

## *Origins* **Creation and the Gospel**

Lesson #12 for March 23, 2013

Scriptures: Genesis 3:21; Psalm 104:29,30; John 1:4; Romans 5:6-11; Galatians 3:13; Matthew 27:46.

1. This lesson will focus on the relationship—similarities and possible differences—between the original creation and God’s ability to “create in us a new heart.” (Psalm 51:10)
2. When we talk about the death of Jesus and what it accomplished, we tend to use a lot of clichés. What does it mean to say, “Jesus became sin for us”? (2 Corinthians 5:21) We know for certain that Jesus did not actually become a sinner. What is the difference between “becoming sin” and “becoming a sinner”? The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* states, “By His death, Jesus restored the relationship between God and humanity that had been broken by the sin of Adam and Eve.” And the obvious question is: How does the death of Jesus restore our relationship? Does the blood of Jesus work in some mystical way? Does the blood of Jesus—His sacrificial death—pay a legal penalty? Or, does the blood of Jesus and His sacrificial death teach us some important things about God, about Satan, and about reality that allow that relationship to be reestablished?
3. Which do you think was/is more difficult: To create Adam and Eve in the beginning? Or, to create a new heart in a sinner? Each requires Divine action.
4. In the Garden of Eden, Eve was deceived and was led into sin. While she had been told that it was wrong to eat of the fruit of the tree, the lying serpent convinced her that it was all right. By contrast, Adam did not hear the words of the lying serpent and ate the food intentionally. Who was more guilty: Adam or Eve? Eve chose the lie/fruit. Adam chose to be with Eve.
5. Read Genesis 3:8-15. What can we learn from God’s approach to Adam and Eve after their sin? He could have just let them die because they had sinned. Or, He could have said, “They are only beginners, let us forgive them and let them stay in the garden.” Instead, He approached them in a careful, even humble, way, asking questions and getting them to recognize their mistakes. Unfortunately, as sinners often do, they each tried to blame someone else. Did that make their case worse? Where do our sins usually come from? (James 1:13-15)
6. As a result of Adam’s and Eve’s sin, some fairly radical changes happened to the environment of the earth when they left the garden.

In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin. **The atmosphere, once so mild and uniform in temperature, was now subject to marked changes, and the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold.** (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 61.5)

7. Read Genesis 3:21. Where did God get the animal skins that He used to make garments for Adam and Eve? How did He actually do that? Were the skins sewn together in some way? Were animals actually killed—maybe as sacrifices—or did God create the skins? In our day, fresh animal skins quickly become very brittle and hard and are really not suitable to wear as clothing. Did God have to dry and cure and tan the skins? How long did that take? And surely, one set of animal skins did not last forever. Did He teach Adam and Eve how to make clothing out of animal skins? Did God assist Adam in sacrificing that first lamb? Or, did an angel do it? Was that the first time for the universe to see death? Did Adam and Eve feel uncomfortable wearing the skins of the animals that they had killed? When they thought about those skins, of what did it remind them? Of their sin? Of God’s plan of salvation? Of the time when they had to kill the animal?
8. One of the most important points to remember in studying the subject of creation versus evolution is the point that no one but God can give life. Modern-day scientists have sought in many ways to attempt to reproduce the life which God created, and they have not been able to. Read Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:29,30; John 1:4; Acts 17:24,25,28. Our daily, hourly, even minute-by-minute lives depend upon God. Human beings have become very good at killing, but we are no good at all when it comes to giving life back again.

9. What is so special about life? It is a chemical compound or even a group of atoms and molecules working together in a certain very sophisticated way? Once again, read Isaiah 59:2. Why is it that when we are separated from God we die? When a person is born, does God create out of nothing?
10. When Adam and Eve sinned, God had three choices: 1) He could have allowed them to die of their sin as He had warned in Genesis 2:17. 2) He could have said that their sin was a mistake and perhaps punish them or discipline them and allow them to stay in the garden. Or, 3) He could do what He did do, suggesting that Adam and Eve really did not understand—and for that matter neither did the entire universe—the implications of sin and death.
11. God and the angels had tried their best to explain to Adam and Eve what would happen if they ate of the fruit. Were those explanations not adequate? Why did God give Adam and Eve another chance?
12. Read Romans 5:6-11. “While we were yet enemies. . . ,” God Himself stepped into the picture. He explained that some very important lessons needed to be learned. We need to understand why and how sin leads to death. But, more than that, we need to understand how the death of Jesus can put us right with God again. In what way does that death help to reconcile us to God?
13. When someone wrongs someone else, as human beings we usually expect the one in the wrong to approach the one he has wronged and asked for forgiveness. But, in this most important of all cases, God did not wait for us to ask for forgiveness. He came down to this earth; and while we were yet sinners, He died on our behalf. It is hard to imagine a better illustration of divine love. Was that the main message God wanted to portray? Is it possible for us to exercise that kind of *agape* love?

The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. That Christ, so excellent, so innocent, should suffer such a painful death, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, our thoughts and imaginations can never fully comprehend. The length, the breadth, the height, the depth, of such amazing love we cannot fathom.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 213.

14. What important lessons are we supposed to learn from the experiences of Gethsemane and Calvary? Is it easy for sinful human beings to learn those lessons?

