

# **Origins**

## **Jesus, Provider and Sustainer**

Lesson #8 for February 23, 2013

Scriptures: Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16,17; Job 42; Matthew 5:45; 6:25-34; 10:28.

1. In this lesson we will review the fact that God not only created everything but also He continues to sustain it. He allowed Job to suffer terrible reverses at the hand of the Devil; but then He restored his health, wealth, and status, and gave him a new set of children. Despite all this, Job's relatives and friends still believed that God had caused all that trouble. (Job 42:11) Did they know about Job 1&2? God sends the sunshine and the rain on the good and the bad. (Matthew 5:45) He cares for even the small plants. So, should we be worried about His care for us? And ultimately, He takes personal responsibility for our salvation.
2. The Scriptures picture God as constantly involved with the care and keeping of all that He has created. (Philippians 4:19,20) His creation is like a finely-tuned, beautiful musical instrument that God uses to produce an inspired melody. Even in the worst possible situations, God works for good. (Romans 8:28) Is that true about Jesus as well? Look at His life!
3. And to prove His love and care for each of His creatures throughout the universe, He came and lived and died even the death of a common criminal on a cross (Philippians 2:8) to demonstrate the truth about His character and government.
4. Read Colossians 1:16,17. Seventh-day Adventists believe that God not only created our universe but also created all the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, etc. that keep it running and functioning in consistent ways. Without that consistency, science would be impossible.

The apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declares of Christ that "all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16,17, *R.V.*, margin. The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 132.

5. Scientists can describe gravity precisely, but they do not know why it works. Our very lives are totally dependent upon God's constant activity. (Job 12:10; Daniel 5:23; Acts 17:25,28)

**Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.** He watches over us by day, and under his wings we find shelter by night. His preserving care is over us, whether we wake or sleep. He is as a sentinel to guard us from Satan's power, or we should be taken captive by him. Jesus is our constant friend. We are to look to him moment by moment, and by looking to him we are to live. (*RH*, December 2, 1890 par. 15; cf. *Ed* 130.5)

6. God did not create our world or the universe and then leave it to its own fate as suggested by deists. We do not have any existence apart from God. We are dependent continuously on His divine power. True Bible believers cannot accept deism. God existed before and independent of every part of His universe. It all depends upon Him. God and the universe are not one and the same as suggested by pantheism, nor does God live in every part of the universe as if that were His own body as in panentheism. We were created for and by Him, and He is the One who sustains our lives. (1 Corinthians 8:6)
7. God not only created us in the beginning but also He re-creates us through the process of salvation to be in union with Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10) And by this second creation, He expects us to do the good works for which we were created.
8. But, if God is totally in charge of the universe and He determines even whether we live or die,

how our heart beats, and how our lungs breathe, is there any free will and free choice left? Without freedom and free choice, it would be impossible to love. In order to truly love, we must also be able to hate or to be apathetic. A God of love would never create the universe with intelligent creatures not capable of loving Him back. (1 John 4:8,16)

9. God not only created us but also He sustains us by providing the food, the nourishment, and everything needed for our continued happy existence. (Genesis 1:29,30) Animals were supposed to eat plants while human beings were to eat grains, nuts, and fruits. And when God was done creating here on this world, He declared everything to be very good.
10. God not only provided a plethora of beautiful life-sustaining trees producing delicious fruit, but also He gave Adam and Eve a garden in which to live with the tree of life in the center so they could live in companionship with Him forever.
11. But, God also created the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Although Satan was allowed to claim that tree as his domain, he does not even have the ability to create a tree! Of course, that tree was placed there to give Adam and Eve a choice. Satan sinned without a tree. What more could God possibly have done for them? But, all of that was spoiled by sin. The Garden of Eden was removed from this earth at the time of the flood, but it is coming back!

