

Origins

Creation and Morality

Lesson #5 for February 2, 2013

Scriptures: Genesis 2:16,17; Genesis 1:26-28; James 3:9; Acts 17:26; Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 5:44-48; Revelation 20:11-13.

1. In this lesson we will discuss creation and whether or not God as our Creator has the right to tell us what to do. What are God's "rights"? What are human "rights"?
2. Read Genesis 2:16,17. Human beings love to talk about their rights. Many would like to feel completely free to do whatever they want to do. The Magna Carta signed in 1215 and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaimed in 1789 are just a couple examples of demands by so-called subjugated populations for the exercise of their "inalienable rights." Do we as human beings have some inalienable rights?
3. What is the relationship between "rights," "privileges," and "responsibilities"? The story of ancient Israel as chronicled in the Old Testament is a long history of a group of people claiming their privileges or rights while trying to avoid as far as possible their responsibilities. Is that phenomenon still taking place in our world today? Some politicians wish that they could somehow magically solve all problems by the cast of a vote. If we could, would we vote to make all of ourselves millionaires? Why do we limit voting rights to certain groups? Are we hoping that they will act responsibly when they cast their votes?
4. Think about where we came from. Did God literally come down to planet earth and mold Adam from the dirt? Some translators have suggested that instead of *dust* it should say *clay* or perhaps *clods* which would certainly be easier to mold. How precise an image of Adam did God make before He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? (Genesis 2:7) Was it a perfect image? How intimately does God want to be involved with His children here on this earth? Imagine His descending upon Mount Sinai and all that happened there and then feeding the Israelites daily for 40 years besides looking after their clothes and their sandals so they would not wear out. (Deuteronomy 8:4)
5. Turning back to the experience of Adam and Eve, what was the purpose of that tree of knowledge? Why did God allow it to be in the garden? What did God tell them about that tree? As far as we know, no death had occurred prior to that moment—this is a direct contradiction to the theory of evolution. But, God said that sin and disobedience would prove deadly. Did God go on to explain? Did He just say, "Father knows best"? Did God have a right to tell Adam and Eve what they could and could not do? Is that why He told them what not to do? Was the tree a test? Or, was it a protection, the only place where Satan was allowed to approach them? When children are small, their parents tend to give them lots of direction. As they become older especially as teenagers, children tend to defy that direct guidance by their parents. Parents tend to respond by saying, "So long as you are living in my house and eating my food and dependent upon me for your necessities, then my rules apply." Is that fair?
6. Does God have the right to tell *us* what to do? What might be the basis for such a right? Read Psalm 95:6,7; 100; and Acts 17:25,28. And note these words from Ellen White: "Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God." (*RH*, December 2, 1890 par. 15) If God is the One who gave us life and sustains our lives every moment, does that give Him the right to tell us what to do? These verses suggest that God is good. He gives us not only life but also purpose and shows us the way of love. We need

to thank Him for what He does for us. What should be our response? Obedience?

7. Read Genesis 1:26-28. What is implied by the idea that we are made “in the image of God”? God goes beyond that by sharing some of His dominion with us. We are to care for the animals, the birds, and the fish.
8. Notice, too, that God purposed to make man in “our” image—that is, an image involving the plurality of the Godhead. Then He made humans male and female. The image of God is not fully expressed in an individual but in relationship. As the Godhead is manifest in three Persons in relationship, the image of God in humans is expressed in relationship of male and female. The ability to form relationships is part of the image of God. Relationships, of course, imply responsibility and accountability, which means morality. Hence, right here we are given a strong hint as to how morality finds its basis in the Creation story. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Origins, p. 40
9. If God is a three-part Unity, and if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in perfect harmony, and furthermore, if we are to be like Them, what does that imply about our lives and our relationships? If God is love, (1 John 4:8,16) are we to be “love” also? If God is totally respectful toward us and even allows us the freedom to reject Him, should we be respectful of others around us?
10. None of us who are literate in the fields of physics, chemistry, and biology would deny that human beings are made of inanimate materials. Electrons, protons, and neutrons are what our bodies are made of. We could go further and say that our bodies are made up of molecules: proteins, carbohydrates, fats, hormones, etc. So, how does it happen that the same (or similar) chemicals are “amoral” when they make up animals, plants, beetles, fleas, or even snakes while we as human beings are expected to be moral and responsible beings? Is there an essential difference in the matter that makes up human beings as compared to those other creatures? What does it mean to be made “in the image of God”?
11. Read Genesis 2:23. As Christians, we recognize that the entire human family has descended from Adam as an individual and from Adam and Eve as the original couple. They were the parents to all of us. As recorded in Genesis, the name that Adam gave his wife is derived from the Hebrew word that means “to live” and means something like “life-giver.” Thus, it is literally true that we are all part of one family. More than that, we have just one Father in heaven. (Acts 17:26; Matthew 23:9) Should that imply human equality? Proverbs 14:31 and 22:2 point out that we are all made by the same God who is the Father of us all. What does that imply about how we should act?
12. Unfortunately, after the entrance of sin, we have come to recognize that we are all born sinners. We are born inherently selfish. As infants, all we concern ourselves with is our immediate needs. There is no planning for the future. But, as we grow up and hopefully mature in every way, we begin to see beyond the immediate future.
13. Satan’s approach has always been an intensely selfish one. Like him, many human beings today only think of immediate gratification and do not want to think about future consequences or responsibilities.
14. Unfortunately, down through the generations following the experience at the tower of Babel, human beings have been divided politically, nationally, ethnically, and economically. Various groups and individuals have tried to bridge some of these gaps with mostly poor results. What should be the role of Christians in dealing with rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, neighbor and foreigner? Do some people have the “right” based on “social

Darwinism” to dominate others because they are richer or stronger or more politically connected?

