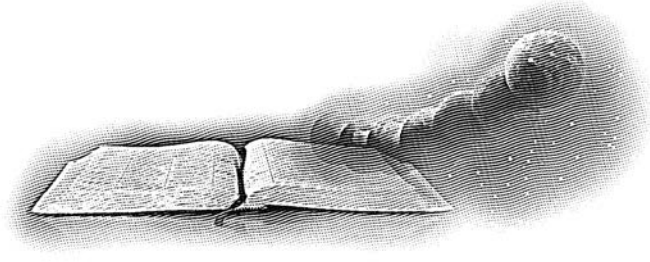


Creation: Genesis as Foundation—Part 1



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 1:1–3, Gen. 1:3–5, Exod. 20:8–11, Rev. 14:7, Matt. 19:3–6, Rom. 5:12.*

Memory Text: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (*John 1:1–4, NKJV*).

The first chapters of Genesis are foundational for the rest of Scripture. The major teachings or doctrines of the Bible have their source in these chapters. Here we find the nature of the Godhead working in harmony as the Father, Son (*John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1, 2*), and the Spirit (*Gen. 1:2*) to create the world and all that is in it, culminating in humanity (*Gen. 1:26–28*). Genesis also introduces us to the Sabbath (*Gen. 2:1–3*), the origin of evil (*Genesis 3*), the Messiah and the plan of redemption (*Gen. 3:15*), the worldwide, universal flood (*Genesis 6–9*), the covenant (*Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:2, 3, 15–17; Gen. 9:9–17; Genesis 15*), the dispersal of languages and people (*Genesis 10, Genesis 11*), and the genealogies that provide the framework for biblical chronology from Creation to Abraham (*Genesis 5, Genesis 11*). Finally, the power of God's spoken Word (*Gen. 1:3, 2 Tim. 3:16, John 17:17*), the nature of humanity (*Gen. 1:26–28*), God's character (*Matt. 10:29, 30*), marriage between a man and a woman (*Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:18, 21–25*), stewardship of the earth and its resources (*Gen. 1:26; Gen. 2:15, 19*), and the promised hope of a new creation (*Isa. 65:17, Isa. 66:22, Rev. 21:1*) are all based on these first chapters, which will be our study this week and next.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 23.

“In the Beginning . . .”

Read Genesis 1:1. What deep truths are revealed here?

The Bible opens with the most sublime and profound words, words that are simple but that simultaneously contain a measureless depth when carefully studied. In fact, the greatest questions of philosophy regarding who we are, why we are here, and how we got here are answered by the first sentence of the Bible.

We exist because God created us at a definite time in the past. We did not evolve out of nothing; nor did we come into existence by chance, for no ultimate purpose, and with no planned direction, as much of the contemporary scientific model of origins now teaches. Darwinian evolution is contradictory to Scripture in every way, and attempts by some to harmonize it with the Bible make Christians look silly.

We also were created by God at an absolute point in time: “in the beginning.” This must mean that God existed prior to this beginning. That is, God existed before time was created and expressed in the daily cycle of “evening and morning” and in the months and in the years, all marked by the relationship of the world to the sun and moon. This absolute beginning is echoed and supported by other passages of Scripture, which continually reaffirm the nature and means of God’s creative work (*John 1:1–3*).

Read John 1:1–3 and Hebrews 1:1, 2. Who was the agent of creation? Think about what it means that He also died on the cross.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was the agent of creation. The Bible says that “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (*John 1:3, NKJV*). Through Jesus “He made the worlds” (*Heb. 1:1, 2, NKJV*). Because all things have their origin in Jesus in the beginning, we can have hope that in the end He will complete what He has begun, because He is the “ ‘Alpha and the Omega,’ ” “ ‘the First and the Last’ ” (*Rev. 1:8, Rev. 22:13, NKJV*).

What difference does it make to know that you were created by God? Imagine if you didn’t believe that. How differently would you view yourself and others, and why?

The Days of Creation

In recent years there has been a trend to view the Creation week as nonliteral, as a metaphor, a parable, or even a myth. This has arisen in the wake of the theory of evolution, which assumes long ages of time to account for the development of life on planet Earth.

What does the Bible teach on this subject? Why are the “days” of Creation in Genesis 1 to be understood as literal, and not figurative, days?