At the end of one thousand years, Jesus, the king of glory, descends from the holy city, clothed with brightness like the lightning, upon the mount of olives—the same mount from whence he ascended after his resurrection. As his feet touch the mountain, it parts asunder, [Zechariah 14:4] and becomes a very great plain, and is prepared for the reception of the holy city in which is the paradise of God, the garden of Eden, which was taken up after man's transgression. Now it descends with the city, more [84] beautiful, and gloriously adorned than when removed from the earth. (3SG 83,84) [Note that reference in brackets is supplied]

12. That garden is still awaiting the time when we will live there.

Nature is a power, but the God of nature is unlimited in power. His works interpret his character. Those who judge him from his handiworks, and not from the suppositions of great men, will see his presence in everything. —Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884.
13. How much of that natural beauty and loveliness that was in the Garden of Eden is still in our world today? Were the flowers any prettier? We cannot deny the fact that a lot of evil can also be seen in our world. There is so much pain and suffering not only for humans but also for animals because of floods, hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes, etc.; and these are generally thought not to be the result of man's activity or of sin, but they are called "acts of God."
14. Review the story of Job. Just about everything awful that one could imagine happened to him. (Job 1&2) For a period of time, Job was almost a kind of pawn in the great controversy. When the "experiment" was over and God's point had been proven and the Devil was defeated, God once again blessed Job with many blessings—a new family and more riches than he had before. What should that teach us about God's relationship with His children here on this earth? Satan directly challenged God's ability to correctly judge the character of men. God said Job was a righteous man, (Job 1:8; 2:3) and Satan declared that was impossible. (Job 4:17-19) God proved that He was a correct Judge of righteousness. (Job 42:7,8) The real truth about Job's relationship with God can be seen in Job 29-31. Job's story is very unusual. Very few of us will ever be asked to be a key player like Job in the great controversy between God and Satan. How many of us would continue to trust God under Job's circumstances? Most of us go merrily on sinning without even being pushed or tempted by Satan. (James 1:13-15)
15. While our understanding of the great controversy gives us a fairly clear picture of the overall pattern and results of evil, it is not always easy to explain what is behind each individual evil

event. Did Job ever find out why those things happened to him? Did he ever read or hear what is told in Job 1&2? Why did God give the answers He did to Job in Job 38-41? At least at that point, He did not specifically answer Job's questions. Did God do so later?

16. Read Matthew 5:45 and Psalm 65:9,10. If God were merely a human, He might be inclined to take it out on His enemies! But, what we read in Scripture is that God sends His rain and sunshine on everyone. How does that fit with stories we have heard about times when fires have gone around the properties of Christians? But, what about Revelation 12-14?
17. How much does God use or control the forces of nature? Read Genesis 8:1; Exodus 10:13; Numbers 11:31. In evaporating the waters of the flood, in the ten plagues of Egypt, and in specific events in connection with the Exodus, God used the wind to accomplish His purposes. Does God still have that ability? Do you know of instances in which God has used the forces of nature to accomplish His will in more modern times? How does all this fit with Romans 8:28? At the end, will there be 144,000 "Jobs"?
18. There are many so-called scientists who want to explain every miracle in the Bible as just a natural occurrence. What is wrong with that approach? If God uses nature, is that a miracle?
19. Read 2 Kings 20:9-11. Our day and night cycles, and thus, our times of the day, are determined by the spinning of the earth. How could God have turned the spinning of the earth back by that amount without massively disrupting things on earth? To us, it looks impossible. This side of heaven, we may never be able to explain how God did that. But, we need to remember Genesis 18:14, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" We need to come to know God well enough so that we trust Him even regarding things which we cannot fully understand.
20. It seems natural for human beings to be worried. However, Jesus Himself provided us with a very good antidote to that problem. Read Matthew 6:25-34. While we know that—largely due to human activities—species are being lost around the world at an increasing rate, it is still true that God is sustaining the plants and animals just as He sustains us. What should we learn from that? When we see so-called "acts of God," how are we supposed to respond? Are such things truly acts of God? Or, are they cases where God is slowly removing His sustaining power and allowing Satan to have more and more control over things here on this earth? Satan certainly has that capacity. Remember Job 1. In light of all this, in what sense is it true that if we put God first, He will take care of everything? In some cases, might answers not come until we are in God's kingdom?
21. Many years ago when I entered Loma Linda University School of Medicine, the dean welcomed us by saying that half of what they would teach us was wrong! They just did not know which half! This has been proven again and again by changing understandings of disease processes, etc. So, why is it that we tend to think of science as definitive and proving various things? Actually, science very infrequently "proves" anything. But, it is so natural to think that "seeing is believing."

