

How to Interpret Scripture

Creation: Genesis as Foundation - Part 1

Lesson #8 for May 23, 2020

Scriptures: John 1:1-3; Genesis 1:3-5; Exodus 20:8-11; Revelation 14:7; Matthew 19:3-6; Romans 5:12.

1. There are not many scholars in our world today who believe in the reliability and authenticity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. This, of course, has arisen out of the ideas of evolution and Satan's attempts to discredit the Scriptures and sow doubts about God's Word in every way he can.
2. How should Christians regard these first few chapters of Genesis?

The first chapters of Genesis are foundational for the rest of Scripture. The major teachings or doctrines of the Bible have their source in these chapters. Here we find the **nature of the Godhead** working in harmony as the Father, Son (*John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1, 2*), and the Spirit (*Gen. 1:2*) to **create** the world and all that is in it, culminating in humanity (*Gen. 1:26-28*). Genesis also introduces us to the **Sabbath** (*Gen. 2:1-3*), the **origin of evil** (*Genesis 3*), the **Messiah and the plan of redemption** (*Gen. 3:15*), the worldwide, universal **flood** (*Genesis 6-9*), the **covenant** (*Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:2, 3, 15-17; Gen. 9:9-17; Genesis 15*), the **dispersal** of languages and people (*Genesis 10, Genesis 11*), and the genealogies that provide the framework for biblical chronology from Creation to Abraham (*Genesis 5, Genesis 11*). Finally, the **power of God's spoken Word** (*Gen. 1:3, 2 Tim. 3:16, John 17:17*), the **nature of humanity** (*Gen. 1:26-28*), **God's character** (*Matt. 10:29, 30*), **marriage** between a man and a woman (*Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:18, 21-25*), **stewardship** of the earth and its resources (*Gen. 1:26; Gen. 2:15, 19*), and the promised **hope of a new creation** (*Isa. 65:17, Isa. 66:22, Rev. 21:1*) are all based on these first chapters, which will be our study this week and next.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, May 16.^{†§}

3. How are we supposed to understand the first few words of Genesis: 1:1? That verse says, "In the beginning...." How long ago was "the beginning"?
4. *Dionysius Exiguus*, Latin for "Dionysius the Humble," (c. A.D. 470–c. A.D. 544) calculated that creation occurred in 4004 B.C. He started working on his calendar around 525 A.D. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysius_Exiguus.) However, that calendar was not fully adopted until *Bede* [*Bede* (/bi:d/ BEED; Old English: B da, Bēda; 672/3 – 26 May 735)] used Exiguus's calculations in his ecclesiastical history which he completed in 731 A.D. *Bede* was also known as *Saint Bede*, *Venerable Bede*, and *Bede the Venerable* (Latin: *Bēda Venerābilis*). He was an English Benedictine monk at the monastery of St. Peter and later wrote the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731 A.D.) which gained him the title, "The Father of English History." Note that some creationists believe that creation must have been earlier than 4004 B.C. But, of course, evolutionists would suggest it began much earlier and has been billions of years in developing. (See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede>.)
5. It is clear that if God created in the beginning, He must have existed before that. Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:1-4; and Hebrews 1:1-2 make it clear that all three Members of the Godhead were together when They said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image." (Genesis 1:26, *NKJV*[†])
6. The Bible repeatedly and in different ways states that we are the creation of God. If correctly

interpreted, science will not contradict the biblical record.

7. Why do you think the New Testament repeatedly says that Jesus was the Agent in creation? (See Hebrews 1:1-2; John 1:3; Revelation 1:8; 22:13.) What does it mean to us to know that we are children of God? See Luke 3:38.
8. Unfortunately, in recent times, people have tried to turn creation week into something non-literal such as a metaphor, parable, or even a myth. We should note that those who call the first 11 chapters of Genesis a *myth* are not suggesting that they are completely false. They are suggesting that they are stories that have been made up to teach important truths.
9. By contrast, what does the Bible say about creation? What kind of “days” are being referred to in Genesis 1?

Genesis 1:3-5: ³Then God commanded, “Let there be light”—and light appeared. ⁴God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, ⁵and he named the light “Day” and the darkness “Night”. Evening passed and morning came—that was the first day.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 1:3-5). New York: American Bible Society.

