

The Role of the Church in the Community

The “Restoration of All Things”

Lesson #1 for July 2, 2016

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; 3:8-19; Deuteronomy 6:5; James 4:4; Galatians 4:19; Mark 2:1-12; John 10:10.

1. When we think about what God created in the beginning and compare that with what we see in the world around us, it is clear that something has gone terribly wrong. What has sin done to us and to our world? How has our rebellion enhanced this great controversy? What things that you see in the world today are the biggest indicators of the existence of the great controversy? Human behavior? Changes in the environment?
2. Does it seem to you like the world is getting better and better and moving toward a golden age millennium as many Christians believe? Or, does it seem like the world is getting worse and worse as we move nearer to the seven last plagues described in Revelation 15 and 16? Christians might find themselves deteriorating into a complete depression except that we know that a new heaven and new earth are coming. God will restore all things, making them even better than they were when He started!
3. The good news is that we do not have to wait until the second coming for that restoration to begin. Passages like 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 8:29 make it clear that by working with the Holy Spirit and with the help of the angels, our transformation can begin now.
4. It is very clear from Genesis 1:26-27 that we were originally made in the image of God. What does that mean? Read Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 6:5; and 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Would it be correct to say that we were created to be like God in spirit, soul, and body? Could we come to love as God loves? God originally created Adam and Eve, as the first human pair, perfect in every way.

When Adam came from the Creator’s hand, he bore, in his *physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker*. “God created man in His own image” (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe—the “wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16)—invited man’s study. **Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator’s glory.**—Ellen G. White, *Education* 15. [Italic type and bold type are added.]

5. Wording in the original Hebrew suggests that Adam and Eve were created like God physically (outwardly) and inwardly. Ellen White said:

Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is “the express image” (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with

the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.

As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty. **The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 45.2-3. [Bold type is added.]

6. A complete human being includes body, soul, and spirit—or in more modern terms the physical, mental, social, and spiritual. This is clearly represented by verses like Deuteronomy 6:5 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
7. Adam and Eve were clearly distinct from all the other creatures on this earth. Adam recognized that there was no other like himself—none suitable to be a companion to himself. Evolutionists are clearly trying to erase this essential difference. Understanding what was coming, God created us capable of procreation—of having children like ourselves. Satan cannot do that. If he could, he would fill the universe with little satans! God created only two—Adam and Eve; they had the power to procreate.
8. But, our sin condemned the world to pain, decay, and death. We were supposed to be rulers over all of nature. That is not how it is now. We have the power to choose and the freedom to make mistakes. No other creature has that.
9. How long did Adam and Eve live in the garden before sin? We do not know. If it was longer than nine months, don't you think Eve would have become pregnant and delivered? Or, did God practice birth control? He has done that at other times in history. (See Genesis 20:17-18.)
10. There is a long list of consequences from that first sin. The first thing that Adam and Eve noticed was their nakedness: Their robes of light had disappeared. (*PP* 57) So, instead of looking forward to intimate contact with God, they were afraid of Him and hid themselves. Like Satan, they were more comfortable with the self-centeredness of evil.
11. Read Genesis 3:8-19. What were some of the results of their sin? Nakedness, fear, shame, blaming others for their sins, decay, pain with childbirth and with other situations, hard work, a change in diet, weeds, thorns, and death. Sin had terrible consequences almost immediately. But, we have promises that all that has been lost can be restored.
12. What are the obvious consequences of our own sins that we deal with on a day-by-day basis? All of those mentioned above plus separation from God, sickness, conflicts, and alienation—just to mention a few.
13. Read Genesis 3:14-15. In what way did God actually place enmity between human beings and Satan? Don't we seem to be very cozy with him most of the time? In your daily life, do you find yourself at war with evil and the Devil? In Hebrew the word for *enmity* shares an etymological root with *hate* and *enemy*. As a result of sin, we have become enemies of God. (See Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21; and James 4:4.) But, God has promised to bring us back into “at-one-ment” with Him. *Atonement* means to be restored to a correct relationship with God. How does sin make us enemies of God? Compare Romans 14:23.

14. What can we learn about the atonement from Leviticus 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 5:7; and 1 Corinthians 1:9? How do those verses fit with Hebrews 10:1-4,11-13? Those Old Testament sacrifices were offered to remind people that sin leads to death. But, those sacrifices could never take away sin! So, what does take away sin? Paul stated:

Romans 8:3 (*GNB*): What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like sinful human nature, to do away with sin.