Yet men of science think that they can comprehend the wisdom of God, that which He has done or can do. The idea largely prevails that He is restricted by His own laws. Men either deny or ignore His existence, or think to explain everything, even the operation of His Spirit upon the human heart; and they no longer reverence His name or fear His power. They do not believe in the supernatural, not understanding God's laws or His infinite power to work His will through them. As commonly used, the term "laws of nature" comprises what men have been able to discover with regard to the laws that govern the physical world; but how limited is their knowledge, and how vast the field in which the Creator can work in harmony with His own laws and yet wholly beyond the comprehension of finite beings!—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 114. (Compare 8T 259-261)

22. While it is true that more and more of the phenomena that we see in nature are being explained by science, there are still many things which science cannot explain. Any Bible-believing Christian should recognize that no human being or even group of human beings will ever be able to fully understand all that God is capable of doing.
23. How many ways can you think of in which God used natural law to accomplish His purposes? And what about all the “natural laws,” that is, laws that God has created to control the forces of nature but which we do not yet understand. Can God, at times, use those laws to accomplish His purposes.
24. Read 1 Kings 19:11,12. Could God actually send the wind, earthquake, and fire just to impress a truth on one of His discouraged and doubting children? Does God prefer to use that “still, small voice” of reason?
25. Is it just as important for us to believe in God’s sustaining power as it is to believe in His creative power? How does your understanding of God’s sustaining power impact your relationship with Him?
26. Think over everything you know about God’s relationship to this earth and natural processes. Does God act in capricious, random, unexplainable ways? Or, in orderly ways? How does that contrast with the usual understanding of the evolutionary process? Is there any possible way to integrate these two views that seem so opposed to each other?
27. In the history of our world and in what is happening now even in the forces of nature, do you see a pattern that suggests that we are moving closer and closer to the end of this world’s history?
28. Is it clear to you that God is continuously active in sustaining our world? The theories of deism, pantheism, and panentheism are not really compatible with the biblical picture.
29. The story of George Mueller who started those large orphanages in southern England and sustained them throughout his life by cooperation with a miracle-working God should remind us that God’s power has not in any way lessened with the passage of time. There are many examples in the Bible in which God specifically acted to care for His children. Think of David when he was fleeing from Saul, and Paul on his missionary journeys.
30. Are we afraid of admitting to our non-Christian friends that we believe in the active intervention of God in our world? Are we embarrassed to think that we might be dependent upon God? Why is it that human beings hate to feel dependent?
31. In light of all we have studied so far, is it reasonable to believe that God is in some way bound by His laws as we understand them? Or, is God completely independent of natural laws? Can’t God act in whatever way He chooses? Is it possible that even in performing so-called miracles, God is simply using natural laws which we have not yet come to understand?
32. If God is going to be our Savior, He/They must not be bound by the evil forces in our world. You cannot save someone on a sinking ship if you are going down yourself!
33. Trusting in God is not a mistake. He is above, beyond, and independent of the forces which seem to be so destructive in our world. Why is it sometimes easy to depend and trust on God while at other times it seems very difficult? How does it affect your trust in God to hear of miracles or at least unexplained events in history that take place in connection with the trusting faith of one of God’s children?

© 2012, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know. [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: January 7, 2013

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Origins\SS-8-Origins-2012\_02\_25-Fin+.wpd