

The Role of the Church in the Community

Restoring Dominion

Lesson #2 for July 9, 2016

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15; Psalm 8:3-8; Romans 1:25; 8:20-22; Exodus 20:1-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

1. This lesson will focus on some of the other effects (Compare lesson 1, #s 10-12.) that resulted from that first sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Not only man but the earth also had by sin come under the control of the wicked one, and was to be restored by the plan of redemption. At his creation, Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan, and the dominion which he held passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became “the god of this world.” [2 Corinthians 4:4] **He had usurped that dominion over the earth which had been originally given to Adam.** But Christ, by His sacrifice paying the penalty of sin, would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion which he had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1908, par. 9. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

2. What does it mean *to lose our dominion*? In our day, the idea of dominion has developed some negative connotations. But, was that true back in the days of the Garden of Eden? Are we still responsible for the earth that we live in? (Revelation 11:18) Would you feel differently about caring for the environment if you lived in the Garden of Eden?
3. Unfortunately, many people in our world believe that we came from a long line of one-celled creatures, up through mollusks, through apes, and finally, became humans. If you really believe that evolutionary story, then there is no real reason behind our creation or our lives. An avowed atheist said that she sometimes:

“Wakes in the middle of the night, stressing over a bunch of deep questions: ‘Is this world truly the result of an accidental cosmic big bang? How could there be no design, no grand purpose to our existence and to the universe as a whole? Can it be that every life—including my own, my husband’s, my two children’s—is totally irrelevant and meaningless? Does my life have no meaning and purpose?’ ”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, July 3, 2016.

4. Because of sin we not only lost our close relationship with God, but also we lost our dominion over this earth and all its creatures. And if we do not believe in the creation story and a loving God who created us for His glory, (Isaiah 43:7) then what purpose do our lives really have? Evolutionists believe that, eventually, our world will just burn up or freeze up when our sun burns out. Is that humanity’s ultimate destiny?
5. God’s plan was for us to represent Him to the rest of creation on this earth and also to the rest of the universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:8-10) And that is true especially after the fall. The entire universe will learn a great deal about God as they observe how He deals with Satan’s rebellion and our rebellion.
6. What all was involved in our dominion over the other creatures, even those in the air and in the sea, back in the days of Adam and Eve? In what ways could they possibly have had a relationship with the fish of the sea while they were living in the Garden of Eden? Were there lakes or rivers or seas in the Garden of Eden? (Genesis 2:10-14) How are we to

nurture, care for, or somehow minister to the rest of God's earthly creation? Is it even possible for God to reveal Himself through us? Was Adam the head keeper of the "national park"?

7. Could you answer the following question? As a Christian, what do you say is the great purpose of your life? Could we honestly say that by the loving ways in which we behave each day it is to correctly represent God: 1) To the onlooking universe? and 2) To those around us with whom we come in contact?
8. Read Genesis 1:26-28. What is the significance of the word *dominion* and of the word *subdue* in these verses? The Hebrew verb *radah* indicates a right and responsibility to rule. How do you think that was actually carried out in the Garden of Eden?
9. The verb *subdue* from the Hebrew *kavash* also depicts a hierarchical relationship between humans and the rest of God's creation on this earth. In our day, does the idea of subduing include subjugation or forcing obedience on the other creatures of this earth? (Numbers 32:22,29; Jeremiah 34:11,16; Esther 7:8; Nehemiah 5:5) Think of the ways in which domestic animals are abused and killed in our day to satisfy the desire for their meat. Would that be considered exploitation? What about the slaughter of innocent lambs for the sanctuary service in the times of the Old Testament? How does that fit into the idea of dominion? Was that a part of God's original plan?
10. Read Genesis 2:15. In this verse Adam was instructed to *dress* and *keep* the garden. The Hebrew words *abad* and *shamar* suggest that he was to work, to serve, to till or cultivate, to hedge about, to guard, to protect, attend to, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, or reserve that over which he had dominion. In what way do you think Adam and Eve did all of that? Surely, God intended for Adam and Eve and all of us still to be living in the Garden of Eden with a loving relationship not only with other human beings but also with all of God's other creatures.
11. Read again Genesis 1:26. What is implied by having dominion over "all the earth"? Does that mean that we are free to do whatever we like with that over which we have dominion? Would that be good stewardship? Or, does good stewardship have boundaries? Clearly, there were boundaries intended for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was supposed to be off-limits! (See Genesis 2:15-17.) By stepping out of the bounds of God's plan for their lives, Adam and Eve plunged all of us into the great controversy and into sin. That disaster continues to our day. (See Romans 8:20-22.)
12. In what ways does humanity overstep its boundaries in caring for our world today? The pollution of air and water? Destruction of animal life and/or their habitats? Global warming? Raising meat for human consumption—one of the largest causes of carbon dioxide production? Are the rich taking responsibility for the poor of this earth?
13. Read Exodus 20:1-20. In the giving of the Ten Commandments, what was God's intention? What was the human response? They had their faces in the dust!
14. The first commandment tells us to worship God *exclusively*. The second commandment tells us to worship God *directly* and not through any substitute. The third commandment tells us to worship God *sincerely and not flippantly or disrespectfully*. The fourth commandment tells us to worship God *with all our hearts, regularly, and repeatedly, every seventh day*.
15. The last six commandments speak of our responsibilities to other human beings. We are to honor our parents, human life, our marriage, the truth, and other people's property; and according to the tenth commandment, we are not even to want to commit those sins.