15. If God intended for us to be like Him in many ways, the most important of which is to be like Him in character, then we need to understand what His character is like. For starters, read Matthew 5:44-48. That is very difficult for selfish human beings. What is implied by loving our enemies and being perfect (mature)? Do you have to be perfect to love your enemies? Or, if you love your enemies, are you perfect? And what about the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:29-37) What are we supposed to learn from him?
16. The ultimate example of unselfish behavior is found in Philippians 2:1-8. Imagine the King and Sovereign of the universe coming down, living as a human being, and finally, dying the death of a common criminal—a “Traitor” against the Roman Empire.
17. Isn’t it clear by now what an incredible contrast there is between Satan’s rules and God’s rules? God calls us to exercise love and care for the weak. Satan calls for us to be selfish and to exploit the weaker among us. If we came up through a process of “natural selection,” wouldn’t it be just natural for us to continue to act in that way?
18. The Bible says that a day of reckoning is coming for everyone. Read Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; Revelation 20:11-13; Matthew 12:36,37; 25:31-40. In light of these passages, it must be exceedingly clear that while we are saved by faith, (Acts 16:31) that faith—our relationship with our Father God—will result in certain kinds of actions. And those actions will be the basis on which God judges. Does that scare you?
19. One day, everyone who has ever lived will face God’s judgment. At the third coming, the entire human race from Adam and Eve to the last person living, along with Satan and all his angels, will stand before the judgment seat of God. What do you expect to happen at that point? Apparently, based on His showing of the panorama and all the details of the great controversy, (*Great Controversy* 666-672) God’s case will be so compelling that even the Devil will be down on his knees admitting that God is right. (Philippians 2:10,11)
20. So, what are God’s requirements? Has God laid on us some impossible demands? Should we fear Him because we are perpetually incapable of doing what He has asked us to do? When speaking to the children of Israel, Moses said God’s commands were not too difficult. (Deuteronomy 30:11) More than that, Ellen White said repeatedly that God never asks us to do anything which is not for our best good. (*Review and Herald*, June 12, 1855 par. 7.; April 12, 1887 par. 9; *1 Notebook Leaflets* 79.1; *Spaulding and Magan Collection* 242.21; *1T* 120.2; *4bSG* 7.4) So, what is the problem? If we recognize that what God wants for us is for our best good, shouldn’t we always be willing to do His will, knowing it is for our best?
21. If Adam was our first ancestor, how do we explain all those fossils that people have dug up around the world? If the Scriptures are true, then they cannot be ancestors of Adam. So, how do we explain the existence of those fossils?

First, the humanlike fossils might be forms of humans with normal intelligence but with growth patterns unlike any present-day human. A second possibility is that the fossils may have been degenerate due to their own lifestyle or environmental stress or other factors. A third possibility is that they may be the results of Satan’s direct attempts to corrupt Creation in ways we do not understand. Another possibility is that they were not humans but were similar in morphology. Different people may prefer different explanations but, because we do not have direct evidence to settle the

matter, it is best to avoid being dogmatic in our speculations. Fossils do not come with labels attached that say, “Made in China 500 million years ago” or the like. Our understanding of earth history, which varies greatly among scientists, provides a frame of reference within which we interpret fossils, but we do not have proof of our interpretations. They are, in the end, only that: interpretations, nothing more. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Origins, p. 44

22. And what are the implications of following a Darwinian understanding of human origins? People like Adolf Hitler with his theories about a dominant race forced our world into a horrible war. And the results are most dramatically seen at places like Dachau and Auschwitz. Is there any doubt that was Satanic in origin?
23. In light of all this, where did our morality come from? The only safe answer is that we got it from our Father in heaven. But, notice some other explanations that have been given by people who do not choose to believe God’s Word.

Julian Huxley argued that morality is itself a product of evolution; thus, “any standards of rightness and wrongness must in some way be related to the movement of that process [evolution] through time.”—T. H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Touchstone for Ethics: 1893-1943* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 131.

24. Consider these contrasting words from Ellen White: “The first great moral lesson given Adam was that of self-denial. The reins of self-government were placed in his hands. Judgment, reason, and conscience, were to bear sway.”—*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 24, 1874.
25. So, which would you choose? A world dominated by Darwinian practices in which the strong are constantly dominating the weak and even eliminating them from the competition? Or, a world dominated by God’s principles of love and caring for the weak?
26. Look at two more issues which are very important in this whole scenario. Judeo-Christian ethics and our belief that we are all made in the image of God necessitate our regarding human life with sanctity. (Genesis 9:4-6) They also necessitate our making moral choices based on the best understanding of the value of not only things but also of individuals. In a burning house we have to choose which to rescue: the baby or the dog.
27. Does our political system follow the example of Satan? Or, the example of God? When we vote at the polls, is our primary consideration self-interest? Do we always vote to raise taxes on someone else but not on ourselves? As noted above, Adam and Eve were to serve and protect nature. (Genesis 2:15) Human dominion was not to be exercised at the expense of the animal world.
28. So, what are the ultimate implications of all this? If we are living God-fearing, loving, unselfish lives as opposed to living out Darwinian principles, what difference would that make in our homes? At work? Even in our surrounding communities? What would happen if all Seventh-day Adventists would begin to live truly unselfish, Godlike lives in our world?

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