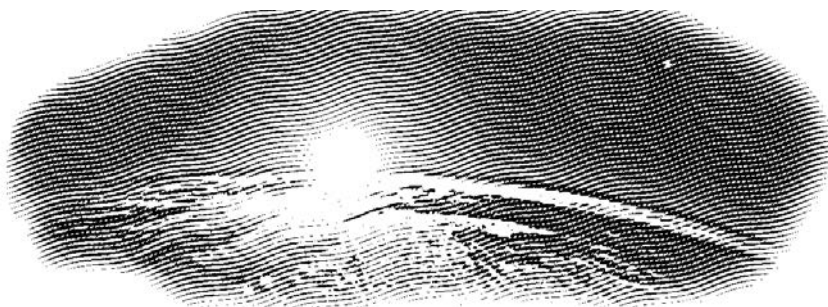


Sabbath: A Gift From Eden



SABBATH—MARCH 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:1–3; Hebrews 4:3, 4; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Ezekiel 20:12; Mark 2:27, 28; 2 Peter 3:3–7.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath day’ ” (Matthew 12:8, Nlrv).

AT THE END OF THE SIXTH DAY, THE CREATION WAS FINISHED (GENESIS 2:1, 2). The world had been made into a place where humans could live. And it had been filled with living things. Adam and Eve had been created in God's own image. And they had been given a beautiful garden in which to live. They had formed the first marriage and established the first home. God was satisfied with what He had made. But something else was added to Eden: the seventh-day Sabbath. (Read Genesis 2:1–3.)

Genesis 2 is proof that the seventh day is not simply the “Jewish Sabbath.” Why? Because God “blessed the seventh-day and sanctified [made holy] it” (NKJV) back in Eden, before the Fall and before the Jewish people lived.

What is more, the Sabbath is a memorial to the creation of all humanity (not just the Jews). So, everybody should enjoy the blessings of the Sabbath day.

This week we will study the Bible teaching on this gift from Eden.

SUNDAY—MARCH 10**CREATION AND THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH (Hebrews 4:3, 4)**

In Exodus 20:8–11, the fourth commandment is directly tied to the Creation week. This is important, because it points back to Eden itself. It points to a world without sin, a perfect world coming fresh from the Creator. “The Sabbath is not introduced as a new invention. But it has been founded at Creation. It is to be remembered and kept as the memorial of the Creator’s work.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders in Bible Times] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 307.

Read Genesis 2:1–3. How is the seventh-day Sabbath tied directly to the Creation itself? How do these verses help to support the idea that God created our world in six days and not over the long ages as evolution¹ teaches?



The Sabbath points back to Eden itself.

In these three verses, the seventh day is mentioned five times. In three of these five times, it is called “the seventh day.” And twice the day is mentioned with the pronoun “it.” From these verses, we can be very clear about the day and what it is. And these verses teach us that the six days of Creation come before the seventh day.

Read Hebrews 4:3, 4. The author of Hebrews points to what event in his discussion of rest? Why is this important?

This New Testament verse clearly speaks of the Genesis Creation story. And it gives additional proof for the historical truth of Creation occurring in six days, followed by a day of rest.

Many today do not accept the idea that Creation took place in six days. They want scientific proof that the record is true. But science itself comes with many ideas and theories (unproven ideas). Plus, how could a real, six-day Creation be proved anyway?

God “has not removed doubt. Faith must depend upon proof, not on an outward showing of signs, wonders, feelings, or miracles. Those who wish to doubt have opportunity. But those who desire to know the truth find plenty of reasons for faith.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 169. What are the reasons you have

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

for faith? Why do the reasons for faith overcome reasons to doubt?

MONDAY—MARCH 11

THE RICH MEANING OF SABBATH REST (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

Read Deuteronomy 5:12–15. How is the point of the Sabbath commandment here different from the point of Exodus 20:8–11?