16. There is an almost endless list of human dictators, despots, and people in various kinds of authority who have abused their rule over others. Consider the case of Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus 1-14 or Herod as recorded in Matthew 2. But, Satan is the ultimate abuser of others. (See Revelation 13.) Satan and those under his control will abuse and control others over whom they have no rightful dominion.
17. In light of that, what will be the cause of the seven last plagues? Will they be sent by God as suggested by many, even Christian theologians? (Revelation 7:1-3) Or, could they be caused by our abuse of the environment around us through misuse, pollution, or even war?
18. There are also examples of people who should have taken responsibility and used it properly but who did not. Consider the cases of those who were given talents in the parable told by Jesus. (See Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27.)
19. So, in what areas of life are we neglecting our responsibilities to God and to the environment? What is within our current boundaries of responsibility? Clearly, Christ intended that we exercise self-control in our personal lives. (See 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Galatians 5:22-23.) He also clearly intended for us to care for the earth and His creatures—as far as we are able. (See James 1:17 and Matthew 25:14-30.) Are we recognizing our God-given limits and boundaries as we deal with family, friends, even coworkers? What would happen if we actually succeeded in practicing the golden rule—seeking to always do good and not evil? (See Matthew 7:1,12.) Is God responsible for everything which He allows?
20. Read again Genesis 2:15. In our daily activities, are we recognizing that everything belongs to God and that we need to take care of everything as if we recognized that fact?
21. After Adam and Eve sinned, all of nature seemed to rebel against them. As we look around the world in our day, do we seem to be powerless in the face of the elements—weather, agriculture, and the animal kingdom?

Among the lower creatures Adam had stood as king, and so long as he remained loyal to God, all nature acknowledged his rule; but when he transgressed, this dominion was forfeited. The spirit of rebellion, to which he himself had given entrance, extended throughout the animal creation. Thus not only the life of man, but the nature of the beasts, the trees of the forest, the grass of the field, the very air he breathed, all told the sad lesson of the knowledge of evil.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 26.4-27.0.

22. As we almost daily hear about devastating damage done by weather and our apparently deteriorating ecosystem, do we blame God? (Isaiah 45:7) Has our sin somehow caused all of those problems? Or, is God just allowing Satan to have more and more control of this earth? Is caring for our earth a moral, ethical, and theological issue?

Seventh-day Adventists advocate a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism, goods-getting, and production of waste. We call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world's resources, reevaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.—In "Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Environment," 1995.

23. There are some in our world who almost worship the environment and the earth. In the end, our world will be destroyed. How can we strike the right balance among our responsibilities to God and our fellow human beings and our responsibilities in caring for our environment?
24. Read Romans 1:25. Never should we place our responsibility toward created things above

our responsibilities to God. But, in practical terms, what does that mean?