15. Is the forgiveness of sin, i.e., justification, all that is required? Or, do we need to be changed in some way?

16. Often, theologians use other terms to describe this atonement. One word that is used is *expiation*. The Latin root suggests reparation for wrong deeds. Is it possible to repair what sin has done? Do sinners owe a “debt to society”? Is there a legal requirement to be dealt with? If so, what is that legal requirement? Was sin a criminal offense? Or, a civil offense? In the case of a civil offense, someone else can pay the debt; but, in the case of a criminal offense, the offender himself must pay. As sinners, we have all done wrong; but, we can be pardoned, forgiven, and justified through the plan of salvation. That is the first step in the “restoration of all things.” (Acts 3:21, *NKJV*) So, is sin a civil offense? Or, a crime?

17. Traditional Christian theology states: Sin leads to death; so, in order for sin to be dealt with, a death must take place. What does that mean to you? Why is that necessary? Is our Father-God demanding a death? Shouldn't the sinner be the one who dies? How can Jesus actually, fairly, and justly, take our place?

18. Have we answered Bozo's/Boso's question from the writings of Anselm?

For what justice is there in giving up the most just [innocent] man of all to death on behalf of the sinner? What man would not be judged worthy of condemnation if he condemned the innocent in order to free the guilty?... For if he could not save sinners except by condemning the just, where is his omnipotence? But if he could, but would not, how are we to defend his wisdom and justice? *Cur Deus Homo?*—Anselm (died 1109 A.D.) [Brackets and content in brackets are added.]

Is it really possible to make Jesus guilty for my sins?

19. Anselm was famous for challenging all the conflicting statements of earlier authorities on basic theological propositions. If God is truly omnipotent (as we believe), shouldn't He be able to save humans without the necessity of anyone—especially the completely innocent Jesus Christ—having to die? Did the Father demand the death of Jesus before He would be willing to forgive us? What would that say to us about the Father?

20. Without an understanding of the cosmic conflict as set forth by Ellen White's explanation of Scripture, it is impossible to answer those questions. But, the cosmic conflict provides wonderful answers to those questions. God has put Himself on trial before the universe. (Romans 3:1-4) He chooses to win our loyalty by providing the evidence that He is the One who has told the truth about sin and its consequences. He not only told the truth, but also He demonstrated it through the life and death of Jesus. The only way to deal with deceit is to tell the truth.

21. Read Galatians 4:19. What do you think Paul was talking about when he said Christ could be formed in us? Certainly, we should recognize that God's original plan for us was to be perfect creatures living in a perfect world in the Garden of Eden. Contrast that with the death, violence, suffering, fear, ignorance, etc. that permeates our world today.

In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. **Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 595.2. [Bold type is added.]

22. Our ultimate goal is to have Christ's nature formed in us. That process takes place in us through the power of the Holy Spirit as we read the Bible, pray, and witness to others.
23. Hebrews 1:3 presents Christ Himself as the ultimate express image of God's person. (Compare John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; and Colossians 1:15.) But, Christ has offered to become a part of our lives, to dwell within us as the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27) So, even now the process can begin, and Christ within us causes us to long to bring those in our community to the One who can restore them as well. Would that suggest that if we do not have such a longing, we are not restored?
24. Are you excited about the possibility that you could begin even now that transformation process which will extend throughout eternity? But, we must never feel that we have achieved the goal of perfection or of being ready for the second coming. The purpose is to begin a process of beholding Christ and being transformed into His image. That process is to begin on this earth; but, it is a process that will continue for eternity.
25. Why didn't God just abandon us when we rebelled against Him? Do you think God wept when He saw the perfect world He had created deteriorating into what we now see? But, God knew in advance what was going to happen. (See 1 Peter 1:2, *KJV*.) He recognized that the only way to accomplish what needed to be accomplished was to send His own Self in the form of the Son down to our world to teach us what God is like. And we need to remember that if Jesus is not coming back a second time, there really was no reason for Him to come the first time! Furthermore, at the third coming, everything will be restored to God's ideal; sin, pain, and death will be eternally destroyed in the lake of fire.
26. Amazing as it might seem, God calls us as His church to play a role in answering the questions that have been raised in the universe about God's character and government. Answering those questions will move us toward the restoration for which we long. (See Ephesians 3:8-10.) What could the universe learn about God from us?
27. Read Mark 2:1-12. Those young men went to considerable trouble to take their diseased and dying friend into the presence of Jesus. What can we do to bring the sick and the suffering of today—those who are suffering physically, mentally, socially, and even spiritually—back to Christ?
28. Read John 10:10 and 1 John 3:8. If Jesus came to give us life in all its fullness, shouldn't that be our goal as well? What could we do today to help mend what the Devil has done?
29. Read Acts 10:38 and 1 John 2:6. In what ways can we partner with Christ in moving our friends and acquaintances nearer to God's ideal for them?
30. What are we actually doing to bring people back to God? The three essential elements of the Christian life are Bible study, prayer, and witnessing. As practicing Seventh-day Adventists, we may be doing some Bible study and prayer and that is wonderful; but, how much witnessing are we doing? And why is that necessary? Can you think of people in