Here Moses reminds the Israelites that they should keep the Sabbath. Moses says that they should do this because God freed them from Egypt. The verses say nothing about the six days of Creation or about the Sabbath being God's rest. Instead, the point of Exodus 20:8–11 is about salvation, freedom, and Redemption.² In this case the redemption from Egypt is a symbol of the true Redemption we have in Jesus. (Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

So, there is no disagreement between the verses. We have no excuse for trying to use one verse to deny the truth of another verse. Moses is showing the people that they belong to the Lord, first by Creation and then by Redemption.

Read Ezekiel 20:12 and Exodus 31:13. What is another reason for keeping the Sabbath?

The verses that talk about sanctification (holy living) remind us that only God can make us holy. Only the Creator can create a new heart within us.

Think, then, about three reasons given for Sabbath keeping and study how they are related. First, we keep the Sabbath on the seventh day because God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Second, we also keep the Sabbath on the seventh day because God is the One who redeemed us and saved us in Christ. And third, He is the One who sanctifies (makes holy) us, which can be done only by the creative power of God. (Read Psalm 51:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.)

Theories that deny the six-day Creation try to make God's grace³ less important. And they make our own works good enough for us to be saved. The Creation story reminds us that we depend fully on God's grace. And we depend on the sacrifice of Christ as a Substitute in our place for our salvation.

Remember the fact that we are as dependent upon God for Redemption as we are for life. (After all, what control do you have in your own birth?) How can the Sabbath help us to better understand our great need of God's grace for everything in our lives? How should this knowledge influence the way that we live?

2. Redemption—the right to have freedom from sin because someone paid the price for it. In this case, Jesus paid for our freedom from sin by dying on the cross in our place.

3. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.



Only the Creator can create a new heart within us.

TUESDAY—MARCH 12

JESUS AND THE SABBATH (Mark 2:27, 28)

Read Mark 2:27, 28. What important truth about the Sabbath does Jesus show here? How can we take this principle (important rule) and use it in our own Sabbath experience?

Jesus and His disciples have just walked through a field of grain. Hungry, the disciples picked some of the grain and ate it. The act of picking grain while one is passing through a field is not a problem, as the rules then permitted this. Food is a need, and it is perfectly acceptable for the disciples to relieve their hunger by eating what they find as they walk along. The problem is that Jewish religious leaders feel their own rules for Sabbath keeping are more important than human need. This is a continuing point of disagreement between Christ and the Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders). Jesus' answer shows that their idea of Sabbath keeping is wrong. The Sabbath should be a day for human

blessing, not something used as an excuse for making people suffer for a long time.

What other activity does Jesus do on the Sabbath that gets Him into trouble with the Jewish leaders? Read Matthew 12:9–13; Luke 13:10–17; and John 5:1–17.

Nowhere in all the Sabbath issues (problems) recorded in the Gospels does the question of the Sabbath ever arise. Instead, the issue is how should the seventh day be kept. Whether it is to be removed is not the issue.

Jesus' example shows us how the Sabbath should be kept. There is one thing we can see clearly from Jesus' example. It is that work done on the Sabbath to help relieve human suffering does not break the Sabbath law. Instead, Jesus' example shows that doing good for others is exactly how the Sabbath should be kept.

In what ways could your Sabbath keeping better show the principles (important rules) seen in Jesus' example to us?



Jesus' examples show that doing good for others is exactly how the Sabbath should be kept.

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 13**SABBATH AND THE LAST DAYS
(2 Peter 3:3–7)**

Read 2 Peter 3:3–7. Compare⁴ the description of the last-day scoffers⁵ with our modern society. What truth do the scoffers deny, and why?

The scoffers claim that nature has continued without stopping. This is a claim known among scientists as uniformitarianism. This is the same as saying that miracles do not happen. This is the same as saying that the Lord is not going to come as He promised.

Notice how Peter connects the scoffers' denial of the second coming of Christ with their denial of the Creation story (and the Flood too). Denial of one leads to denial of the others!

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. People may scoff, doubt, and make fun of Christians. But what message will be preached with heavenly power?

