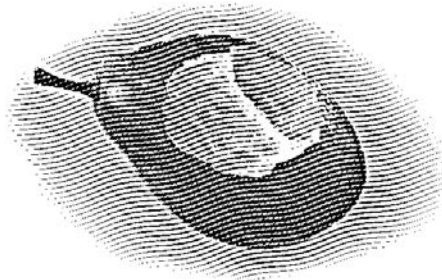


Creation and Morality¹



SABBATH—JANUARY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 1:26–28; James 3:9; Acts 17:26; Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 5:44–48; Revelation 20:11–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD God gave the man a command. He said, ‘You can eat the fruit of any tree that is in the garden. But you must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you can be sure that you will die’ ” (Genesis 2:16, 17, NIV).

PEOPLE LOVE TO TALK ABOUT “HUMAN RIGHTS.” There are, and have been, many documents throughout the world and throughout history that have discussed this topic. For example, there are the Magna Carta² (1215), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen³ (1789), and different United Nations documents. These different documents all say that humans have equal rights. These are rights that no one can rightfully take away from us. They are ours because we are human.

The questions remain: what are these rights? How are we to decide what they are? Can these rights change? If so, how so? And why should we, as humans, have these rights, anyway?

In some countries, for example, women were not given the “right” to vote until the twentieth century. (Some nations still deny it.) But how can a government give people something that is their right to begin with?

Hard questions! Their answers are connected with the question of human beginnings. This is the study for this week’s lesson.

1. morality—beliefs about what is right behavior and what is wrong behavior.

2. Magna Carta—a famous document protecting the rights of Englishmen.

3. French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen—a law protecting the rights of the French people.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 27**OUR DEPENDENCE ON THE CREATOR (Genesis 2:16, 17)**

Genesis 2:7 shows God creating Adam. It shows that He makes him as a smart, spiritual person rather than as an animal. The verse does not describe Him doing so, but we can imagine God using His hands to make the dust into a man. A person might think that God is so great that He would not bother to “get His hands dirty” in the making of man. But the Bible shows that the Creator is closely involved with the creation. The Bible shows many such examples of God working with people. The examples include Exodus 32:15, 16; Luke 4:40; and John 9:6. But really, the greatest example is Christ Himself becoming human flesh. In this way, He could become involved with the created world in the same way we do. This shows that God would bend so low as to “get His hands dirty” among people.

Read Genesis 2:16, 17. What command does God give to Adam? What meaning do we get from this command?

We may ask, What right did God have to make rules for Adam and Eve? But compare⁴ this situation to a family. A child’s parents give the child a home and all of life’s needs. They love the child and wish to see the

child grow up to be a good and wise adult. The parents’ greater experience and wisdom can save the child much trouble if that child will accept their guidance. Some children find this guidance hard to accept. Yet, as long as the child depends on his or her parents for his or her needs, he or she needs to accept the parents’ rules. In the same way, we depend on our heavenly Father for life and life’s needs. So, it makes sense for us to accept God’s guidance. Because He is a God of love, we can trust Him to always take care of what we need for our own good.

Read Psalm 95:6, 7 and Psalm 100. How does the writer of psalms show our need for God? How does our need for God make us responsible for treating other people with kindness?



A person might easily imagine God using His hands to make Adam out of the dust.

4. compare—to show how two things are the same or different.

MONDAY—JANUARY 28**IN THE IMAGE (LIKENESS) OF GOD (Genesis 1:26–28)**

Read Genesis 1:26–28. What special gift is given to mankind that is not given to the animals?

What does “the image of God” really mean? This question has caused a great deal of discussion. And people have different opinions about the answer. But the verses give some clues (hints) about the nature (real meaning) of the idea. First, to be made in the image of God suggests that we are almost the same as God in some ways. One important part of the idea of the image of God is that God gave humans control over the other living things. As God is Ruler over all, so He has chosen humans to be responsible for control over the fish, the birds, and the land animals.

God also planned to make man in “our” image, which involved the Three Members of the Godhead. Then God made humans male and female. Because of this, the image of God is not fully shown in just one person but in a relationship between people. This is because the Godhead is shown in Three Persons who are in relationship to each other. In humans, the image of God is shown in the relationship of the male and the female. This ability to form relationships is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. But relationships mean

responsibility, which means morality (holy living). So, right here we are given a strong hint at how morality is connected with the Creation story.