your circle of influence who need your help getting to know God better?

31. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has organized itself through various agencies to reach out to a hurting world. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is a worldwide organization designed to help those in greatest need. It reaches out to disaster victims, famine victims, those without a clean water supply, etc. But, local churches have also organized themselves to provide literacy, education, tutoring, mentoring, and psychological counseling along with other services for community members in need. How can we get people who may even come to us for help of one kind or another to recognize their spiritual need? Read Ephesians 4:21-24.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 555.1. [Bold type is added.]

32. What are we—as individuals, as a Sabbath school class, and as a church—doing to share the good news of the gospel with our communities? Can you give some examples?
33. We may be able to help people physically and mentally through our institutions such as Seventh-day Adventist hospitals and clinics around the world. But, despite our very best efforts, we know that, eventually, if Christ delays His coming, all of us will die.
34. Could Jesus come back in our time? Why? Or, why not?

You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years.... We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892, par. 10 [Sermon at Lansing, Mich., Sept. 5, 1891]; *Ev* 221.1; *LDE* 33.2; *Mar* 136.2; *1SM* 189.2.

35. In the work of restoration, what needs to be the first step? In order to represent God correctly, don't we need to have a clear picture of Him and how He runs His government? When we look even at ourselves, what can we do to improve things? While it is not our work to judge even ourselves, we need to develop a constant yearning to reach out to God and to others as Jesus did.
36. So, how can we show more empathy for those who have fallen in sin? Jesus treated everyone with respect, ministering to their needs and working to restore them. How can we do the same?
37. What are some of the key aspects of God's image that He bestowed on Adam and Eve at their creation? In what ways are we like God even now? In what ways could we become more like God by following His plan for our lives?
38. How do we respond to the brokenness we might see in the world around us? What could we do to heal the brokenness around us?
39. How do we react as we see war, murder, death, and destruction on television almost every day? Is there anything that we can do about it? Do we just become numb to it?

40. As we all recognize, God created us with free will or free choice. Can we use our free will to help move mankind at least in the direction of God's plan for all of us?
41. As you think about the brokenness of our world, what particular aspects come to mind first? Try to imagine what the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve in that perfect environment must have looked like. Read Genesis 3-6 to see how quickly things deteriorated! Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. (Genesis 3:6-7) Cain murdered his brother, Abel. (Genesis 4:8) More murders followed. (Genesis 4:23-24) And pain, alienation, strife, and war, etc. became the norm. (Genesis 5:29) Things became so bad that God felt it was necessary to start over again by destroying almost the entire world in a flood. But, when that flood was over, God made a covenant with His friend Noah and Noah's family. See Genesis 9:11.
42. What do you think is implied by Paul's "ministry of reconciliation"? (2 Corinthians 5:18) How does that relate to restoration? Second Corinthians 5:16-19 is one of the most beautiful passages in Scripture. Verse 18 (*GNB*) states:
- All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also.
43. Are we prepared to do that?
44. Many scientists in our world today deny the idea of a perfect creation done by God. But, because of scientific evidence, they are being forced to recognize some startling facts. Life on this earth could not exist nor could the universe remain as it is without an incredible degree of precision in the way things were made. Could that have happened just by chance? See Gerald Schroeder, "The Fine Tuning of the Universe," at http://geraldschroeder.com/wordpress/?page_id=49
45. In that article, Dr. Schroeder, a physicist from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, made it very clear that our universe and our world could not have happened by accident. In a world where evolution seems to be the predominant theory about origins, this is a real challenge. How do we respond to those around us who believe in evolution? As we know, that can be a large challenge. For ourselves we must remember that:
- 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." 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.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 437.2.
46. Aren't you glad that we have the Sabbath and all the blessings that attend its keeping?

© 2016, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: May 28, 2016

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Church & Community\SS-1-Church & Comm-2016_07_02-Fin+.wpd