

Glimpses of Our God ***Creation Care***

Lesson #8 for February 25, 2012

Scriptures: 2 Peter 3:10-14; Romans 1:25; Psalm 100; Hebrews 1:3; Genesis 2:15; Nehemiah 13:16-19; Genesis 1:26-28.

1. This lesson is about the home that God made for us to live in. In Genesis 1:26-28, we are told that human beings were supposed to have dominion over all other creatures and to care for them even in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden.
2. Should Seventh-day Adventists become environmental activists? If we believe that God created this earth (the rock globe), this world (the surface environment where we live), and all the creatures that live here, shouldn't we be more concerned about what happens to those creatures than the concern expressed by people who believe that the creatures and they themselves came into existence by pure random chance? Theoretically, evolutionists believe that new species are being created all the time! Isn't destruction of older species and the production of newer species an essential part of the evolutionary process? Isn't that what is meant when we say "survival of the fittest"? If all living things came from an original single cell, how many millions of species have evolved from that first cell? According to evolutionists, isn't that process supposed to be ongoing? By contrast, creationists believe that God created all the different "kinds" back in the beginning and all current species have descended from those original kinds.
3. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus is coming soon. It is even part of our name. In fact, the coming of Jesus has been delayed by us and by our ancestors!

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and **Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.** But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith. . . . Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of [696] God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history! {*Ev* 695.3 - written in 1883}

In the quotation above, notice that Ellen White was referring to all the "adventists" that thought Jesus was coming back in 1844, not to the Seventh-day Adventist Church which was not organized until many years later. The fact that Jesus has not come yet is evidence that none of the generations that have lived since that time have been ready either! (See Matthew 24:14; 2 Peter 3:10-12; *Evangelism* 694-697)

4. Does this quotation mean that "adventists" and Seventh-day Adventists are responsible for all be environmental destruction, all the wars, and all the evil that has occurred since 1883? Is it possible that the quickest way to deal with the environmental problems of our world is to finish the gospel so Jesus can return soon, very soon?
5. One of the major causes of environmental destruction in our world today is the consumption of meat and animal products. It is estimated that 17 billion livestock live in our

world. That is 2½ times the number of people. According to the Water Education Foundation, it takes 2464 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of beef in California. Only 25 gallons of water are needed to produce 1 pound of wheat. Forty percent of the fresh water used in the United States in the year 2000 went to irrigate crops for livestock. Only 13% was used for domestic purposes. According to David Pimentel from Cornell University, 40 calories of fossil fuel are needed to produce 1 calorie of protein from feedlot beef while only 2 calories of fossil fuel are needed to produce 1 calorie of protein in the form of tofu. A meat diet is a very inefficient use of fresh water, fossil fuels, land, etc.

6. Billions of tons of topsoil are being lost in the process of producing feed for livestock. It is estimated that half of the topsoil from the state of Iowa has been lost in the last 100 years. According to the Rainforest Action Network (dealing with the Amazon Basin), one football field of rain forest is being destroyed every second of every day. Most of this is to produce and raise livestock. Fifty-five square feet of tropical rain forest are destroyed to make every fast food hamburger which is made from rain-forest cattle.
7. The waste products from livestock are one of the largest single causes of greenhouse gases and environmental pollution. In the Gulf of Mexico, there is a 7000 square mile dead zone where there is no aquatic life, reportedly due to pollution from animal waste and chemical fertilizers.
8. Ammonia and methane produced by livestock are one of the major causes of greenhouse gases. Methane is a 21 times more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. (See www.vegetariantimes.com/features/ft_eco_living/574)
9. So, how should Seventh-day Adventists relate to all of this? The church has produced a statement about environmentalism for Adventists. (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, February 20)
10. One of the prime causes for environmental destruction is the incessant drive to make more money. How should Seventh-day Adventists relate to that issue? As mentioned in the statement noted above about environmentalism for Adventists, are we just another part of “unbridled consumerism, goods-getting, and the production of waste”?
11. We believe that God made this earth. He created man and told us to multiply and care for this earth and all of its creatures. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus sustains our universe. Are we directly fighting against Him when we damage or destroy our environment? To what extent are we personally responsible for global warming, environmental destruction, etc.? It has been suggested that 90% of the carbon dioxide is converted back to oxygen by the plankton in the ocean. If we are not going to focus on the environment, we had better focus on evangelism! What are we supposed to do about these “ethical and social issues” in our world? To compare, Paul lived in a world dominated by slavery. If he had attacked slavery directly, he would have been taken straight to prison. Instead, he wrote the letter of Philemon which would eliminate slavery if it was followed fully.
12. Jesus Himself told us that our first responsibility is to love God and our second responsibility is to love other human beings. (See Matthew 22:37-40) Can we claim to be doing that if we are destroying the environment that God created and in which we live? Genesis 2:15 clearly suggests that we are supposed to care for our environment. The Hebrew word *SMR* translated “keep it” suggests “to watch” over, “to preserve,” and “to protect.”
13. Read Proverbs 27:20. Will there ever be a time when human greed comes under control?