Read Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9. How is the idea of humans being made in the “image of God” clearly connected with morality?

Humans have struggled for thousands of years with the question of morality. Even before we get into what the right kind of morality is, the whole idea of morality itself raises many deep issues (problems). Why should humans, as opposed to beetles, fleas, or even chimps, have the ability to choose between right and wrong? People are made of matter (atoms, electrons, and so forth) just as animals and insects are. So, how can humans alone know what moral issues are? The answer can be found in the early chapters of the Bible. The Bible shows humans to be moral⁵ people made “in the image of God.”



The image of God is not fully shown in a person but in a relationship.

5. moral—able to choose between right and wrong.

TUESDAY—JANUARY 29**MADE OF ONE BLOOD (Acts 17:26)**

In Genesis 2:23, Adam is given the job of naming his wife. He calls her *Havah*. The word *havah* is connected with the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which means “to live.” (Jews sometimes use the related word *lehayim*, meaning “to life!”). So, the Hebrew word for “Eve” (*Havah*) can be translated as “life-giver.” Eve’s name shows the fact that she is the mother of all humans. It shows that we are all one family.

Read Acts 17:26. How does Paul connect the brotherhood of all people with the Creation? Compare with Matthew 23:9.

We are all the same in that we have come from one woman, Eve, and from one man, Adam. And God is the Father of us all. This makes us all equal. Think how different human relations would be if all people understood this important truth. Have we ever needed proof of how sinful we are or of how badly sin has damaged us? If we have, we have that proof in the sad fact that humans often treat one another worse than some animals treat other animals.

Read Proverbs 14:31 and Proverbs 22:2. How do these verses help us to understand the connection between morality and the fact

that we are created by God?

Many things have divided the human race, whether these things were political, national, ethnic (geographic; belonging to different race groups), or, of course, economic. The economic divisions are probably one of the greatest problems. For example, the workers of the world never have united (become one). Instead, they have warred against each other because of their nationalities. Also today, as always, the poor and the rich often treat one another with suspicion and distrust. How often these feelings have led to fights, even war! Yet, the causes of people becoming poor and the answer to this problem still puzzle us. (Read Matthew 26:11.) But one thing is sure because we know it to be from the Word of God (Bible): rich or poor, we all deserve to be treated equally and honorably. We have this right because of our beginnings.

Years ago, Charles Darwin’s theory of beginnings became popular. The rich used it as an excuse for taking advantage of the poor. They called their ability to do so “social Darwinism.” They argued that in the natural world, the strong overcome and “use” the weak. So, they thought, why not use the same principle (rule) in economics? But how is this another example of why a correct understanding of origins is important to the understanding of morality?



We all come from one mother, Eve. We are one family.

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 30

THE CHARACTER (WHO GOD IS) OF OUR CREATOR (Luke 10:29–37)

God created us in His image. This means that He planned for us to be like Him in character. So, we are to be almost the same as Him, within our limitations as humans. To be like God is not the same thing as wanting to be God. This is a very important difference. To be like God means that we just reflect (show) His character. To do so we must have a proper understanding of what that character is.

Read Matthew 5:44–48. How do these verses show that we should reflect God’s character in our own lives?

Read Luke 10:29–37. Again, what does this show about the character of God and how it should be shown among people? Read also Philippians 2:1–8.

The story Jesus told involved two men from different groups of people. These groups were bitter against each other. But Jesus showed that they were neighbors. This meant that each was within the other’s area of responsibility. And God was pleased when they set their differences aside and treated each other with kindness and mercy.

We can see that this story shows a sharp difference between the principles (rules) of God’s kingdom and the principles of Satan’s rulership (way of ruling). God calls the strong to care for the weak. But Satan’s principles call for the strong to take advantage of the weak. God created a world of peaceful relationships. But Satan has twisted the world so much that many think that the strong should survive while the weak should not. They think that if the strong’s defeat of the weak was the way we came into life, why should we do anything different now? However, if we accept this view, we are not following God’s principles as He taught them. This is why we must not take advantage of the ones who are weaker than we are.