25. How does the life and death of Jesus restore our dominion? Will that take place only after the third coming? There are numerous passages both in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen White suggesting that God will restore things to an even better condition than the original Garden of Eden. Don't we know that our world is going to be completely destroyed and remade? If so, should we just give up and say whatever happens will happen?
26. Read Deuteronomy 15:7-15; Luke 14:13-14; 1 Peter 3:15-16; James 1:27; Isaiah 58:7; and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. These verses emphasize the fact that we should reach out to the poor and needy. We should invite them to our homes and feed them when we have opportunity. But, we also need to share the gospel with them. As Paul stated in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, we should not encourage them to be lazy and idle. He said, "Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat." So, what does restoring dominion to the poor involve? Are we going beyond our requirements if we provide not only help for their physical needs but also spiritual help? In our daily lives, are we becoming beacons of light and hope to those in need? Are we correctly representing Jesus Christ by our daily lives?
27. Immersed as we are in a sinful world, it is hard for us to imagine what it was really like in the Garden of Eden. What would it be like to speak with God face-to-face and do it comfortably? Think of the immediate response to sin.

The thorn and the thistle (Gen. 3:17, 18), the aftermath of the Flood (Gen. 7:12), the desert and the wilderness, the groaning of the earth for deliverance (Rom. 8:19-22) are some of the word pictures the Bible uses to describe the effect of sin upon the world.—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald® Pub. Assn.), vol. 12, p. 254.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Friday, July 8.

28. We truly cannot even imagine (See 1 Corinthians 2:9; compare Isaiah 64:4 and Jeremiah 3:16.) what it will be like to enter heaven.
29. How much longer do you think our world can survive? What would it mean to be a worshiper of the environment? Would you feel incredibly frustrated if you thought the only hope for the future was to preserve our current world in the best possible condition? We know that everything living on planet earth is interconnected. Is it possible that we could pollute our way to destruction if God did not intervene in time?
30. How could we be good stewards of the earth? Or, are the effects of what our ancestors and others who lived on our planet in the past so overwhelming that anything that we could do now would not make any difference anyway?
31. In trying to understand the significance of our dominion over the lower creatures of the earth, could we learn something about how God exercises His dominion over us?
32. Is it God who will destroy the earth? Or, us? What would happen if we started a nuclear World War III? Soon after World War II and the dropping of the first nuclear bombs, it is reported that someone asked Einstein what kind of weapons would be used in World War III. His response was, "I don't know; but, I can tell you what kind of weapons they will use in World War IV!" The questioner was somewhat surprised and asked what kind of weapons? Einstein's response was, "Rocks!" He was implying that everything would be destroyed by a major nuclear war on planet earth.
33. Is it a sin to use more than our share of the earth's resources? Americans certainly have lived wastefully with respect to the earth's resources for a long period of time!
34. As Seventh-day Adventists, we choose to worship the God who we believe is our Creator.

We do not worship created things. But, do we sometimes idolize things in this life?

35. What should be the correct hierarchy in God's universe? God is certainly over all; then come the angels. Would that include the other heavenly beings? And under them come human beings. Finally, under human beings, we would find the animal kingdom. Is that a correct picture?
36. In recent times, evolutionists and those in the field of biology who have been trying to claim that we are naturally descended from apes have tried to remove the distinction between humans and animals. But, the Bible makes it very clear that only human beings were made in God's image.
37. Can we honestly claim to be different from the animals? Could you explain that successfully to an evolutionist?
38. In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve a wonderful diet of fruits, nuts, and grains. The serpent tried to convince Eve that their diet was not complete. He said that if she would just taste of the forbidden fruit, she would be even wiser, in fact, become like God. That is a technique called *spin* in which the truth is changed or twisted to imply something which it does not mean. *Spin* makes the real unreal and makes the unreal seem real.
39. How does spin affect our lives today? How much of what we hear in public media is corrupted by spin?
40. In the original Hebrew wording of Genesis 3:1-4, the serpent almost implied that God had forbidden them to eat from *any* tree in the garden. That, of course, was absolutely not true. Then, the serpent, in effect, said: "Well, then, you can eat of every tree; right?" And we know what happened.
41. Read Mark 10:37. How do you think Jesus felt when James and John came asking to be given seats next to Him in His new kingdom? Was He seriously disappointed in them? Would He be seriously disappointed in us?
42. By washing the disciples' feet on that incredible final evening He had with them, He gave the ultimate lesson suggesting that those who are Christian leaders are leaders because they serve others. Have we learned that lesson? If everyone in the Adventist Church was prepared to exercise his/her abilities in that direction, how would it affect the world?
43. Can you think of any truly great people who have exhibited the kind of "true greatness" that characterized Jesus?
44. Pets play a very important place in the lives of many human beings. But, where are they in the hierarchy that we have talked about today? Do we sometimes treat our pets better than we treat other human beings?
45. What kinds of things could we do on a regular basis to make our world better?

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