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The Answer From Above

*Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels
hierarchies?*

With that pained utterance, the German poet Rilke asked what modern humanity—whose outlines have been sketched by Darwin, then colored in with the soulless hues of science—has long asked.

Why not, considering the dismal picture evolution paints of human origins? According to this scenario, about fifteen billion years ago a tremendous explosion created matter, energy, time, and space all at once. Atoms condensed into gaseous clouds, stars coalesced from whirling strands of fire and light, and from those stars, molten globules hardened into planets, including our own. Shallow water fermented, simple life forms, emerged by chance, and millions of years later, human beings. If the temperatures had been warmer or colder or if gravity had been slightly off, none of us would be here.

No wonder Rilke asked, Is anyone above listening? Is there anyone above us? Is there even an *above* us—something besides what we, with all our sophisticated gadgetry, could ever see? Are we here only by design of cold forces that operate with no purpose and yet gave us hearts and minds that cry out for purpose? (How cruel to be creatures who want answers in a world that offers none.)

Worse than no purposeful creator would be one with evil designs on us. The fact that a god exists doesn't automatically mean good news. Ancient mythologies crowd the heavens with cruel deities. Better to take a chance with the cold, lifeless forces of the cosmos than with an evil god who takes pleasure in our sorry lot.

Fortunately, the Bible teaches that there is a Creator God, Jesus, who loves the human race. Far from taking pleasure in our sorry lot, He has shared it, suffering worse than we ever could. His sufferings climaxed at the Cross, the topic for this quarter.

Years ago, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about a madman who shouted in a marketplace, "What were we doing when we unchained this earth from the sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, side-ward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we

not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?" His point was that all moral and spiritual foundations have been shattered, leaving humans to plunge aimlessly in all directions through a purposeless and *infinite nothingness*.

Scripture says the opposite. The spikes in His hands, in His feet, not only nailed Jesus to the cross but nailed the earth to heaven in ways that nothing could sever. The Cross shows this tiny planet that we are not alone and that our Creator has linked Himself to us through our pain.

All through the Bible, from Creation through the birth of Jesus, God reveals to us that He is intimately involved in humanity. The incarnation of Christ, where the Creator dwelt among His

The spikes in His hands not only nailed Jesus to the cross but nailed the earth to heaven.

creation in human form, was amazing enough. But that God should, in this incarnation, substitute Himself for us *and bear the full brunt of His own divine wrath against sin, all in order to save us from that wrath?* Who even can begin to grasp what this sacrifice means? We'll need eternity to fathom it (in the meantime, we'll cover what we can in the next three months).

Though we follow the plan of redemption down through the ages, we will focus on the final week of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. From here we will reflect on the meaning of the Cross and what it offers to us who claim it as the foundation of our salvation.

Who, if we cried out, would hear us from above?

The Cross not only answers who has heard us from above, it is the answer from above.

Our principal contributor, Pastor Brian Jones, recently served as coordinator and materials developer for a multilanguage Bible information ministry, sponsored by the Upper Columbia Conference, in Spokane, Washington. Brian, the author of two previous quarterlies of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, has a Ph.D. in Christian counseling; he and his wife have a young daughter and currently reside in West Virginia.

Got Questions?

Sabbath School University *has answers!*

Sabbath School University is a 28-minute discussion of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. SSU discusses the lesson content and strategies to enrich your Sabbath School with fellowship, outreach, Bible study, and missions. Sabbath School leaders, don't miss this weekly broadcast on the Adventist Television Network.



<http://Adventist.TV>
broadcast and program information



It's 7:00 Sabbath morning. Where are you?

In Port-au-Prince, capital city of Haiti, early service Sabbath School starts at 7:00. The attendance is so high that it takes dozens of teachers to lead the classes. And second service is even more crowded. Each pastor in Haiti has up to 15 congregations.

The church in Haiti plans to build two lay training centers to teach thousands of lay workers to effectively share God's love. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help provide for those centers.

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on March 26
supports projects in the Inter-American Division.