The scoffers are wrong. Judgment is coming. And God calls us to worship the One who “made the heaven and earth, and the sea” (Revelation 14:7, KJV), and everything else. This is Creation language. The verse points to Exodus 20:11, which shows that Creation and the Sabbath are important in the end times. The

Sabbath is an example of the Bible story of Creation and Redemption. In the same way, refusal to accept the Creation story leads to refusal of the seventh-day Sabbath. It also means accepting a man-made substitute in place of the true Sabbath. Revelation 14:8–10 shows that the result is spiritual unfaithfulness and separation from God.

God is calling people to worship Him as the Creator. Nowhere in the Bible do we find anything that points so fully to Him as the Creator as does the seventh-day Sabbath. So, we understand the Sabbath is an important sign showing God as Creator in the last days.

Think it through: how does a refusal to accept a real six-day Creation weaken the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath? If our understanding of the seventh-day Sabbath is weakened, why would we be loyal to it while we suffer punishment and torture in the last days?

THURSDAY—MARCH 14**A PSALM FOR THE SABBATH
(Psalm 92)**

Read Psalm 92. What does this tell us about what Sabbath keeping should be like? Why, when thinking about the Lord, should we be as joyful as the example of joy shown in this psalm?

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

5. scoffers—people who laugh at, and talk about, someone or something in a way that shows disapproval and a lack of respect.

The writer of Psalms clearly knows the Lord. He knows what the Lord is like. He knows what the Lord has done. He knows what the Lord was going to do one day. And it is for these reasons that he shows the joy that he feels.

Study, too, the rich themes shown in this “song for the Sabbath day” (NirV).

First, there is praise and thankfulness to God for His loving-kindness and faithfulness. Any “psalm for the Sabbath” would show that God is Creator, as this one does.

Also, study the theme of judgment here. In the Bible, God’s judgment is not just against the wicked. It is also in favor of the righteous (read Daniel 7:20–28). These two parts of judgment are shown here in this psalm too. These promises may not be fulfilled (completed) now. But we have the promise that this judgment finally will come at the end of time. This is when God will create all things new (Revelation 21:5).

Suppose we get nothing else out of this psalm. Then, we should understand that the Sabbath is a holy time for us to enjoy in the Lord, to rejoice in Him. We also should rejoice in all that He has done for us and has promised to do. This is because the whole theme of the psalm is that of praise, joy, and happiness. And this is not because of anything that the writer of this psalm has done. It is only because of all that the Lord has done and has promised to do.

What a wonderful gift to be given to us: one-seventh of our lives set apart

every week to rest, a day to be free from our busy lives, and to rejoice in the works of the Lord!

How can you learn to rejoice in the Sabbath as the psalmist does here in this psalm? If you are not having that experience, why not?



What a wonderful gift God has given us: to set apart one-seventh of our lives to rest with Him!

FRIDAY—MARCH 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no reason for us to suppose that man was changed slowly from animal or vegetable life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man’s limited, narrow minds. Men try hard to remove God from His honorable title of Creator. They defraud [rob] man of the dignity of how he was created. God set the starry worlds on high and painted with great skill the flowers of the field. He filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power. When God came to crown [bless] His glorious [perfect]

work, He put man on the planet to be ruler of the fair earth. Because God created man, he has great value. The history of humans shows that they owe their beginnings not to cells, germs, and apes, but to the great Creator.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 45.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Why is the relationship between Sabbath and Creation so important in these last days? How is this truth shown in Revelation 14:6, 7? Look again at the question at the end of Wednesday’s lesson as you discuss the above question.

❷ In the early 1800s, Charles Darwin introduced his theory of evolution. At about the same time, God raised up a church that upheld the seventh-day Sabbath as a very special belief. God also raised up that church to

preach the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. These messages call upon us to worship the One who created the heavens and the earth. What could be sadder, or a deeper fall from faith, than for those who claim to be members of that church to argue in favor of evolution?

❸ In recent years, science has shown how complicated (deep) life is. Charles Darwin probably had no idea of just how complicated even the “simple” cell really is. We know now that even the most “simple” cell is more complicated than Darwin probably ever thought.

How strange that many scientists believe that life started by accident alone when we know that the more complicated a thing is, the less likely it is that the thing could have happened by “accident.” The more that science discovers how complicated life is, the less chance it has to “prove” that evolution created life. Discuss.