Read Genesis 1:3–5 and Exodus 20:8–11. How is the term “day” used in these contexts?

The Hebrew word *yôm*, or “day,” is used consistently throughout the Creation narrative for a literal day. Nothing in the Genesis Creation narrative indicates that anything other than a literal day was meant, as we understand a single day today. In fact, some scholars who don’t believe the days were literal will, nevertheless, admit that the author’s intention was to depict literal days.

It is interesting that God Himself designates this name for the first unit of time (*Gen. 1:5*). *Yôm*, or day, is defined with the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning” (*Gen. 1:5, 8, etc., NASB*). The term is used in the singular, not the plural, meaning a single day.

Thus, the seven days of Creation are to be understood as a complete unit of time, introduced by the cardinal number *’echad* (“one”) followed by ordinal numbers (second, third, fourth, etc.). This pattern indicates a consecutive sequence of days, culminating in the seventh day. There is no indication in the use of terms or in the narrative form itself that there should be any gaps between these days. The seven days of Creation are, indeed, seven days as we delineate days today.

Also, the literal nature of the day is taken for granted when God wrote with His own finger the fourth commandment, indicating that the basis for the seventh-day Sabbath rests on the sequence of a literal seven-day, Creation week.

The Genesis Creation isn’t the only creation in the Bible. There also is the re-creation, at the Second Coming, when God will transform mortality into immortality “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:52, NKJV). If, however, God can do this instantly at the re-creation, why would He use billions of years for the first creation, as theistic evolution teaches?

The Sabbath and Creation

Today the seventh-day Sabbath is heavily under attack in secular society and in religious communities. This fact can be seen in the work schedules of global corporations; in the attempted change of the calendar in many European countries designating Monday as the first day of the week and Sunday as the seventh day; and by the recent papal encyclical on climate change that calls the seventh-day Sabbath “the Jewish Sabbath” and encourages the world to observe a day of rest to alleviate global warming (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* [Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015], pp. 172, 173).

Read Genesis 2:1–3, Exodus 20:8–11, Mark 2:27, and Revelation 14:7. How is the understanding of the Creation week tied to the fourth commandment? How is this tied to the three angels’ messages?

The Bible says, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done” (*Gen. 2:2, NKJV*). “After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man.” —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 47. This is why Jesus can say, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (*Mark 2:27, NKJV*). Jesus could make this authoritative statement because He made or created the Sabbath as the eternal sign and seal of God’s covenant with His people. The Sabbath was not for the Hebrew people only, but for all humanity.

Genesis indicates three things that Jesus did after He created the Sabbath day. First, He “rested” (*Gen. 2:2*), giving us a divine example of His desire to rest with us. Second, He “blessed” the seventh day (*Gen. 2:3*). In the Creation narrative, animals are blessed (*Gen. 1:22*), and Adam and Eve are blessed (*Gen. 1:28*), but the only day specifically blessed is the seventh day. Third, God “sanctified it” (*Gen. 2:3*) or “made it holy.”

No other day in the Bible receives these three designations. These three actions are repeated in the fourth commandment, though, when God writes with His own finger and points back to Creation as the foundation for the Sabbath (*Exod. 20:11*).

A comparison of Revelation 14:7 and Exodus 20:11 reveals the Sabbath commandment to be the basis for worshipping the Creator. How does this direct link to the Sabbath tie into last-day events?

Creation and Marriage

The last decade has witnessed enormous changes in the way society and governments define marriage. Many nations of the world have approved same-sex marriages, overturning previous laws that have protected the family structure that comprises at its center one man and one woman. This is an unprecedented development in many respects, and it raises new questions about the institution of marriage, the relationship of church and state, and the sanctity of marriage and the family as defined in Scripture.

Read Genesis 1:26–28 and Genesis 2:18, 21–24. What do these texts teach us about God’s ideal for marriage?

On the sixth day, God comes to the climax of the Creation, the Creation of humanity. It is fascinating that the plural is used for God in Genesis 1:26: “‘Let us make man in our image.’” All persons of the triune Godhead in loving relationship with each other now create the divinely instituted human relationship of marriage here on the earth.

“In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (*Gen. 1:27, NKJV*). Adam declares, “‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh’” (*Gen. 2:23, NKJV*), and Adam names her “Woman.” Marriage requires that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (*Gen. 2:24, NKJV*).

