

Jesus, Giver and Supporter



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16, 17; Job 42; Matthew 5:45; Matthew 6:25–34; Matthew 10:28.

MEMORY VERSE: “My God will meet all your needs. He will meet them in keeping with his wonderful riches that come to you because you belong to Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NlrV).

NOTHING IN THE UNIVERSE WORKS WITHOUT THE LORD. He created everything that was created. “All things were made through him [God]. Nothing that has been made was made without him” (John 1:3, NlrV). God also is the One who keeps the universe going all the time. Even more surprising, the One who created and keeps it going was the One who was crucified for us.

“The apostle [leader and teacher] Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, says of Christ that ‘all things were created by him. He created everything in heaven and on earth. . . . Before anything was created, he was already there. He holds everything together.’ Colossians 1:16, 17 [NlrV]. . . . In other words, God’s hand keeps the worlds in space. It holds everything together in its place throughout the universe of God. It is also the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 132.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 17**THE KEEPER (SUPPORTER)
(Hebrews 1:3)**

Read Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, 17. What part does Jesus have in keeping the universe going?

The suggestion here is that Jesus continues to keep the universe going by His power. The universe is not independent. Its life depends on the continuous use of God's will. This does not agree with deism. Deism is the philosophy (study of truth) that teaches that God created the world to govern itself and then left it to run without any further action from Him. The Bible does not agree with such theories (unproven ideas).

Also, God is not within the creation. He is not always creating it as taught by the false theories of pantheism (the idea that God and the universe are the same thing) or panentheism (the idea that God lives in the universe as though it were His own body). God is not dependent on the universe in any way. He is separate from the universe. He lived, and continues to live, independently of it. The universe depends on God. God does not depend on the universe.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Acts 17:28. How does Paul describe our relationship to Jesus?

We are dependent on God's power to keep us going, moment by moment,

day by day. It is because of His love that we continue to keep going. And we also are able to act and form relationships because of His love. This is true in a special way for those who have dedicated themselves to (want to serve) God. They are, as Paul would describe it, "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; notice that Creation is mentioned in these verses). It is also true that even those who refuse to accept salvation are still dependent on God's power for their lives. Daniel made this point clearly to King Belshazzar when he said, "But you didn't [did not] honor the God who holds in his hand your very life and everything you do" (Daniel 5:23, NIV).

With all this in mind, how do we understand that free will and free choice are real? Why are these parts of our life so important to all that we believe?



It is because of God's love that we are able to form relationships.

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 18**THE KIND GIVER (Genesis 2:8, 9)**

Genesis 1:29, 30 show that when God first creates living things, He gives food to them. Herbs, fruits, and seeds are the food chosen for both humans and animals. Nothing is said of animals killing other animals for food. The kind Giver makes plenty of food for everyone to eat without any need to fight over it.

What a big difference from evolution.¹ The theory (unproven idea) of evolution teaches that human life goes on because it fights for food and survival. But the early chapters of Genesis know nothing about that. Instead, they show a world that was really like heaven from the beginning. That is why when the Lord finishes creating the world, the Bible shows these words: “God saw everything he had made. And it was



Herbs, fruits, and seeds were the food God chose for both humans and animals at Creation.

very good. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day six” (Genesis 1:31, NIV).

Read Genesis 2:8, 9. What do these verses show about God’s special interest in caring for Adam and Eve?

We already noted (pointed out) that God has given food for all His living things, including humans. Now God goes a step further in His loving care. He prepares a special Garden for Adam and Eve, with beautiful trees that give good fruit. (Read Genesis 2:9.) The Garden, with its beauty and food, is an example of God’s great love and grace.² It is a gift of grace because Adam and Eve have done nothing to earn it. It is freely given.

As stated in an earlier lesson, we are so far away from the original Creation. Ours is a greatly damaged world. Nothing on the earth has been protected. But, even among the damage, we can still see proof of God’s love.

“Nature is a power. But the God of nature is unlimited in power. His works show His character [who God is]. Those who judge God from His handiworks will clearly see His presence in everything.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,[®] March 13, 1884. Look at nature; in what ways do we see “His presence in everything”?

1. evolution—a theory that the differences between modern plants and animals exist because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.

2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.



The Garden was an example of God's love and grace.

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 19

NATURAL EVIL (Job 42)

Of course, one of the great questions that puzzles all believers is the question of evil. It is not just human evil, but what is called “natural evil.” “Natural evil” means bad things that happen in nature (floods, hurricanes, drought [no rain], earthquakes, and so on). These things cause so much pain and suffering, and not just for humans but for animals too.

How are we to understand the events known as “natural evil”? If God is in control of the creation, why would such things happen?

One of the earliest books of the Bible is the book of Job. In this book these questions (and others) become painfully real for Job (read lesson 4).

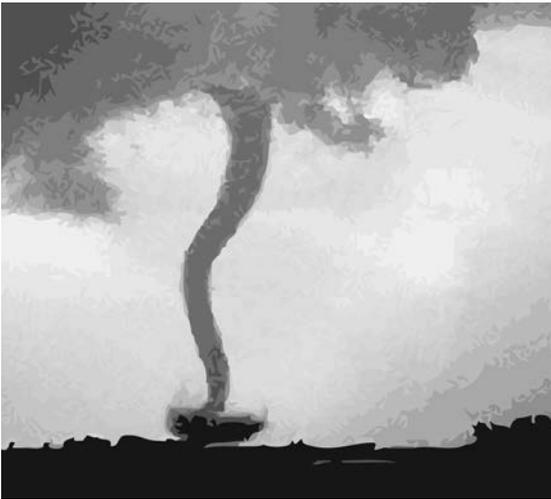
Read Job 42. What does this

chapter answer for us? What questions remain unanswered?

