

Three Cosmic Messages

The Sabbath and the End

Lesson #8 for May 20, 2023

Scriptures: James 2:8-13; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Psalm 33:6,9; Revelation 14; 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13; Ephesians 3:9.

1. Do we really believe, and act as if we believed, that we are all “brothers and sisters” descended from a common ancestor, namely God?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The essence of humanity’s dignity is a common Creation. **The fact that we are uniquely created by God places value on every human being.** The unborn in the mother’s womb, the quadriplegic teenager, the young adult with Down’s syndrome, and the Alzheimer-afflicted grandmother all have immense value to God. God is their Father. They are His sons and daughters. “ ‘God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. . . . And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth’ ” (*Acts 17:24–26, NKJV*).

Ours is a shared heritage. We belong to the same family. We are brothers and sisters fashioned, shaped, and molded by the same God. **Creation provides a true sense of self-worth.** When the genes and chromosomes came together to form the unique biological structure of your personality, God threw away the pattern. There is no one else like you in all the universe. You are unique, a one-of-a-kind creation, a being of such immense value that the God who created the cosmos took upon Himself our fleshly bodies and offered Himself as a sacrifice for you and your sins!—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, May 13.^{†‡§}

2. If one carefully thinks of the implications of evolution as compared to our divine creation, the contrasts are incredible.
3. The fact that God tells us that there will be a judgment at the end implies that we have some responsibility. It would not be fair to judge a person over something about which s/he had no control.

[BSG:] **If we are merely a collection of randomly formed cells, simply the product of chance and an advanced African ape, nothing more, then life has little meaning.** If we are merely one of the estimated eight billion people clawing at one another for living space on a planet called earth, life loses its purpose, other than mere survival. In contrast, **the biblical Creation provides a reason to live and a moral imperative for living. We have been created by God and are accountable to Him for our actions. The One who made us holds us responsible.** He has established absolutes, even in a world of “moral relativism.”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, May 14.^{†‡} [However, “my truth” may not be “your truth”!]†

Revelation 14:12: This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*American Bible*

Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Revelation 14:12). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡]

4. This verse tells us that **we are going to be evaluated based on God’s commandments and instructions**. God’s ways are considered to be “light,” while Satan’s misrepresentations are darkness. The judgment will be based on whether or not we choose God’s light.

John 3:17-21: ¹⁷ “For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour [*sic*].

¹⁸ “Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God’s only Son. ¹⁹This is how the judgement works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. ²⁰All those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. ²¹But **those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡} [God is not in the business of condemning His children! (See Romans 6:23.) Instead, God is trying to save as many as possible from the results of sin!][‡]

5. So, God is holding us responsible for obedience and faith. Those who are faithful will be judged favorably and given rewards! We usually think of judgment only of the evil with bad results.

Revelation 14:7: He said in a loud voice, “Honour [*sic*] God and praise his greatness! **For the time has come for him to judge. Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!**”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

Romans 14:10: You then, who eat only vegetables—why do you pass judgement on others? And you who eat anything—why do you despise other believers? **All of us will stand before God to be judged by him.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

James 2:8-13: ⁸ You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, “Love your neighbour [*sic*] as you love yourself.” ⁹But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and **the Law condemns you** as a lawbreaker. ¹⁰Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. ¹¹For the same one who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a lawbreaker if you commit murder. ¹²**Speak and act as people who will be judged by the law that sets us free.** ¹³**For God will not show mercy when he judges the person who has not been merciful; but mercy triumphs over judgement.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

6. **If we were simply the result of a long evolutionary process, we could not be held responsible in any way for our behavior. However, God has created us and given**

us the freedom to make choices. Thus, we are responsible for the decisions we make. God expects us to make those choices in light of not just this world's history, but also in light of all of eternity. The scope involves the entire universe.

7. Heredity and environment are two major forces impacting who we are and how we live. But, these factors need not be overwhelming. We can still choose to do right because it is right. **What relationship do heredity and environment have to the choices we make daily? How can we, by God's grace, overcome character defects that we didn't choose to have in the first place?**

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Those who put their trust in Christ are not to be enslaved by any hereditary or cultivated habit or tendency. Instead of being held in bondage to the lower nature, they are to rule every appetite and passion. God has not left us to battle with evil in our own finite strength. **Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart.**—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing** 175.1-176.0.^{†‡} [The mind filled with trash produces trash. If filled with good, it produces good.][‡]

8. ***The book of Daniel was written about 540 B.C. The book of Revelation was written about A.D. 90. Did God understand what would happen in 1844 when He gave Daniel that 2300-day/year prophecy? Did God already know that in 1844 Charles Darwin would write his book on evolution? Remember that it was not published until 1859, but it was written in 1844, the year of the Great Disappointment and Ellen White's first vision.***

