

Origins

Sabbath: A Gift from Eden

Lesson #11 for March 16, 2013

Scriptures: Genesis 2:1-3; Job 38:7; Hebrews 4:3,4; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Ezekiel 20:12; Mark 2:27,28; 2 Peter 3:3-7.

1. In this lesson we will focus on some of the many reasons why we celebrate the Sabbath. That first Sabbath in the Garden of Eden was certainly a day of celebration for the entire universe. Look what had been accomplished during the preceding week. It was a celebration of God's seventh day. It was our first full day. It was a celebration of all that God had accomplished throughout the universe, and everyone was celebrating. Certainly, it was not limited to one group of people or one nation, and it should never be called "the Jewish Sabbath."
2. If we can fully understand all that God intended for the Sabbath to mean, it should be no surprise that we will continue to celebrate the Sabbath for the rest of eternity. Thousands of years later from the top of Mount Sinai, God reminded us that we keep the Sabbath because of what He did at creation. Coming out of more than 100 years of slavery, the Hebrew people had almost forgotten what God had done for them and what He wanted from them.
3. Read Genesis 2:1-3. Having created a marvelous new world with the crown jewel called the Garden of Eden, God stopped His work to celebrate. And that same Garden of Eden has been preserved and will become the centerpiece of God's future home forever here on planet earth. Realizing all of that, what possible reason could there be for not celebrating? The seventh-day Sabbath is very clearly a reminder of God's action in our world. And there was no reason for the Sabbath to be created if those first six days were not true 24-hour days like the ones we know every day. And as we have studied in the past, that truth is recognized throughout all of Scripture. (See Hebrews 4:3,4) There is no hint in Scripture of theistic evolution.
4. Why do so many doubt the seven-day creation week? They demand scientific evidence that the record is true. There is no such thing as scientific evidence for something that happened in the past. There are only two ways that a six-day creation week could be "proven": show a video, or do it over again. In either case, the skeptics would claim that the evidence was not enough or that it had been altered! (Macroevolution cannot be proven either!)

The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith.—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 169. (Compare *Steps to Christ* 105)

5. Skeptics say that the first 11 chapters of Genesis talk of things which are in the impenetrable past. Thus, they call them myths—they cannot be verified. So, why do we choose to believe those records as established facts? Do we have adequate reasons for our faith? Can God be trusted? Do we believe the biblical record? Or, should we believe the Devil's claims? Why is he called the "father of lies"? (John 8:44) The Sabbath was established specifically to allow us time to evaluate all the evidence that God has so generously provided.

Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the

Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, "Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." [Revelation 14:7] It follows that the message which commands men to worship God and keep His commandments will especially call upon them to keep the fourth commandment. (GC 437.2)