Scripture is unequivocal that this relationship is to take place between a man and a woman, who themselves originate from their father and mother, also a man and woman. This concept is further clarified in the instruction given to the earth’s first parents: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’” (*Gen. 1:28, NKJV*). In the fifth commandment, children (offspring) are to honor their father and their mother (*Exod. 20:12*). This interrelationship cannot be fulfilled within anything but a heterosexual partnership.

Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:3–6. What do they teach us about the nature and sanctity of marriage? In light of Jesus’ words, and while never forgetting God’s love for all humanity and that all of us are sinners, how should we take a firm and faithful stand on the biblical principles of marriage?

Creation, the Fall, and the Cross

The Bible provides an unbroken link between the perfect Creation, the Fall, the promised Messiah, and final redemption. These major events become the basis of the theme of salvation history for the human race.

Read Genesis 1:31, Genesis 2:15–17, and Genesis 3:1–7. What happened to God’s perfect Creation?

God declared His creation “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). “The creation was now complete. . . . Eden bloomed on earth. Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the fair creation.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 47. God had warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden tree, they would surely die (*Gen. 2:15–17*). The serpent began his discourse with a question and then completely contradicted what God had said: “ ‘You will not surely die’ ” (*Gen. 3:4, NKJV*). Satan promised Eve great knowledge and that she would be like God. Obviously, she believed him.

How does Paul confirm God’s statement in Genesis 2:15–17? Read Romans 5:12 and Romans 6:23. How do these teachings relate to theistic evolution?

In Scripture, we can see where later biblical writers confirmed earlier biblical statements and provided additional insights. In Romans 5–8, Paul writes about sin and the beauty of salvation: “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people” (*Rom. 5:12, NIV*). But an evolutionary perspective would have death present for millions of years prior to humanity. This idea has serious implications for the biblical teaching of the origin of sin, Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross, and the plan of salvation. If death is not related to sin, then the wages of sin is not death (*Rom. 6:23*), and Christ would have had no reason to die for our sins. Thus, Creation, the Fall, and the Cross are inextricably linked. The first Adam is tied to the last Adam (*1 Cor. 15:45, 47*). A belief in Darwinian evolution, even if some concept of God is inserted into the process, would destroy the very basis of Christianity.

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pp. 44–51; “The Literal Week,” pp. 111–116, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“The cumulative evidence, based on comparative, literary, linguistic and other considerations, converges on every level, leading to the singular conclusion that the designation *yôm*, ‘day,’ in Genesis 1 means consistently a literal 24-hour day.

“The author of Genesis 1 could not have produced more comprehensive and all-inclusive ways to express the idea of a literal ‘day’ than the ones that were chosen.”—Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/EPOCHS’ of Time?” *Origins* 21/1 (1994), pp. 30, 31.

“The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because these cannot be explained by natural laws, Bible history is pronounced unreliable.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 258.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Look at the Ellen G. White quote above. How often, even today, do we see exactly what she wrote, even among professed Christians who, in face of the claims of science, will automatically take the claims of science over the biblical account, which would, as she wrote, imply that biblical history “is unreliable”?
- 2 Why is it impossible to take the Bible seriously while accepting theistic evolution? If you know a theistic evolutionist who claims to be a Christian, why not ask him or her to explain the Cross in light of what Paul wrote (see *Romans 5*) about the direct link between Adam’s fall and death and the cross of Jesus? What explanation does he or she give?
- 3 If the Bible is God’s revelation, then are not the believer’s faith and eyes opened to the greater reality as expressed in Scripture? How can Christians then be called “closed-minded” when they are opening their minds to the scriptural truths revealed by an infinite God? In fact, an atheistic, materialistic view of the world is much narrower than is the Christian worldview.
- 4 As believers staying faithful to the Word of God, how can we minister to those who are struggling with questions of sexual identity? Why must we not be those who cast stones, even with people who, like the woman caught in adultery, are guilty of sin?

Delayed Heart Attack

By YIANNAKIS KYRIAZIS

Dreadful abdominal pain awoke me at 5:00 A.M.

Though rested, I felt exhausted and out of breath. I was nearly 60 and not in the best of health, so I went straight to the hospital in Cyprus's capital, Nicosia. A doctor examined me, said everything was fine, and told me to go home.