9. **We all should honor and worship God because of His creation, His offer of salvation, His healing, and His final restoration.** The Sabbath is a central part in that entire history. From the first order at creation to keep the Sabbath down until we are told that we will keep it throughout eternity with God in His new earth, **the Sabbath has been and will be a marker of our loyalty to God. The fact that we worship on the seventh-day Sabbath is acknowledgment and evidence of the fact that we believe in a fiat creation which took place in seven literal 24-hour days and that on the seventh day He created the Sabbath for us to worship and fellowship with Him.**

Genesis 2:1-3: ¹And so the whole universe was completed. ²By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. ³**He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation and stopped working.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

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*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 5:12-15: ¹² “ ‘Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy, as I, the LORD your God, have commanded you. ¹³You have six days in which to do your work, ¹⁴but 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. Your slaves must rest just as you do. ¹⁵**Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, the LORD your God, rescued you by my great power and strength. That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath.**’ ”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [God was adding meanings to the Sabbath; He was not changing the meaning.][‡]

10. In Ezekiel’s day, God told him:

Ezekiel 20:12,20: ¹² “**I made the keeping of the Sabbath a sign of the agreement between us, to remind them that I, the LORD, make them holy....**

²⁰ “Make the Sabbath a holy day, so that it will be a sign of the covenant we made, and will remind you that I am the LORD your God.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] Scripture calls us to rest in His love and care each Sabbath. Sabbath is a symbol of rest, not works; of grace, not legalism; of assurance, not condemnation; of depending upon Him, not upon ourselves. Each Sabbath, we rejoice in His goodness, and praise Him for the salvation that can be found only in Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Monday, May 15.[‡]

11. The Sabbath is a rest day, a day of worship and fellowship with God that links humanity, at least those who honestly worship God, from the time of creation to the third coming and the eternal future.

Isaiah 65:17: The LORD says, “I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Revelation 21:1: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Isaiah 66:23: “**On every New Moon Festival and every Sabbath, people of every nation will come to worship me here in Jerusalem,**” says the LORD.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

12. The Sabbath helps us to realize that we were intended by God to be part of something much larger than our human families, cultures, and ideals.

[BSG:] **The Sabbath calls us back to our roots. It’s a link to our family of origin. The Sabbath has been observed continuously since time began.** It is an unbroken connection back through time to our creation. It keeps us focused on the glorious truth that we are children of God. It calls us to an intimate, close relationship with Him.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Monday, May 15.^{†‡} [When thinking about our genealogy, we need to trace it all the way back to God rather than just to our recent ancestry.][‡]

[BSG:] In an attempt to destroy the uniqueness of our creation, the devil [sic] has introduced a not-so-subtle counterfeit. The counterfeit, accepted by even some among us, goes like this. God is the prime cause of creation, but He took long ages to bring life into existence. Evolution was the process He used. This approach attempts to harmonize “scientific data” with the Genesis account. It asserts that the days of creation are long, indefinite periods of time and that life on earth is billions of years old.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 16.‡

Psalm 33:6,9: ⁶ The LORD created the heavens by his command, the sun, moon, and stars by his spoken word....

⁹ When he spoke, the world was created; at his command everything appeared.—*Good News Bible.**

[BSG:] **The first chapter of Genesis affirms that God created the world in six literal days of 24 hours and rested on the seventh. The linguistic structure of Genesis 1 and 2 does not permit anything else. Even scholars who don't believe in the literal six-day Creation acknowledge that the author's intent was to teach the six-day Creation.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 16.†‡

Hebrews 11:3: It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.—*Good News Bible.**

[BSG:] **The Hebrew word for “day” in Genesis 1 is *yom*. Throughout the Bible, every time a number modifies the word *yom* as an adjective (third day, first day, and so on), it limits the time period to 24 hours. Without exception, it is always a 24-hour period.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 16.†‡§ [This is unquestioned by scholars.]‡

13. **The Sabbath is no arbitrary demand placed upon us by God; it is a memorial, a time to celebrate with God, remembering where we came from and where we are going.**

[BSG:] Also, and to the immediate point, **if God did not create the world in six literal days, what significance does the seventh-day Sabbath have?** Why would God command it? It would make absolutely no sense at all to leave the Sabbath as an eternal legacy of a six-day Creation week if a six-day Creation week never existed to begin with. **To accept long ages of creation is to challenge the very need for the seventh-day Sabbath. It also raises serious questions regarding the integrity of Scripture.**

By attacking the Sabbath, Satan is challenging the very heart of God's authority, and what could be more effective in destroying the memorial of the six-day Creation than denying the reality of the six-day Creation? No wonder so many people, including Christians, ignore the seventh-day Sabbath. What a setup for the final deception.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 16.†‡

14. For thousands of years, beginning in heaven, Satan has done everything that he could/can to destroy God's influence and the peace of the universe. He is still doing it! Notice how all of this conflict started. It was not here on earth; it was in heaven!

