

# Creation, Again



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Rev. 21:1–5, Gen 3:19, 1 Cor. 15:52–58, Gen. 6:11–13, Isa. 11:6–9, John 14:1–3.*

**Memory Text:** “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13, NIV).

In 2 Peter 3:10–13, Peter describes the fate of heaven and earth. Both, along with all that they contain, will be destroyed. But that's not the end of the story, not by a long shot, because a new heaven and a new earth will be created in their stead.

Look at the contrast between the two existences. Sin has dominion in the old one; righteousness dwells in the new. Death rules in the old one; life in the new. The contrast couldn't be more striking or absolute.

As we can see in these promises, too, God's role as Creator didn't end with the first Creation of the earth. It doesn't end with the work that He does in us, to make us new creatures in Christ either. No, it continues. The same Lord who through the supernatural power of His Word created the world once will create it again, and with His supernatural power too.

Indeed, without this last act of creation, all the previous ones would come to nothing. The new heavens and the new earth are the culmination of God's promises to us.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 30.*

## A New Beginning

One thing that science and the Bible do have in common is the belief that this earth, as we know it now, is not going to last forever. For science (at least some versions of it), the same cold and mindless forces of chance that brought the earth and life on it into existence are the same cold and mindless forces of chance that are going to, eventually, destroy it. The Bible, too, teaches that this earth isn't going to last forever but will, indeed, be destroyed. In the scenario that science offers, however, that destruction is the end of everything forever; in contrast, in the biblical scenario, it's the start of something brand new and wonderful and that lasts forever, as well.

**Read** Revelation 21:1–5. What picture of the future is presented here? What wonderful promises await us? Why is this something that only God can do for us?

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No question, one of the best promises of our new existence is that death and suffering will be forever gone. It is clear that God does not regard these experiences as positive. They were not in the Creation that God pronounced “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). They are alien intruders; they were never meant to be part of the original Creation, and they won't be part of the new one either. Jesus came to destroy these things, and we will never have to experience them again.

The new creation brings a new beginning. This wretched experiment with sin will be over. The results are in, and they are clear: sin brings death and suffering, and God's law is the law of life.

As God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and with them we are all offered a new beginning. Only God, only the Creator, could do this for us. And it all comes to us through the work of Jesus in our behalf. Without the plan of salvation, we'd have no hope for anything beyond that which this life now offers, a pretty dismal thought.

**Why are these promises of a new existence so crucial to us? What would our faith be without them?**

## From Dust to Life

**Read** Genesis 2:7 and 3:19. From what was Adam made, and what was the result of his sin?

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God created Adam from the dust, and he became a living being. As long as he maintained his relationship with God, his life would continue. When Adam sinned, he became separated from the Source of life. As a result, he died and returned to dust.

**Read** Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. What will happen to those who sleep in the dust?

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The promise of the resurrection provides hope for the Christian. Job expressed this hope, saying, “And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (*Job 19:26, NKJV*). For the faithful, death is only temporary. The God who formed Adam from the dust and breathed life into him has not forgotten how to create humans from dust. The resurrection will be an act of creation just as much as was the original creation of Adam.

**Read** 1 Corinthians 15:52–58. What is taught here that is so inextricably linked to the Genesis Creation account?

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The resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Jesus is going to happen instantaneously. As with the first creation of humankind, it will be a supernatural event in which God does everything. All this is in blatant contradiction to theistic evolution. After all, if God isn't going to use millions of years of evolution to re-create us, but does so in an instant, then He certainly could have created us without evolution in the first round. Thus, as with everything else in the Bible, the hope of the resurrection is more biblical evidence that refutes theistic evolution.

**What should it tell us about the limits of science that, regarding something as crucial and fundamental as the resurrection, science offers us little light?**

## Restoration of Human Dominion

**Compare** Genesis 1:28 with John 12:31. What was the status of Adam and Eve in the newly created world? Who seized power and became the ruler of this world?

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Adam was given the responsibility to be ruler of the world. When he sinned, Adam’s dominion was compromised. Satan now exercised his power in the creation, causing the corruption and violence that we see everywhere.