Exodus 20:8-11: ⁸ “Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. ⁹You have six days in which to do your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. ¹¹**In six days I, the LORD, made the earth, the sky, the sea, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the LORD, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.**”—*Good News Bible.*†*

The Hebrew word *yôm*, or “day,” is used consistently throughout the Creation narrative for a literal day. Nothing in the Genesis Creation narrative indicates that anything other than a literal day was meant, as we understand a single day today. In fact, some scholars who don’t believe the days were literal will, nevertheless, admit that the author’s intention was to depict literal days.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 18.[§]

10. **God Himself designated that the first day included evening and morning.** The terms are in the singular, never plural. Furthermore, talking about the other days of the week, they are named using cardinal numbers. That is, *first, second, third, fourth*, etc. There is no suggestion that these days are separated by any kind of gaps or extended for long periods of time.
11. For those who have questions about God’s ability to create humans in one day, we are reminded that “**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet,**” (1 **Corinthians 15:52, NKJV*†**) **God will re-create all the righteous dead before taking them to heaven!** How does this fit with the idea that God took millions of years through some process of theistic evolution to create us in the first place? Was there death before sin?
12. One only has to look around in our world to realize that the seventh-day Sabbath is under heavy attack. Many European countries are now designating Monday as the first day of the week and Sunday as the seventh day. The Roman Catholic Church in a recent papal encyclical called the seventh-day Sabbath “The Jewish Sabbath” while encouraging the world to observe a day of rest to alleviate global warming. (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* [Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015], 172-173).
13. **The Sabbath is a common theme throughout Scripture.** See Genesis 2:1-3; Mark 2:27-28; and Revelation 14:7 for just a brief overview.

14. There are three important words used to describe the seventh-day Sabbath in Genesis 1 & 2. God *rested* and He *blessed* and then He *made it holy* or *set it apart*. See Genesis 1:22,28; 2:2-3. No other day in the Bible receives those designations.
15. Why do you think the Sabbath has become such an issue? Why is it that in the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6-7, we are called to worship God because He is the Creator?
16. What other issue is discussed in the first 11 chapters of Genesis that is a major issue today?

The last decade has witnessed enormous changes in the way society and governments define marriage. Many nations of the world have approved same-sex marriages, overturning previous laws that have protected the family structure that comprises at its center one man and one woman. This is an unprecedented development in many respects, and it raises new questions about the institution of marriage, the relationship of church and state, and the sanctity of marriage and the family as defined in Scripture.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 20.

17. What does God say about the ideal relationship and marriage?

Genesis 1:26-28: ²⁶ Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small.” ²⁷ So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, ²⁸ blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 2:18,21-23: ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him.”...

²¹ Then the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the flesh. ²² He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him. ²³ Then the man said,

“At last, here is one of my own kind—

Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh.

‘Woman’ is her name because she was taken out of man.”—*Good News Bible*.*

18. Why did God do it that way? Some have suggested that men are superior to women and the reason is because Eve was taken out of Adam. Every woman who has given birth to a child should respond, jokingly, by saying that every male since that day has been taken out of woman! This is a battle not over equality but superiority!
19. It is very important for us to note that the three Members of the Godhead, in a loving relationship with each other, chose to create us male and female with that intended same, loving relationship.
20. In the last decade or so, there has been a huge movement to make homosexual relationships acceptable legally and morally. But, Scripture is unequivocal that God’s intention was for the relationship to take place between a man and a woman. And God intended for that relationship to result in children. Having children is a very important educational experience for human beings. It should teach us a lot of things about God’s relation to us!
21. Jesus Himself made some very clear statements about human marriage.

Matthew 19:3-6: ³ Some Pharisees came to him and tried to trap him by asking, “Does

our Law allow a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason he wishes?"

⁴ Jesus answered, "**Haven't you read the scripture** that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? ⁵And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. No human being must separate, then, what God has joined together."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

22. God sees everything from beginning to end; history has given us an unbroken link between the perfect creation, the fall, the promised Messiah, what He did while on this earth, and the final redemption.

23. Read Genesis 1:31; 2:15-17; and 3:1-7. This is an incredibly sad story. God's perfect creation was spoiled. And the results have continued to cause all kinds of problems in our world from that day to this. What made the snake so "cunning"? He was also able to fly. (See *PP* 53.4.)

24. There is no question about the fact that there was nothing faulty about God's original creation that might have caused sin to happen—neither in the creation of Lucifer in heaven, nor in the creation of Adam and Eve. And God created that beautiful Garden of Eden which was supposed to be our eternal home. There was no taint of sin or shadow of death; Adam and Eve had regular access to the tree of life. They were warned not to eat of that other tree. (Genesis 2:15-17) But, as we know, it happened.

25. Paul commented about the fall as recorded in Romans.

Romans 5:12: Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Romans 6:23: For sin pays its wage—death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

26. **If we were to accept theistic evolution or even Darwinian evolution, then Paul's writings have no meaning. There would have been no time when man first sinned.** And what would be the reason for calling Christ *the second Adam* if there was no *first Adam*?

1 Corinthians 15:45-47: ⁴⁵For the scripture says, "The first man, Adam, was created a living being"; but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit. ⁴⁶It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

27. What have we learned from Genesis in this lesson?

"The cumulative evidence, based on comparative, literary, linguistic and other considerations, converges on every level, leading to the singular conclusion that the designation *yôm*, 'day,' in Genesis 1 means consistently a literal 24-hour day.