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. (DA 83.4)

15. Read Galatians 3:13 and Deuteronomy 21:22,23. It is interesting to notice that Galatians 3:13 suggests that it is a curse to be hanged on a tree. Deuteronomy 21:22,23 suggests that a body hanging on a post overnight would lead to a curse on the land. Of course, Christ did not remain on the cross overnight. He was already dead before sunset.
16. However, Josephus and others explained that something like that happened in A.D. 70 at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. When deserters tried to escape from Jerusalem, they usually were caught and crucified outside the city wall where those from the inside could watch. Eventually, so many died and were crucified there was not even room enough to walk between the crosses. Imagine the curse that rested on the city and the land as a result of that! Wait until the end!
17. We know that Christ was not a sinner. He never committed a single sin. So, what was it that He took upon Himself on the cross? Was it the guilt of our sins? Or, the responsibility? Does God take responsibility for sin because He allowed human freedom?

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The **guilt** of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity,

filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of **guilt** He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. **So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.** (DA 753.1)

18. And what was that terrible agony that Christ suffered? From eternity past, the Father and the Son have been One. They had never experienced separation in any sense. But, with the death of Jesus, they experienced the "sundering of the divine powers." (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 93*, 1899) What does that tell us about the death of the wicked in the end?
19. Many Christians have come to be afraid of God and His judgments while secretly enjoying sin. Is the good news—the gospel—that Christ has died as our Substitute and Surety? Did He take our sins upon Himself? The New Testament teaches us that by His death on the cross, Christ will eventually eliminate sin, sinners, and death. But, if death was a part of God's way of creating our world through theistic evolution, how can we say that death is the last enemy? (1 Corinthians 15:26) Wouldn't that suggest that the ideas of theistic evolution are in direct opposition to the gospel?
20. Those who believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit cooperated in creating our world in the beginning should not have any trouble in believing that They can now recreate us and give us new hearts and right spirits. (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 11:19,20; 36:26,27; Colossians 3:10; and 2 Corinthians 5:17)
21. Is it easier to make something brand new out of raw materials? Or, easier to remake something that has been smashed and broken? If we believe that God has the power to completely heal us and make us like newborn babes when we are born again, why do we hesitate to let Him do that? Does it require the destruction or the abandonment of our old ways of thinking and the establishment of a whole new way of thinking? Would that be described as a change in paradigm? How difficult is it for us to change our paradigm?
22. We certainly should recognize that God's power and glory are incomprehensible to finite, sinful human beings. Look at some examples of this from the writings of Ellen White:

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 753,754.
23. While we recognize that God's glory was veiled to the point where not even Jesus could detect His presence, every eye in the entire universe outside of this world was glued on what was happening in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

He was to work no miracle for Himself, but angels protected His life till the time came when He was to be betrayed by one of His disciples, till He was to give His life on Calvary's cross, and Satan stirred up the minds of men to think that the angels of heaven were indifferent. **But every one was watching the contest with interest. From the moment that Christ knelt in prayer on the sod of Gethsemane till He died on the cross and cried out, "It is finished," the angels and all the universe of God looked on with the greatest interest.** When those words were spoken, the plan was completed—the plan whereby Satan's power should be limited and broken, and whereby Christ should finally die. And when Christ rose from the dead His triumph was complete. Satan knew that his battle with Christ was lost, but yet he is at enmity with God.—*Manuscript 8*, 1888. (1888 126.4)
24. If our world was created by a haphazard, completely chaotic, chance process and there was no supernatural or other logical, reasonable orderly process involved, then what basis is there for saying that any event that takes place is a sin?

25. Atheists, agnostics, and evolutionists are hoping to avoid any future judgment by God. Critics who are trying to devalue the significance of the death of Jesus sometimes argue that Jesus knew even as He was dying on that crucifixion Friday that He would rise again on Sunday. Such a death—being only temporary—would be no big problem. In contrast, notice these words from Ellen White:

As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now [687] the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry. Everything was at stake with him. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of the world would finally become Christ's; he himself would be overthrown and cast out. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God. (DA 686.5)

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. (DA 753.2)

26. If you believe in theistic evolution or even full Darwinian evolution and you are not certain if God has created anything, can you be certain that He can give you a new heart and a right spirit? And how can God accuse us of doing something disorderly and thus sinful if the whole creative process was one disorderly, chaotic mess?
27. And what would a blood sacrifice do to somehow remedy the problems created by all of this chaos? Is this a case of God demanding a blood sacrifice? And if God does not exist or even is far removed from the events on this earth, there is no way He could demand anything. Creationists know that God not only exists but also He is love, (1 John 4:8,16) and He wants nothing but the best for His children. So, God has made a provision whereby through looking at the life and death of Jesus we can make an intelligent choice about what we want to do with our lives.
28. If we believe that evolution is the explanation for our origins, can evolution also result in our salvation? Can we claw our way up to heaven? Will some future generation of human beings evolve into saints? Is that what seems to be happening as we look at the world around us? If such a thing is possible, then, of course, there was no reason for Jesus to come and die that awful death. There would be no angry God demanding the payment of a penalty. And to whom would the payment be made? What does it take for justice to be satisfied? Could God have just forgiven Adam and Eve? Of course, that would imply that His previous statement about sin leading to death was wrong! Has God lied to us?
29. In this lesson we have studied some of the details of how God has attempted to balance righteousness and justice on the one side with grace and mercy and forgiveness on the other. Is that picture clear in your mind? Could you explain it all to someone else?

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