After the Cross, however, Jesus won back the earth from Satan’s dominion (*see Matt. 28:18, Rev. 12:10, John 12:31*). And even though Satan is still allowed to operate on the earth and do damage, we can rejoice in the knowledge that Satan’s days are numbered: Christ’s victory on the cross guarantees that.

**Read** 2 Timothy 2:11, 12 and Revelation 5:10. What truths can we glean from these texts? *See also 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.*

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Those who are saved will be given authority as kings and priests. The idea of kingship implies some kind of authority; the idea of priests carries with it the implication of acting in communication between God and other creatures, perhaps even with those from other created worlds, those who have never known the experience of sin and the woe that it brings.

**“All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God’s redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 677. What do you think it means to “enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings”? What could we learn from unfallen beings? And they from us?**

## More Restoration

In the world that we know, predation is a common way of life among the animals. The term “food chain” is a familiar reminder of the importance of predation in our ecology, and we have difficulty imagining a world without it. But in the beginning, all land creatures ate green plants (*Gen. 1:30*). No animals fed on other animals. Genesis 1:30 does not mention the food of the sea creatures, but the same principles would likely apply, so that God could review the entire Creation and declare it “very good.”

**Read** Genesis 6:11–13, 9:2–4. **By the time of the Flood, what changes had occurred in nature? What further deterioration occurred in the relationship between humankind and beast after the Flood?**

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What had started as a peaceful kingdom had become filled with corruption, violence, and evil. These are the results of sin. The world that once was “very good” had become so bad that it called for its own destruction.

After the Flood, the animals became afraid of humans. This included the creatures of land, air, and sea. This is obviously in contrast to the previous situation. It appears that the dominion of humans over the animals was reduced at this time.

**Read** Isaiah 65:25, 11:6–9. **How are the relationships among the creatures in our present world different from those promised by God in the future?**

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Through the beauty of this poetic language, Isaiah shows us that there will be no violence in the new world. Corruption and violence, those characteristics of the pre-Flood world that called for their destruction, will both be absent from the new one. It will be a world of harmony and cooperation, a peaceable kingdom. We are so used to violence, predation, and death that it’s hard for us to imagine anything else.

**As we can see, the gospel is so much about restoration. Though, of course, God alone can do the final restoration, what choices can we make that can help to bring about some needed restoration now?**

## The Restoration of Relationship With God

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 7. After the Fall, however, that close relationship was radically altered in many ways.

**Read** Genesis 3:24, Exodus 33:20, and Deuteronomy 5:24–26. What did sin do to the close relationship that existed between humanity and God?

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Sin had broken the relationship between God and humanity. God sent the couple away from His presence for their own protection. Humans could no longer see God’s face and live.

The Lord, though, of His own initiative, brought in the plan of salvation, through which the broken relationship could be healed, even at a terrible cost to Himself.

**Read** John 14:1–3 and Revelation 22:3–5. What promise did Jesus extend to His disciples just before He went to the cross, and what will be the result?

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God and humanity are to be reunited, at peace, and meeting face to face. The earth will be without any curse, and all that has been lost will be restored. The redeemed will be given a new environment, a new life, a new dominion, a new peace with the rest of the creation, and a new relationship with God. The original purpose behind the creation of humans will now be fulfilled. God, the human race, and the creation will be in harmony, and that harmony will last forever.

**Even now, before the re-creation of heaven and earth, how can we learn to enjoy a close communion with God? What choices do we make that affect our relationship with God, either in positive or negative ways?**

**Further Study:** “And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. . . .

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Gather as many texts as you can (especially from the book of Revelation) that talk about what the restored earth will be like. Discuss in class what these texts are saying. What aspects of the restored earth do you find the most appealing? What aspects are hardest to understand?
- 2 How is the doctrine of Creation as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2 related to the doctrine of the re-creation of the heavens and the earth? How are we supposed to understand this re-creation if theistic evolution were true?
- 3 Read Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16, 17. What is Paul saying here, and how can we draw comfort from these words for ourselves?
- 4 Dwell more on this whole concept of the gospel as “restoration.” What does the word imply? What is restored? How is it restored? And what role do we have, if any, in the whole process?
- 5 What does the promise of a new heaven and a new earth reveal to us about the character of God?

