all the different creatures that God has made? Some of the creatures that God made that live in the water are positively unbelievable. But, they fit well into their environment. Did God make each of the millions of species we now have classified?
2. Is everything that God has made beautiful by our standards? Back in the beginning, did God make anything ugly? Some people would say that a newborn baby who has been distorted by the birth process is ugly. Would you agree?
3. Have you ever thought of God as an artist, sculptor, or musician? Who gave the birds their songs? If you have ever had the opportunity to study birds, particularly in the tropical areas of the world, the colors are fantastic. And the behavior of some of those birds is also unbelievable. Is God a lover of beauty? Is everything that God has spoken or written in the Scriptures beautiful? How do you feel about the work of human artists and sculptors? Do you enjoy visiting art museums? John Keats, a famous poet, once wrote, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Would you agree with that statement? Should we have a Christian doctrine on beauty? How would beauty in art or writing or music relate to our other Christian doctrines and teachings?
4. Read Genesis 1:26,27,31; 2:7. Before creation week was finished, God molded two human beings out of raw materials. He made Adam out of clay and later Eve out of a rib. Why do you think God chose to create our first parents in that way? Did God want Adam to realize that he was a part of this world? Did He want Eve to understand that she was an integral part of Adam and of Adam's family? Don't you think that Adam and Eve were beautiful when first created? When making Adam, was God doing the work of a sculptor or a potter? God not only sculpted Adam but also breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man began to live! (Genesis 2:7) No human sculptor or potter could do that!
5. Read Jeremiah 18:3-10; Isaiah 64:5-8; Psalm 51:10. Potters were obviously very common workmen in ancient times. Everyone needed pots to cook, to store, and to carry food and other valuables. Much of the science of archaeology is based on identifying and dating broken pieces of ancient pots. When a potter is working with fresh clay, if it does not come out just the way he wants, he can mold it once again into something different. But, potters are only working with nonliving material. God wants to mold us not only in our mothers' wombs as fetuses, but also He wants to create new hearts and right spirits within us. (Psalms 51:10) If we allow God to work with us, can He produce beautiful souls? Is God more concerned about our physical appearance or about our characters?
6. God also gave very specific plans for the construction of the tabernacle which the Israelites built in the wilderness. He may also have given most of the plans for Solomon's temple. Much of the last half of the book of Exodus and a number of other chapters in the Old Testament describe God as a kind of architect. Read Exodus 25:1-9. In what form do you think the plan was that God gave to Moses? Did He expect Moses to remember all the details? Or, was there some actual plan written out or drawn in some form? Did Moses make notes?
7. It is clear that God appreciates good workmanship because He endowed certain men with special skills to work on that tabernacle; and for many generations later, their descendants

apparently retained some or most of those skills. (2 Chronicles 2:13,14)

8. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have sometimes suggested that the pattern of the Old Testament tabernacle was taken from the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary. The book of Revelation seems to suggest that. But surely, there will not be any altar of burnt offering in heaven. No animals will die in heaven. No dead sacrifices will be offered in heaven. Will there be some kind of an altar in heaven for some different purpose? Apparently, God was concerned about the details of the tabernacle because there is more information and there are more details about the building of the sanctuary in the wilderness than anything else in the writings of Moses.
9. The tent-tabernacle in the wilderness was made by skillful hands and probably was very beautiful. It was also portable. But, how many of the people ever got an opportunity to see inside? Were they able to look around the altars in the courtyard and see a little of what was inside the tabernacle? Apparently, God was happy with the results of the construction of the tent-tabernacle because when it was finished and properly dedicated, His glory filled the tabernacle; and not even Moses could go inside. (Exodus 40:34,35)
10. But, God not only gave details about the building of the tent, but also He gave instructions for the music to be used in connection with the services. And that is not all! He gave detailed directions about the clothing and attire of the priests.
11. In the days of David, there were 38,000 priests assigned to serve in the Temple. (1 Chronicles 23:1-5) David broke them up into about 24 different groups. Each group would serve for about half a month each year. 1 Chronicles 23:5 tells us that 4000 of those men praised the Lord on musical instruments. What kind of musical instruments were available in those days? The shofar was a kind of trumpet made out of an animal horn. Did they have a way of shaping or cutting those horns so that they would be in tune? Concerning the division of the labor throughout the year, read 1 Chronicles 24:7-18; 25:9-31.
12. There are a number of different authors and poets credited with writing Psalms. They spanned the time from Moses (Psalm 90) to the Babylonian captivity. (Psalm 137) Look at what David said about how God directed him in writing psalms. (2 Samuel 23:1,2) What role do you think God played in inspiring David to write such music?
13. Read 2 Chronicles 29:25-26. Apparently, God had given him instructions about the use of harps, symbols, and trumpets and probably other instruments as well. Do we have any idea what kind of music they composed? If God were composing music today, what kind of music would He compose? Would He only use stringed instruments? Or, only brass? Would He use drums and cymbals? Would he use guitars?
14. The kind of music that is appropriate for use in worship services is a very contentious subject. The type of music we like tends to be related to our age! Are there any kinds of music that God does not like? Surely, no one can deny the fact that poets and musicians have an important role in preparing materials for use in our worship services.
15. God also inspires literary beauty. There are many statements in the Bible suggesting that God spoke to prophets and to apostles. When a prophet said something like, "The Lord spoke to me" or "Thus saith the Lord God," were those actual quotations from God? Or, are they simply the prophet restating in his own language what God told him? In either case, wouldn't we call it the word of God? How did God put ideas into the heads of His prophets?
16. Literary scholars have created courses being taught in universities around the world considering the literary qualities of the Bible. They may not believe that the Bible is inspired at all, but they recognize it as great literature. Meanwhile, the Devil has done everything possible to destroy or corrupt the Bible. Much of the Bible is in the form of Hebrew poetry. Was God responsible for that? What about all the chiasms and acrostics: for example, Psalm

119. Psalm 119 is an acrostic in which the first eight verses begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the next eight verses begin with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and so forth, right through the entire Hebrew alphabet. To construct such a poetic device required incredible skill from the author or poet.