What are other ways in which you can see how an understanding of our beginnings can influence our thoughts on moral (holy) living?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 31

MORALITY (HOLY LIVING) AND ACCOUNTABILITY (RESPONSIBILITY) (Revelation 20:11–13)

In an earlier lesson, we studied the sermon Paul gave to the men in Athens (Acts 17:16–31). Follow the line of reasoning Paul used. Study not just where he started but where he ended. What is so important in the closing argument he made about the question of beginnings and morality?

Paul's sermon to the men of Athens began with Creation and ended with judgment. According to Paul, the God who made the world and everything in it fixed a day on which He will judge the world. This means that to be moral (righteous) means to be accountable (responsible). Each of us will be held responsible for our actions and our words. (Read Ecclesiastes 12:14 and Matthew 12:36, 37.)

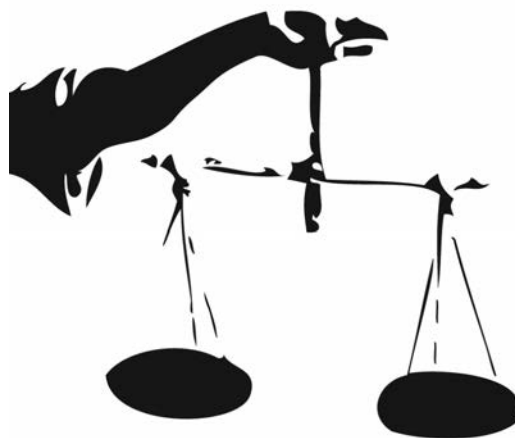
Read Revelation 20:11–13 and Matthew 25:31–40. What is clearly taught in these verses about morality?

Everyone who ever lived will meet together to face God's judgment. The difference among the groups in Jesus' parable⁶ is how each treated those who were poor. This story shows that the Creator is interested in how His people treat each other, especially those who are poor. There is no place in heaven for selfish people. Selfishness is opposed to the character (who God is) of the God of peace.

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that one day God Himself will

bring the justice that is so lacking in the world. The whole idea of a judgment suggests that there is a right way to live. Why would God judge and punish if there were no moral standards to hold people to?

Think about how certain the judgment to come is. What hope do the gospel and the promise of salvation in Christ give us in that judgment?



God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world.

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: According to the Bible, Adam was the first man who was specially created from the dust by God. Our understanding of the beginning of morality is founded in the beginning of Adam. Therefore, a Bible understanding of morality cannot be separated from a Bible understanding of beginnings.

How, then, should we classify the

6. parable—a short simple story that teaches a truth.

fossils of early man? Adam was the first human. So, it would not be possible for any fossils to come before Adam or other humans. Then where did these fossils come from? There are several possible answers.

First, the humanlike fossils might be forms of humans with normal brains but with different growth patterns than any present-day human. A second idea is that the fossils may have been imperfect because of the humans' lifestyle, environment, or other reasons. A third idea is that they may be the results of Satan's efforts (work) to spoil creation in ways we do not understand. Another idea is that the fossils belonged to those who were not humans. They were animals that were nearly the same as humans. Different people may have different opinions. But because we do not have strong proof to settle the matter, it is best to not be too firm in our guesses. Fossils do not come with labels that say "Made in China 500 million years ago." Scientists have many different understandings of earth history. The earth gives us clues as to how we can interpret fossils. But we do not have proof of

our interpretations. They are, in the end, just interpretations!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Think of what it would mean if there were no Creator who gave moral principles to all people. Where would moral principles come from? Many people do not believe in God. But they hold to some strict moral principles. On what basis, without God, might people be able to develop moral principles? What are some possible principles that they could come up with? What would be the greatest weakness in all of them?

❷ How does our view of Creation shape or form our opinions about current issues such as euthanasia,⁷ cloning,⁸ and abortion?⁹

❸ A local citizen who volunteered his time to give tours at the Nazi concentration camp of Dachau began the tour by talking about Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. He suggests that Darwin's theory led to Dachau. Does that idea make sense? In what ways might the tour guide be mistaken?

7. euthanasia—the act or practice of killing someone who is very sick or injured in order to prevent any more suffering.

8. cloning—making an exact copy of a person, animal, or plant.

9. abortion—a medical procedure used to end a pregnancy by causing the death of the fetus.