## God and the Devil Worshiper

Benjamin Sam was a Global Mission pioneer in a primitive highlands region on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. While visiting the ailing village chief, he faced down soldiers with guns pointed at his head and prayed for healing for the chief. God helped him to raise up a small congregation in the highland village, and today a school and a small church stand as testimonies of God's power to change hearts.

Benjamin transferred to a region on the southern plains of the island. There he visited the people and found many who wanted to know more about Jesus. He held two weeks of evangelistic meetings in the village.

On the first night of the meetings a devil priest named Bem and his wife entered the meeting area and sat down. The next night they returned, but that night the devil whom Bem worshiped became angry and wouldn't let Bem sleep. Bem's joints swelled and became painful, and the devil told him, "I will kill you if you leave me." Bem became fearful and cried out, "I'm going to die!" Then he told his startled wife that the devil was attacking him and had threatened to kill him.

Early the next morning Bem's wife came to tell Benjamin what her husband had said the night before. Benjamin visited Bem's home and told him that the devil was a defeated enemy of God, and Bem didn't have to fear his power. Benjamin told Bem and his wife that Jesus had cast out many demons during his lifetime. "Jesus even raised a dead child and a dead man," he said, referring to Jairus's daughter and Lazarus. Bem and his wife listened in awed silence.

Benjamin invited the couple to kneel with him while he asked Jesus to cast out the demon from Bem's life. Benjamin prayed for Bem and his family. When Benjamin ended his prayer, Bem told Benjamin that the devil had left him.

Following the evangelistic meetings Bem and his wife asked to be baptized. At the baptismal service, Bem shared how Jesus had cast out the demons he had once worshiped. "Now I am a follower of the true God, Jesus Christ," he said.

Bem shares his new faith with those he used to serve as a devil priest. A small congregation of believers now worships in this village, evidence of God's redeeming love.

Our mission offerings help to reach people everywhere who need to hear God's message of love and forgiveness.

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BENJAMIN SAM served as a Global Mission pioneer until he was asked to pastor a congregation near Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands.



Although the 12 books that end the Old Testament are referred to as the “Minor Prophets,” their message is a powerful one. Over and over again in these books, the Lord pleads with His people to repent, to put away their sins, to return to Him to find life, not death, to find salvation, not damnation, to find hope and not despair. The second quarter lesson study entitled “Seek the Lord and Live!”: Major Lessons From Minor Prophets by Zdravko Stefanovic will explore this powerful message of God’s grace toward undeserving sinners. There is nothing “minor” about the messages in these books. The message contained in them is present truth, God’s message to us today just as it was to those who lived in the time of these prophets who, though long gone, still speak. Our response should be to heed these valuable lessons.

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### Lesson 1—Spiritual Adultery (Hosea)

#### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **A Strange Command** (*Hosea 1:2, 3, NIV*)

MONDAY: **Spiritual Adultery** (*Hosea 2:8–13*)

TUESDAY: **A Promise of Restoration** (*Hosea 2; Hosea 3:1, 2*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Case Against Israel** (*Hosea 4:1–3*)

THURSDAY: **A Call to repentance** (*Hosea 4:6*)

**Memory Text**—*Hosea 2:23, NIV*

**Sabbath Gem:** Even amid spiritual adultery and divine judgment, God’s love for His people never wavered.

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### Lesson 2—Love and Judgment: God’s Dilemma (Hosea)

#### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Easily Deceived and Senseless** (*Hosea 7:11, 12, NIV*)

MONDAY: **A Trained Heifer** (*Hosea 10:11–13*)

TUESDAY: **A Toddling Son** (*Hosea 11:1, 3, NKJV*)

WEDNESDAY: **Compassion Stronger Than Anger** (*Hosea 11:8, 9, NASB*)

THURSDAY: **Healed, Loved, and Nurtured** (*Hosea 14*)

**Memory Text**—*Hosea 12:6, NIV*

**Sabbath Gem:** Hosea reveals more of God’s love for His wayward people.

**Lessons for the Visually Impaired** The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.