People always want more. And where does that more come from? Ultimately, it has to come from this earth.

14. One way in which we could reduce our impact upon the earth is to correctly observe the seventh-day Sabbath. If we stopped doing business on that day and everyone rested, a significant reduction in the use of the earth's resources would result.
15. What would happen if we as a human family were to follow the advice in Leviticus 25 and allow the soil to rest one year out of seven? The ancient Hebrews were given very specific instructions about re-balancing the financial situation every seven years and again every 50 years. How would such a program impact our world today and our environment?
16. Read Genesis 1:26-28. What does it mean to have power or dominion over the fish, the birds, and all animals—domestic and wild? Does this mean we have the right to destroy them in any way and for whatever reason we choose? Could we actually throw off the balance of nature by destroying some essential links in the food chain? What did God originally intend when He said that we should “replenish the earth”? Was that talking about human population growth sufficient to dominate all other species? Surely, it was not supposed to include wholesale destruction of the beautiful world God had made. In the Serengeti parks in Tanzania, there are 400,000 baby wildebeest born every year. If there were no predators to control those numbers, the parks would be stripped of everything green and they all the plant-eating animals would die within about two years. Predation may be violent; but, it is necessary.
17. How has the introduction of sin changed this command from God to replenish the earth?

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing [21] to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 20, 21.

18. Is it possible that some of the events described as the seven last bowls of God's anger or the seven last plagues could be a result of environmental destruction? (Revelation 16) Our world is our home. We do not have the option of leaving it and living somewhere else. For this reason, we need to care for it.
19. What environmental issues are important to you? Are there some local issues involving cleaning up the environment or preserving valuable resources in which you could be involved? Do we as individuals have any responsibility for the larger issues such as global warming and greenhouse gases?
20. Read Psalm 8; 24:1,2; 100; Revelation 14:7. In what way does nature praise God? Aren't Adventists claiming that the three angels' messages are our message to the world? Don't those messages include honoring our Creator? Does that involve caring for what He has

created? In what way does nature reveal a correct picture of God? Does God expect us still to find Him in nature? (Romans 1:20)

21. Sigve K. Tonstad suggests that we should expand our notions of Sabbathkeeping to include “creation-keeping.” Are we sufficiently in tune with nature and our environment so as to at least not thoughtlessly destroy natural resources?
22. The Scriptures make it clear that our world will eventually be destroyed by fire. (2 Peter 3:10-14; Revelation 21:1-5) What kind of changes do you think that will produce on our earth? Will God completely wipe out this earth and world in order to make a new one? Certainly, He will eliminate all traces of sin and disease.
23. How do your understanding of revelation and inspiration affect your relation to nature? We describe nature as God’s second book. Do you see a conflict between God as He is revealed in nature and God as He is revealed in Scripture? Does our destruction and exploitation of nature have anything to do with that?
24. “Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love.”—Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 9. In what ways can you see the picture of God being the same in nature as it is in Scripture?
25. The Adventist Health Study in its various components since the 1970s has demonstrated that vegetarianism and the Adventist diet as described by Ellen White can extend a person’s life by as much as 12 years over the general population. If vegetarianism is a huge advantage for the environment and also a huge advantage for us in terms of our health, why isn’t it more widely adopted? Why do people choose to eat meat? Adventists have often spoken up in favor of vegetarianism primarily because of how we read Scripture and understand the writings of Ellen White. Should we be speaking more openly about the environmental impact of meat-eating?
26. What steps could you as an individual take that would not only improve your own health and life but also the environment around you? Is it reasonable for us to take such steps?
27. Do you feel at least partially responsible for the delay in the coming of Jesus Christ? Are you doing everything that you can do to finish the gospel? What more could you do? Our call is to worship the Creator rather than the creature. Let us finish the gospel! Maranatha.

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Last Modified: December 30, 2011

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