My wife, Marbie, was by my side. She had been instrumental in helping me to stop smoking five packs of cigarettes a day. She also had led me to Jesus and membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She had agreed to marry me only after my life changed, and I was baptized.

Here I was now, just two years into my new faith and marriage, and feeling very unwell.

"I'm not going anywhere," I told the doctor.

I was still in pain and wanted to know why. Seeing my persistence, the doctor agreed to call a cardiologist, who, it was discovered, was off duty.

I waited. One hour passed. Two hours. Then five, seven, eight hours.

Around 1:10 P.M., the pain increased substantially. Struggling to breathe, I stood up to go outside for fresh air. My head began to spin, and darkness came over me.

Someone shouted, "Quick! He's having a heart attack."

At that moment, the cardiologist arrived.

Medical workers rushed me to the emergency room.

When I regained consciousness, I learned that my heart arteries had been badly blocked.

"We did everything that we could," the cardiologist said.

I was hospitalized in the intensive-care unit for three weeks. Once my condition improved, doctors performed open-heart surgery. I was in the operating room for 9 ½ hours. By God's grace, the operation went well, and I am strong and happy again.

Looking back, I believe that the pains that awoke me at 5:00 A.M. were the beginning of a heart attack. I could have died right away. Yet our loving God delayed the heart attack for a full 8 ½ hours until the cardiologist arrived, thus preserving my life.



Today I am 61 and very grateful to God for giving me a new lease on life. I will use the extra years that He has given me to serve Him and others.

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help construct a new church building and community center in Nicosia for Kyriazis's congregation and two other congregations.

Key Texts: *Gen. 1:3–5, John 1:1–3, Exod. 20:8–11, Rev. 14:7, Matt. 19:3–6, Rom. 5:12.*

Part I: Overview

Jesus once said, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (*Matt. 7:24, 25, NKJV*). If Christ’s revelation to us, His Word the Bible, is to be the foundation of our lives, what is the foundation on which all Scripture builds? The answer lies in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, in which the major teachings or doctrines have their source.

There we find the foundational teaching of Creation and of God the Creator. Given the importance of this foundation, should we think it is a coincidence, then, that there has been an unprecedented assault in modern times against the biblical teaching of Creation? Is it by chance that the end-time church is commissioned to proclaim Jesus as the Creator, who emphasizes this one characteristic of Himself? In the introduction to the church of Laodicea (the last of the seven churches in Revelation 2, 3), Jesus refers to Himself as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (*Rev. 3:14, NKJV*). The three angels’ messages begin with the proclamation of the first angel: “ ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*). During the next two weeks, we will study why the teaching of Creation is foundational for the message and mission of God’s end-time people and how the Creation account should be interpreted.

Part II: Commentary

Scripture

Have you ever wondered about your existence? Where did I come from? Why am I here? What meaning is there to life? Who am I? The great philosophers have pondered these questions for millennia. These fundamental questions are at the core of the Creation account and are, in fact, answered in the first two chapters of Genesis. Over the course

of history, these chapters have provided humanity with dignity, meaning, and purpose. They have inspired the greatest minds to explore the world around them and discover the wonders of God’s creation.

In the simple opening sentence of the Bible, Genesis 1:1 addresses the deepest of human questions. Before we were created, in the beginning there was God. He designed an ecosystem for us, creating the habitation of earth perfectly for His new creatures in order to sustain life. Our earth is located at a precise distance from the sun—not too far, and not too close. The sun is perfectly sized so as not to produce too much energy to destroy life. There is abundant water on earth and a breathable atmosphere. The moon is just the right size to control the tides. The magnetic field is fine-tuned to keep us from getting fried by the sun. No wonder that after every stage of Creation, God concludes that it is good (*tôv*; *Gen. 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25*), and when it was completed, *tôv m’ôd*, “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). The designation “good” in Hebrew can include both aesthetic beauty and ethical aspects because the creation originated from God, who is love (*1 John 4:8*).