Revelation 12:7-12: ⁷ Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, who fought back with his angels; ⁸ but **the dragon was defeated, and he and his angels were not allowed to stay in heaven any longer.** ⁹ The huge dragon was thrown out—that ancient serpent, called the Devil, or Satan, that deceived the whole world. He was thrown down to earth, and all his angels with him.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, **“Now God's salvation has come! Now God has shown his power as King! Now his Messiah has shown his authority! For the one who stood before our God and accused our brothers and sisters day and night [Satan] has been thrown out of heaven.** ¹¹ Our brothers and sisters won the victory over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the truth which they proclaimed; and they were willing to give up their lives and die. ¹² And so be glad, you heavens, and all you that live there! But how terrible for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you, and he is filled with rage, because he knows that he has only a little time left.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

15. **The great controversy did not start on this earth; it started in heaven.** However, it was won by Jesus Christ, taking human nature and living that sinless life and dying that awful second death, separated from His Father. It will finally be finished after the third coming when God shall cleanse this earth to make it His eternal home. How could we not honor God after learning all of this?
16. Revelation 14 calls on us to worship God, not to worship the Devil/dragon. We are called to faithfully keep the commandments of God and remain faithful to Jesus.
17. It is interesting to note that in these verses in the last book of the Bible, we are reminded of what happened back in the first few verses of the Bible.

[BSG:] The real issue in the last days is our love and loyalty to Jesus. But according to the Bible, this love is expressed in obedience to the commandments (*1 John 5:3, Rev. 14:12*)—and the Sabbath alone among the commandments is behind everything because it alone points to God as Creator (*Exod. 20:8–11*). No wonder **it will be the outward symbol of the final divide between those who worship the Lord and those who worship the beast (*Rev. 14:11, 12*).** Considering how basic and fundamental the Sabbath is to everything else, it's hard to see how the final issue of worshiping the Creator could be about anything else.

Many people argue that it makes no difference what day one keeps as the Sabbath, as long as we keep one. How do we answer that argument with the Bible?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 17.^{††§} [What is symbolized by your worship? **It is the meaning of your worship that counts.**][‡]

18. **If the great controversy were just over an arbitrary command to worship on a certain day and not any other, that would be true.** However, the Sabbath has so many meanings attached to it that to refuse to worship on that day is to reject God's entire plan of salvation.

[BSG:] **The Sabbath is a place of refuge in a weary world. Each week we leave the cares of this world and enter God's retreat center—the Sabbath. The famed Jewish author Abraham Heschel calls the Sabbath “a palace in time.”—*The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), p. 12. Each seventh day, God's heavenly palace descends from heaven to earth, and the Lord invites us into the glory of His presence for this 24-hour period to spend a time of intimate fellowship with Him. [If someone important invites you to come and meet with him/her, do you go? Or, do you argue about the appointment date?]**

In the introduction to Heschel's book on the beauty and solemnity of the Sabbath, Susannah Heschel, his daughter, writes of the significance of the Sabbath in these words: **“The Sabbath is a metaphor for paradise and a testimony to God's presence; in our prayers, we anticipate a messianic era that will be a Sabbath, and each Shabbat prepares us for that experience: Unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath . . . one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come.”—Page XV.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 18.^{†‡§}**

19. It is a wonderful thing to realize that the God who created our perfect world in the beginning will do it again at the end. And we will continue to worship God every Sabbath.

Isaiah 66:23: [Reading again:] **“On every New Moon Festival and every Sabbath, people of every nation will come to worship me here in Jerusalem,” says the LORD.**—*Good News Bible.*^{*†‡}

20. We live in a world full of anxiety and despair, even depression. The answer to that is to realize that we are supposed to be a part of God's glorious plan to restore everything to its original condition.

21. Revelation 4:11 tells us that all of heaven rejoices because God is our Creator.

Revelation 4:11: “Our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory, honour [*sic*], and power. For you created all things, and by your will they were given existence and life.”—*Good News Bible.*^{*‡}

Exodus 20:11: [Reading again:] “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.*^{*‡}

[BSG:] “Within the Decalogue the Sabbath commandment stands as its seal in that it identifies who God is—the Creator; confirms the territory over which He rules—everything He created; and reveals His right to rule—for He

created everything. In order for the dragon to succeed, he had somehow to set aside this memorial.”—Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels’ Messages,” unpublished manuscript, pp. 40, 41.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 19].‡

22. Many have recognized the fact that **the Sabbath and the meanings that God has attached to it answer the great existential questions:**

- Where did we come from? God created us.
- Why are we here? And how can we achieve the best good while we are here? We are to learn to be like Him.
- Where do we go when our lives on this earth are finished? God’s plan is for us to join Them in the earth made new.