Anyone who reads the book of Job comes away with more questions than answers. The book does show important truths about the great controversy (war between God and Satan). (Read also Revelation 12:12.) These truths help us begin to understand that evil is possible. The great controversy does not explain every example of evil. To explain evil would be to make an excuse for it. And we can never do that. The great controversy can show the great problems behind evil. But each story tells us little, if anything, about each example of evil.

Job does not understand what has happened to him. And we do not understand when we face such great losses. God speaks to Job, but He does not give the answer to Job's questions. He does not explain the cause of what happened. He just reminds Job that there are things he cannot understand and that he will have to trust God, which Job does. Our experience is often the same. We may not receive an answer to our questions. But the story of Job gives us a better understanding of the nature of evil. And it shows us that God does know the struggles that we face.

Go back to Sabbath's introduction and read the Ellen G. White quote. How does knowing that God Himself suffered greatly from evil help us to better understand the question of evil too?



To explain evil would be to make an excuse for it.

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 20

GOVERNING (RULING) A DAMAGED CREATION (Matthew 5:45)

Read Matthew 5:45 and Psalm 65:9, 10. How does God act during the Creation in order to keep control over the living things that He created? What does this tell us about God’s interest in the created world?

We know about sunshine and rain. And scientists have given explanations of how each works. But there is more to the story than science can tell. Behind the scenes, God is busy caring for the needs of His living things. We may not understand His ways, but we know He is in control. For example, a skilled musician may play a musical instrument so beautifully that a person pays closer attention to the music rather than to

the musician. In the same way, God plans the Creation so that we often see the plan and are impressed with the Creation. We may not recognize that God is planning events so that all things will work together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Read Genesis 8:1; Exodus 10:13; and Numbers 11:31. In these three verses, what similar (nearly the same) events happened?

Winds are a common event. We usually understand what causes them. But in these verses, the winds are different. We might call them “winds caused by God.” They happen at certain times and places and make special things occur. They may appear “natural,” but there is an unseen God working out the purposes of His own will. He uses “tools” of the world that He created for His own purposes.

In 2 Kings 20:9–11, we read about one of the most unusual miracles of the entire Bible. The relationship of sun, earth, and day-length seems to never change in human experience. Imagine how surprised today’s scientists would be if the sun should change position in our day. But, we must ask, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14, KJV). What this miracle and others should tell us is that there is a lot about the creation and God’s actions that we cannot understand. That is why it is so important that we come to a personal knowledge of God and His love. That way, we learn to trust Him,

even though there are many things that we do not understand.

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 21

GIVER FOR A DAMAGED CREATION (Matthew 6:26)

Adam and Eve have sinned and can no longer enter the Garden. But God still cares for their physical needs (Genesis 3:21). Sin brings a new need, the need for clothing. Adam and Eve try to make clothing for themselves, but fig leaves are not satisfactory. Something better is needed; so, God gives them skins. (We will study more of the meaning of the skins in another lesson.) The point is that God cares for Adam's and Eve's needs, even though they have fallen into sin. This is another example of us receiving God's grace, even though we are unworthy.

What important message is Jesus giving us in Matthew 6: 25–34? How are we to understand it in the face of the problems that are such a part of so many lives?

These are very comforting words. And we need to hold on to them with all our heart, soul, and mind, especially in times of great suffering, loss, and need. Jesus died for us, not for the lilies or the birds. We can be sure of His love for us, no matter what happens. But, as we all know, events can at times be quite shocking. We see famine, floods, disease,

and death all around. And Christians are not protected from these terrible events.

God does not promise His people a life of comfort without pain. But He does promise to care for our needs and to make us stronger so we can meet our challenges. We just cannot forget that the great controversy is real and that we are in a fallen (sinful) world.

How can Matthew 10:28 (read along with the verses in today's study) help us to deal better with the rough times that we often face?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "Men of science think that they can understand the wisdom of God, that which He has done or can do. Most of them believe that God is limited by His own laws. Men refuse to accept that He is really God. They think to explain everything, even how His Spirit works upon the human heart. And they no longer respect His name or fear His power. They do not believe that God is real and do not understand His laws or His limitless power to work His will through them. The words 'laws of nature' are used to describe what men have been able to discover about the laws that rule the physical world. But how limited is their knowledge, and how great is the field in which the Creator can work with His own laws. But men are too limited to understand them!"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders in Bible Times] and Prophets [Special*

Messengers], page 114.

(Read also Ellen G. White, “Laws of Nature,” pages 259–261, in *Testimonies [Special Messages] for the Church*, volume 8.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Read carefully the Ellen G. White quote above. What is she saying? In what ways do we see many scientists today doing exactly what she says?

❷ Modern science today is much better than it used to be at explaining why certain things happen or why they do not. The problem is not with “natural laws” but with the idea that these laws can work all on their own

without God’s actions behind them. What is wrong with this thinking? Why does it make no sense? (Ask yourself, Where did these laws come from?) Why is that idea so opposed to the most basic teaching of the Bible?

❸ How does the image (picture) of Creation as a musical instrument give a more correct picture of God’s relationship to the creation than the image of Creation as a machine?

❹ What other examples can you find in the Bible where God caused special events that we would call “forces of nature”? Read, for example, 1 Kings 19:11, 12.