6. There are those who try to cast doubt on the importance of the fourth commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:8-11 by quoting Deuteronomy 5:12-15. When Moses repeated the command to keep the Sabbath, he gave a different reason for doing so. Why did he do that? Had Moses forgotten what God had told him at Sinai? At the end of Deuteronomy, we are told: "Moses was 120 years old when he died; he was as strong as ever, and his eyesight was still good." (Deuteronomy 34:7, *GNB*) With that kind of ringing testimony, how could we doubt Moses' memory? What happened in Deuteronomy 5 was that Moses was adding to the reasons why we should keep sacred the seventh-day Sabbath. God is not only the One who created us, but also He is the One who saves us, delivers us, and redeems us. He had just liberated the children of Israel from Egypt. Why shouldn't they celebrate that on the Sabbath? Moses was reminding the children of Israel that they belonged to the Lord, first by creation, but then also by redemption. God not only created but also He predicts the future. (Isa. 40-55)
7. Read Ezekiel 20:12 and Exodus 31:13. In these verses it should be clear that God has wonderful plans for us. He wants each one of us to be a part of His personal private property. He wants to make us holy to become more and more like Himself. What is needed to bring that about? Faith is our part; transformation and sanctification are God's part as He works with us and in us. (Exodus 19:5,6; 1 Peter 2:9; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Titus 2:14)
8. But, that is not the last time God has given us additional reasons to celebrate the Sabbath. After dying that terrible death of separation and crucifixion on Calvary, Jesus was laid in the grave while all in the universe were already celebrating. But, God chose to allow Him to lie there in the grave over the Sabbath hours to give additional meaning to its sacredness. Salvation will eternally be linked with the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath.
9. As we have noted in previous lessons, our very existence, even our ability to take a breath and for our hearts to keep beating are dependent upon God's power. (Acts 17:25,28) Every Sabbath, we are to celebrate that fact. Jesus Himself made it clear that the Sabbath was made for us. (Mark 2:27,28) And Jesus reminds us that as our elder Brother, the Firstborn of the human race, He is Lord also of the Sabbath, a time of special association with Him.
10. Think of all you know about the conflicts that Jesus entered into over the keeping of the Sabbath. It is important to notice that there is never a mention of whether or not the Sabbath is a valid celebration of God's sovereignty. The many conflicts He entered into—in opposition particularly to the Pharisees—were always about how to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath is intended to be a day of blessing in celebration of the relief of pain and suffering and certainly not as an excuse for prolonging suffering. He showed us how to keep the Sabbath.
11. Read Matthew 12:9-13; Luke 13:10-17; and John 5:1-17. Each of these miracles was performed on the Sabbath, and these were individuals who had suffered with their problems for long periods of time. These miracles were not "emergency surgery"! Jesus intentionally performed these miracles on the Sabbath as a way of saying to us exactly what He wants us to be doing on the Sabbath. So, how do you keep the seventh-day Sabbath? How should we celebrate God's creation? We cannot perform miracles, but we can relieve suffering.
12. Would it be a correct understanding of God's plan for the Sabbath to have us not only worship Him but also to work for the poor and the sick and to study our Bibles with others to improve our mutual knowledge about God and even to witness to others about our faith?
13. Read 2 Peter 3:3-7. Was God through Peter trying to give us a glimpse of what the arguments of skeptics would be in our day? It is hard to imagine how the arguments of evolutionists could

have been more clearly stated in Peter's day! They deny the flood, and they deny the creation story. Of course, the bottom line is that they deny God's direct miraculous interventions in the events of our world. And as we know historically, the same people deny virtually any miraculous occurrence throughout Scripture. It is pretty clear that by denying one miracle in Scripture, one is on a slippery slope to denying all the other miracles.

14. Read Revelation 14:6-12. What is God's response at the end of time to all this skepticism and doubting? God has chosen a people to give to the world His last final terrible warning about the consequences of sin. We are to remind the world that God is Creator. The fact that we recognize Him as our Creator makes it easier for us to look forward to His final actions in the history of our world. Surely, no one would suggest that the events in the book of Revelation could all take place without God's intervention in any way!
15. So, what about it? Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church—are we—clearly giving the three angels' messages to the world? Do we owe it to the world to tell them about the judgments that are coming? Are we embarrassed to speak up for the truth of the Sabbath—to speak up on behalf of the God we worship? We need to remember that the good news is not about us, or even about our church; the good news is about God! And there are plenty of good things we can say about God.
16. And so, at the end of time, we will see that there will be two days proposed on which men are to worship. On the one hand, the Sabbath—linked to all that God has accomplished throughout history—versus Sunday which is the substitute day of worship on the other. Satan knows that any group of people who correctly and fully celebrate the seventh-day Sabbath will be able to resist his power. No wonder he works so unceasingly at attacking the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath. The Devil certainly understands that if he can lead us to doubt the truthfulness of a seven-day creation week and especially if he can get us to doubt the entire creation story, our reasons for keeping the Sabbath are seriously compromised.
17. Read Psalm 92. Do we give praise to God and celebrate every week when the Sabbath arrives? Or, are we more thankful when it is over? What do we learn from this Sabbath Psalm? The author was clearly celebrating the Sabbath day. He was praising and thanking God for His loving kindness and faithfulness and the fact that He would sustain the righteous and eventually eliminate the wicked. In this context, it is important to notice that God's judgment is not just against the wicked but it is in favor of the righteous. (Compare Daniel 7:20-28) Do you think that the psalmist was thinking about our time when he said that the righteous will flourish, but the wicked will perish? Or, is that a celebration of the future judgment? How many things can you think of as reasons why we should celebrate the Sabbath? Is this a special family day for you? Is it a time when you can lay aside your weekly responsibilities? Is it a time when you can worship the God you love? Is it a time when you can get out of doors and perhaps enjoy the God that created the nature around us?
18. In the three angels' messages, God is reminding us of where we came from, of the creation story, and of the history of sin which began even before our world was created with rebellion in heaven followed by the creation of this earth and the tragedy of sin. We are encouraged to see God's action behind all of human history, and that should cause us to think of the great controversy. When we look around us, it may appear that the Devil is winning; but, taking a longer view of history, we are guaranteed that God has won and will win in the end.