23. We have been told very clearly that Satan will make the keeping or not keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial to God the final test of our loyalty to God or our loyalty to Satan. Do we understand all those issues? Please review Revelation 12-14. Why will almost the whole world end up worshiping the Devil? What does God have to say about that?

[BSG:] The fact that there is a judgment implies that human beings can make moral choices. If we merely evolved, there would be no real basis for free will. If everything were determined by our heredity or environment, we would not be capable of exercising our freedom of choice.

William Provine, professor of history of biology at Cornell University, acknowledges that evolution and free will are incompatible. In a lecture delivered on February 12, 1998, he made this remarkable statement: “Naturalistic evolution has clear consequences that Charles Darwin understood perfectly . . . [including the idea that] human free will is nonexistent. . . . Free will is a disastrous and mean social myth.”—William Provine, abstract for “Evolution: Free Will and Punishment and Meaning in Life,” talk delivered on Feb. 12, 1998, <https://www.discovery.org/a/9581/>. [<https://www.discovery.org/a/9581/> but not a link in the Bible study guide].

Free will is certainly not a “mean social myth.” It is an inalienable gift, given by God to each one of us. If you do away with free will, there is no way to determine right and wrong. If there is a judgment, there must be a law that is the basis of that judgment.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 107.†‡ [Brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph are in the Bible study guide except for the website link.]‡

John 3:17-21: [Reading again:]¹⁷ “For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

¹⁸ “Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God’s only Son. ¹⁹**This is how the judgement works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.** ²⁰All those who do evil things hate the light and will

not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

24. Satan will do everything he possibly can to force us to join his side in the great controversy. However, **God will never use force**. God’s government is based on love; force is not appropriate in God’s kingdom.

[EGW:] **In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve.** In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. “The truth shall make you free;” [John 8:32] and Christ is the truth. **Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul.** Subjection to God is restoration to one’s self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is “the law of liberty.” James 2:12.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 466.4-5.†† [We tend to think of governmental laws as restrictions such as speed limits, the requirement to pay taxes, etc. However, God’s laws are to set us free.]†

25. In fact, surrendering to God and living a life according to His plan for us is the only way to true freedom.

[EGW:] **All true obedience comes from the heart [the mind].** It was heart work with Christ. **And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.3.††

26. Remember that **God did not coerce Lucifer/Satan to obey. He did not coerce Adam and Eve to do what He told them to do; He will not coerce us to obey today.**

[EGW:] [Before the first coming of Jesus,] The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the**

service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 22.1.†‡

[BSG:] **In the devil's [sic] final deception, he will attempt to coerce God's people to serve him.** Through restricting their ability to buy or sell, through ridicule and slander, through persecution, imprisonment, and even death, [Revelation 13:15-17] he will pressure them to conform. While Revelation 14:7 invites us to worship the Creator, Revelation 14:9 warns against worshiping the beast. **The final conflict between good and evil is over worship.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108.†‡

[BSG:] **In a chaotic, uncertain world, the Sabbath is an oasis of peace.** It points us to our Creator, who gives us the assurance of security and safety in His presence. The Sabbath is a place of refuge, a sanctuary in time that descends from heaven to earth each week. It unites us in a common bond with our brothers and sisters in Christ. **The Sabbath is the great equalizer.** Worshiping together on Sabbath, we recognize anew, we understand afresh, that we are part of the great web of humanity, created by God, and that He has "made of one blood all nations" (*Acts 17:26*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 106.†‡§

Acts 17:26: [Paul said to the people of Athens:] "From one human being he created all races on earth and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live."—*Good News Bible*.*‡

[BSG:] In the final days of earth's history, the world will be brought to a test over the fourth commandment: " 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy' " (*Exod. 20:8, NKJV*). The commandment that leads all humanity to worship the Creator will be substituted by a counterfeit day of worship. Once again, God will have a people who are faithful to Him. Revelation 14:12 declares: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (*NKJV*). God's remnant, His last-day people, will endure to the end. By His grace and through His power, they will "keep His commandments."—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108.†§

27. Are we ready for this? Will we be able to stand up to the Devil no matter what he does? Would we be willing to die for the truth?

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