Illustration

In Psalm 139:14, David recognizes the complexities of the body when he says, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (*NKJV*). Today we know so much more than those in David’s day did about the intricacies of the smallest element of the human body—the cell. The human cell is made up of the tiniest of machines that, in order to function, must have all their parts. Like a mousetrap, you take one part away, and the devices cease to function. Each cell contains a person’s DNA. A computer is based on binary code of zeros and ones. DNA is made up of a quaternary code (A, C, G, and T), which is far more complex than a binary code. An entire language with grammar and syntax is associated with DNA, with three billion bases. Moreover, this DNA can replicate itself, and it does so within nearly 40 trillion cells in the human body. Each of the 200 types of the cells in the human body has a different function. These are the core building blocks of life, and they work in harmony to carry out the basic functions for a human being to survive. Certainly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. The complexity and the commonality among all human beings and living creatures point to a single Creator who designed life. But we are not simply machines. We have been given a creative mind, a conscience, and an ability to experience love, hope, and happiness. The conscience of the human mind and the freedom we have to choose and to create are impossible to explain from an evolutionary perspective. How much easier to believe in a Creator who created us in His image and in His likeness (*Gen. 1:27*).

Scripture

After creating the ecosystem for life and filling it with fish, birds, and land animals, the communal Godhead designed humanity as the apex of Creation also to exist in community. “ ‘Let Us make man in Our image.’ . . . So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (*Gen. 1:26, 27, NKJV*). Humanity was to live in communion with God and with each other. God designed that both male and female were to be biologically, physically, and emotionally the counterpart to each other. They were created to complement each other. They were the “perfect fit” for each other so that Adam could exclaim when Eve was later designed from his rib, “ ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’ ” (*Gen. 2:23, NKJV*). Thus, Adam names her “woman.” Marriage requires that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (*Gen. 2:24, NKJV*).

The basis for culture and civilization on earth was the husband-and-wife unit and the children that were born from this relationship through procreation. That is why the Bible places so much emphasis on the family unit. This emphasis on the family unit also is highlighted in the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments describe humanity’s relationship to God, culminating in the seventh-day Sabbath, which solidifies the obedience and honor given to God by means of a special relationship from week to week. Notice that after the Sabbath precept the transition to the fifth commandment focuses first and foremost on the family, for here is where God’s character was to be transmitted for future generations: “ ‘Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you’ ” (*Exod. 20:12, NKJV*). A world filled with loving families, who regard God supremely and uphold His character in their lives and raise their children in humble obedience was the original purpose in God’s creation.

Satan’s attempt to destroy God’s purpose at the Fall drove a wedge between God and humanity and then between Adam and Eve. The separation of Eve from Adam provided Satan an opening. In an unguarded moment, Eve curiously approached the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan, by insinuating doubt upon the Word of God, succeeded in distorting and disrupting God’s plan of protection. The immediate results were devastating. After Eve and then Adam ate from the tree, their sense of separation and guilt tore the first couple from their relationship with God. They now sensed

their own nakedness. After God in His love pursues them, they blame each other and God, furthering the division that has now occurred. In the very next chapter, Genesis 4, we see the full result of sin in the murder of a son and brother. Disobedience to God's Word bore its ultimate fruit in the destruction of God's creation.

The insinuating doubt of Satan at the beginning, “ ‘Did God really say . . . ?’ ” (*Gen. 3:1, NIV*) is still with us today through the theory of evolution. God's Word plainly testifies that He spoke the heavens and the earth into existence and that “all things were made through Him [Christ], and without Him nothing was made that was made” (*John 1:3, NKJV*). If we doubt God's Word concerning His Creatorship, are we not as surely following a lie as did our first parents in the beginning of earth's history?

Christ came to restore the world and His creation to Himself and to His Father. In declaring that “ ‘before Abraham was, I AM’ ” (*John 8:58, NKJV*), Jesus declared that He was the self-existent God of the universe. The wind and seas obeyed Him because He created them. He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, because “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (*John 1:4, NKJV*). The final re-creation that Christ promises at the Second Coming is possible only if He was truly our Creator at the beginning.

Part III: Life Application

God intended for the family to be the foundational unit of human life. What, then, are the results when the foundation in a building is eroded? How does an erosion of a belief in Creation contribute to the rest of the structure in society? What difference does the theory of evolution make for the meaning of our existence? This week, what testifies of God's purpose in your life?

“Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. . . . Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall ‘leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one’ (*Genesis 2:24*), He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 63, 64.