17. The entire book of Revelation and the book of The Song of Solomon each form a large chiasm. A chiasm is a literary device in which the author begins with an introduction and goes deeper and deeper into the subject until he comes to his main point in the center of his discourse; and then, he retraces his steps back out, matching section for section until he comes to the epilogue which reflects the introduction in some way. In the book of Revelation, there are seven different scenes each with seven parts; and the central point in Revelation is the great controversy as presented in Revelation 12-14.
18. Read Romans 11:33-36. The Scriptures were written at the direction of God. In effect, they were created by Him and exist through and for Him.
19. When God molded Adam—and later Eve—into beautiful human beings, how much information did He plant in their brains? Obviously, they knew—or very quickly learned—how to speak some language. They knew how to interact with each other. They knew how to communicate with God. They appreciated what God had made for them. Was it more difficult for God to create beautiful, perfect human beings in the beginning, or to try to re-create beautiful human beings from sinful deteriorated human beings in our day? Can God make something beautiful out of something ugly?
20. Consider some of the times when God took people who were far from perfect and made saints out of them. Read the stories of Jacob (Genesis 32:22-30), David (2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51; 32), Peter (Luke 22:31,32), and Paul (Acts 9:1-22).
21. One of the most amazing stories of transformation in the Bible is the story of Mary Magdalene.
22. Mary had been looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that had shaped her life. He might have extinguished every spark of hope in her soul, but He did not. It was He who had lifted her from despair and ruin. Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf. She knew how offensive is sin to His unsullied purity, and in His strength she had overcome. {DA 568.1}

When to human eyes her case appeared hopeless, Christ saw in Mary capabilities for good. He saw the better traits of her character. The plan of redemption has invested humanity with great possibilities, and in Mary these possibilities were to be realized. Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 568.
23. In the story of Mary, we find that God took a human being who had been degraded to the level of demon-possession and transformed her into a close associate of Himself. He made her a person of the highest moral character. That is far more complicated than chiseling stone or clay.
24. Are we willing to let God mold and chisel us? Do we want to be potters? Or, are we willing to be the clay in God's hands? What would God like to make out of you?

Let the converting power of God be experienced in the heart of the individual members, and then we shall see the deep moving of the Spirit of God. Mere forgiveness of sin is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice not only that sin might be removed, but that human nature might be restored, *re-beautified*, reconstructed from its ruins, and made fit for the presence of God.—Ellen G. White, *5T* 537.1; *3SM* 154.1.

25. How much of a role do parents play in molding the characters of their children? Do they shape their personalities, even their Christianity? Don't we as parents stand in the place of God for our children when they are young? Didn't God intend for each one of us to be perfectly formed as children, mirroring the pattern that Jesus showed us when He was on this earth? How do we accomplish that?
26. Is beauty—whether it is in nature, music, architecture, the written word, or even in human beings—intended to teach us something about God? Doesn't God love beauty? Why do you suppose He spent so much time and effort giving details about the construction of that tent-tabernacle in the wilderness? How does it affect us when we are faced with something truly beautiful in any sphere? Is true beauty uplifting?
27. What tools does God use to mold our characters? See *Great Controversy*, p. 555. Do we give God the opportunity to interact with us and affect our characters?
28. Read 1 Peter 2:9. God intends each one of us to be a part of His chosen nation, His royal priesthood, a very special person.
29. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* suggests that the entire great controversy is about who we as human beings will choose to worship. What is implied by such an idea? Do we automatically worship the supernatural being that we believe is telling us the truth? The core issue in the great controversy is, "Who is telling us the truth?"
30. Read Exodus 40:34,35 and 2 Chronicles 5:13,14. When these first two temples were constructed and were ready to be dedicated, God filled them with His glory so that not even Moses or the priests could enter them for a while. But, read Haggai 2:9 (*GNB*): "'The new Temple will be more splendid than the old one, and there I will give my people prosperity and peace.' The LORD Almighty has spoken." See also *Prophets and Kings* 597.1,2 which suggests that Jesus' teaching and healing made that temple so glorious.
31. While the beauty and decorations in the first two temples were, no doubt, attractive and impressive, God was more impressed by the quiet, but persuasive teaching of the humble Galilean sitting in the temple courtyard and speaking the truths of the gospel to hungering souls.
32. Would it be correct to say that an accurate presentation of the truth about God—spoken in a quiet, yet knowledgeable and persuasive way so that people are drawn to God—would be one of the most beautiful things that God could behold? Don't you suppose that the entire universe was listening every time Jesus sat down to teach the crowds who gathered around Him? Could we ever come even close to doing that in our day? Are we giving serious thought to how we can best represent God to all those with whom we associate?

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