"The author of Genesis 1 could not have produced more comprehensive and all-inclusive ways to express the idea of a literal 'day' than the ones that were chosen."—Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/Epochs' of Time?" *Origins* 21/1 (1994), pp. 30, 31.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Friday, May 22].^{‡§}

The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator

and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because these cannot be explained by natural laws, Bible history is pronounced unreliable.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 8, 257.4-258.0.

28. Today, each of us is faced with a serious challenge. So-called science comes up with ideas which seem to contradict the biblical account. What are we supposed to do when faced with such conflicts? **Remember that science is based in the idea that one does something by experiment which s/he can repeat again and again under the same conditions and s/he will get the same results. One-time events such as the creation of our world cannot be repeated again and again and, thus, are criticized by scientists. What about the theory of evolution? No one has been able to repeat any macro-evolutionary event.**
29. Should we seriously accept the idea presented in Scripture that there is a relationship among Adam's sin, his later death, and the plan of salvation which resulted in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross?
30. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, should we have questions about the authenticity of these accounts early in the book of Genesis? How should we relate to evolutionists, even theistic evolutionists? We should love them all! How should we relate to those who question the necessity of sticking to God's definition of marriage?
31. We know that Satan has done everything he possibly can to discredit God, to destroy God's reputation, and to encourage doubts about God's Word. We have suggested in this lesson that **those first 11 chapters of Genesis are foundational to everything else we read in Scripture**. Should it be any surprise that Satan has done everything possible to destroy our confidence in that account? Should faithful Christians be raising questions about the reliability and truthfulness of Genesis? If we do not, guess who will. Can we answer such questions?
32. It is important to notice that these **first 11 chapters of Genesis answer the existential questions for all men and women**. What are the existential questions? What questions have challenged the thinking of human beings from the beginning until our day? (1) Where did I come from? (2) Who am I? (3) Why am I here? (4) What is the purpose and meaning of life? (5) Where am I going? (6) What happens to me after I die? Only God can answer those questions.

Before we were created, in the beginning there was God. He designed an ecosystem for us, creating the habitation of earth perfectly for His new creatures in order to sustain life. Our earth is located at a precise distance from the sun—not too far, and not too close. The sun is perfectly sized so as not to produce too much energy to destroy life. There is abundant water on earth and a breathable atmosphere. The moon is just the right size to control the tides. The magnetic field is fine-tuned to keep us from getting fried by the sun. No wonder that after every stage of Creation, God concludes that it is good (*טוֹב*; *Gen. 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25*), and when it was completed, *טוֹב מְעֹד*, “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 107.[§]

33. **Evolutionists are having more and more trouble trying to explain their model of how things came about by mere chance.** See *Darwin Devolves* by Michael Behe.

The human cell is made up of the tiniest of machines that, in order to function, must have all their parts. Like a mousetrap, you take one part away, and the devices cease to function. Each cell contains a person's DNA. A computer is based on binary code of zeros and ones. DNA is made up of a quaternary code (A, C, G, and T), which is far more complex than a binary code. An entire language with grammar and syntax is associated with DNA, with **three billion**

bases. Moreover, this DNA can replicate itself, and it does so within nearly **40 trillion cells** in the human body. Each of the **200 types of the cells** in the human body has a different function. These are the core building blocks of life, and they work in harmony to carry out the basic functions for a human being to survive. Certainly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. The complexity and the commonality among all human beings and living creatures point to a single Creator who designed life. **But we are not simply machines. We have been given a creative mind, a conscience, and an ability to experience love, hope, and happiness. The conscience of the human mind and the freedom we have to choose and to create are impossible to explain from an evolutionary perspective. How much easier to believe in a Creator who created us in His image and in His likeness (Gen. 1:27).**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 107.^{†§}

34. After creating a perfect ecosystem for us. God determined that:

Humanity was to live in communion with God and with each other. God designed that both male and female were to be biologically, physically, and emotionally the counterpart to each other. They were created to complement each other. They were the “perfect fit” for each other so that Adam could exclaim when Eve was later designed from his rib, “ ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’ ” (*Gen. 2:23, NKJV*). Thus, Adam names her “woman.” Marriage requires that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (*Gen. 2:24, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108.[§]

35. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the first four commandments are focused on our relationship with God while the last six are focused on our relationship with our fellow human beings. It is interesting to notice that after the Sabbath commandment, the next thing that is mentioned is the 5th commandment in which we are to honor our father and mother. (*Exodus 20:12*) God intended for us to live in a world of perfect peace and harmony with loving families who regard God supremely and raise their children in humble obedience. But, sin destroyed all of that. Satan has done everything possible to drive wedges between us and God and between us and those around us.

36. When Jesus comes back, each one of His faithful children will be able to experience something of God’s creative power when we are re-created. Try to imagine that day.

Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation.... Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one” (*Genesis 2:24*), He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the Eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing** 63.2-64.0. Compare *AH* 340.4; *FLB* 253.4.

37. This lesson will prove to be a challenge to many who are still struggling with some of the issues we have discussed. Does that include you?

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