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently

working out the counsels of His own will. (*Education* 173.2)

19. Surely, it was no accident that Charles Darwin wrote his book on the origin of species in the very year, 1844, when hundreds of thousands of people were looking forward to the second advent of Jesus. From that day to this, there has been a conflict—a war—over ideas. How could some of us who should believe in creation ever adopt the ideas of evolution?
20. As science gets ever more detailed in its description of how a cell works and the intricate mechanisms that make life possible, it becomes more and more difficult to believe that all of that could have happened by accident. Theistic evolution which claims to be based on science is finding that science is making it impossible to believe in theistic evolution.
21. So, what was God's original plan for the Sabbath? How did they celebrate the Sabbath in the Garden of Eden? Was that a time when God came down to spend some extra quality time with His two new children? If that was the case, don't you think that must have been the best day of the week for Adam and Eve? If God is a God of love, (1 John 4:8,16) wouldn't it seem very natural that He would create beings designed for intimate fellowship with Himself? Do you find each Sabbath day that you are more in tune with God? The Sabbath is so much more than just a day to collapse and recuperate from a too-busy week. The Sabbath should be the queen of the week. It should be a time for us to rethink our priorities. It should be a time for us to embrace the truths that we hold founded on Genesis 1-11 and not to be relegating them to some kind of myth or fable status. Or, do you think it is possible to eliminate Genesis 1-11 and still believe in the rest of Scripture?
22. Sometimes it is suggested that the seven-day week was designed into our very DNA. That is, we need one day a week to collapse and rest to recover from what we have done the rest of the week. But, we were created for intimate fellowship with God and not just for maximum production efficiency. Why would anyone want to give up a time of fellowship with God?
23. In those Sabbath celebrations in Eden, do you think some of the angels came along with God to celebrate with Adam and Eve? Did the angel choir sing for them? We need to remember that the Sabbath was our first full 24-hour day. Adam and Eve were not there during the first 5½ days of creation week. By faith, they had to accept God's explanation of what had happened. When they looked around at the beautiful Garden of Eden, did they have any questions about God's ability to create such a garden in a brief period of time? Did they have any problem accepting God's explanation of the how, when, or why of their Edenic home?
24. Look at the Christian world around you. How do they celebrate their Sunday as compared to how you celebrate your Sabbath? Do you celebrate your Sabbath from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night? Are you thankful for every minute you have with the Lord during those sacred hours? How do your Christian friends celebrate their Sunday? Do they rush home from church to watch the football game? Is Sabbath a way to enhance our intimate fellowship with God?
25. The celebration of the Sabbath should begin each Sunday and build all week long toward the actual day. Are we living and acting all week long like the kind of people who are God's faithful people? Christian growth and development are what is needed for us to overcome our natural selfishness and the desire to lord it over others. Hasn't every one of us who has brothers or sisters experienced sibling rivalry? We need to grow up and become mature enough to reach out to others in love and care instead of enhancing our superiority over them at every opportunity as suggested by the evolutionary process. Which day will you choose? And, why?

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Last modified: February 13, 2013

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