

Creation and the Gospel



SABBATH—MARCH 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 3:21; Psalm 104:29, 30; John 1:4; Romans 5:6–11; Galatians 3:13; Matthew 27:46.

MEMORY VERSE: “Because of Adam, all people die. So because of Christ, all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22, NlrV).

IN THE BIBLE STORY, ADAM AND EVE WERE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

They were perfect. But they did have free will.¹ Free will was necessary for them to be able to love. But when Adam and Eve rebelled (turned) against God, they fell under Satan's power. (Read Hebrews 2:14.) Their downfall brought the whole world under the enemy's power. But Jesus came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8, NKJV) and free us from his power. Jesus did this by dying in our place and offering us life. On the cross, Jesus became “sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NlrV). He experienced the separation from His Father that sin causes. By His death, Jesus brought back the relationship between God and people that had been broken by the sin of Adam and Eve.

All these points are very connected to the Creation story. Creation comes into the picture again as the power of the Creator God is used to create a new heart in His children (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new heart also renews the image of God within us, and it brings back our relationship with Him.

1. free will—the power to make our own decisions.

SUNDAY—MARCH 17**GRACE² IN THE GARDEN
(Genesis 3:9–15)**

As we know, Adam and Eve were perfect humans created in the “image of God.” But they fell into sin, which brought death. God had warned them not to give in to sin. And they understood what they had been told. Eve even told the serpent what God had said to Adam and to her. But the two sinned anyway.

At times, we are the same as Eve. This is because sometimes we are also tricked into sin. But, at other times, the same as Adam, we sin on purpose. Either way, we are sinners, guilty of breaking God’s law.

Read Genesis 3:9–15. What does God say about the sin of Adam and Eve?

God held a trial, an investigative judgment,³ even. The purpose of the trial was not for God to learn the facts. He already knew them. The purpose was to give Adam and Eve an opportunity to accept responsibility for their actions. This was the first step toward their repentance (turning back to God) and restoration (becoming new). God asked Adam and Eve what had happened. And they confessed. They were guilty, and their sin led to quick results. But the first gospel promise was given (read lesson 6) to them in Eden.

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

3. investigative judgment—a trial that examines facts and evidence before deciding whether or not a person is guilty.

Read Genesis 3:21. What additional act of grace is shown?

Death came in a most unexpected way. Instead of the quick death of Adam and Eve, one or more animals died. Imagine how Adam felt when the animal died in his place as a sacrifice. It was the first time that Adam had seen death. And it must have brought him great mental pain. Then the animal was skinned, and a robe was made from the skin. The skin was placed over Adam’s body to cover his nakedness. Every time Adam looked at it, or felt it, he was surely reminded of what he had done and what he had lost. More important, it was a reminder of God’s grace.

No doubt we all should be thankful for God’s grace to us. And what better way of showing thanks to God than to show grace to others! Whom could you show some grace to right now?



It was the first time Adam had seen death.

MONDAY—MARCH 18**SIN AND DEATH (Psalm 104:29, 30)**

In Genesis 3:19, Adam was told that, at death, he would return to the dust from which he was made. The same thing will happen to us. Notice—we do not return to being apes, because we were not made from apes. We were made from dust. So, at death, it is to the dust that we return.

Read Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:29, 30; John 1:4; and Acts 17:24, 25. Why are these verses important for us? How should this truth influence the way in which we live?

Life is a wonderful experience. We are all familiar with life. But there is still something mysterious about it. We can take apart a living thing. But in the end we find nothing there except different kinds of atoms and molecules (two or more atoms). We can collect the molecules in a jar, and we can heat the jar, or pass an electric spark through it, or try any number of other experiments. But we do not get life again. There is no “package” called “life” that is within a living body or a living cell. Life is a property (part) of the entire living system. It is not something that can be separated from the cells.

But we know a lot about how to cause death. We have developed many ways of killing living things. Some of these methods show the terrible violence and cruelty of our sinful hearts. But the creation of life is beyond our ability. God alone has the

ability to create living things. Scientists have tried to create life. They think that if they could do this they would have an excuse for why they do not believe in God. So far, all their projects have failed.

Read Isaiah 59:2. How does sin influence our relationship to God?

Life comes only from God. So, separation from God cuts us off from the Giver of life. The sure result of separation from God is death. Even if someone lives 969 years, as Methuselah did, the story still ends with “and he died.” Sin causes separation from life. And the result is death.



We were made from dust. So, it is to the dust, at death, we return.

TUESDAY—MARCH 19

**“WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS . . .”
(Romans 5:6–11, NKJV)**

Because of God’s true, unselfish love, His answer to human sin is to save mankind from it. This can be

found all throughout the Bible. God had the right to give Adam and Eve up to Satan's power after Adam and Eve made their choice to sin. But God knew that Adam and Eve did not understand the full meaning of what they had done. And He decided to give them an opportunity to become better informed and to be able to choose again.

Read Romans 5:6–11. How do these verses help us to understand what God's grace is all about?

When a person does something wrong to us, we like to have an apology from the person before we are willing to forgive him or her. Of course, an apology would be nice to receive. This is because complete healing usually happens when the person accepts the responsibility for doing the wrong thing and apologizes for it. But God did not wait for us to ask for forgiveness. He took the first step. While we were still sinners, He gave Himself to die for us. This is a wonderful example of His love.

How does our behavior compare with God's behavior? How often do we feel insulted and angry and try to get revenge? We always should be thankful that God does not treat us that way.

God's treatment of sinners shows the true meaning of love. It does not depend on feelings alone but on following certain principles (important rules). For example, the person who makes the insult and the person who

feels hurt should be brought together, and peace should be made between them. God's treatment of Adam and Eve is a good example of how He feels about our sin.

“The Cross calls for the deepest sorrow. Upon this subject you will be forgiven if you show that you are sincere in your sorrow. Christ was so great and so innocent, but why should He suffer such a painful death by accepting all the sins of the world? We cannot fully imagine His great suffering. We cannot understand how long, wide, high, or deep His wonderful love is.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Special Messages] for the Church*, volume 2, page 213. Maybe we cannot understand this love, but why is it so important that we try?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 20

THE SUBSTITUTE WHO ACCEPTED OUR SINS (Galatians 3:13)

Think deeply about what Galatians 3:13 means to us. While you do, remember that Christ is God. What does this tell us about what God was willing to do in order to save us? More so, what does this tell us about how sad it is for anyone not to accept Christ's plan of salvation for his or her life?

In accepting the guilt of our sins upon Himself and dying in separa-

tion from God, Jesus fulfilled (completed) the promise made in the Garden of Eden. This is the promise that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Jesus' sacrifice made it possible for God and the human family to be brought back together. This will lead to the final removal of evil from the universe (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:14).

Keeping Galatians 3:13 in mind, read Matthew 27:46. What do Jesus' words show about what He went through on the cross?

On the cross, Christ accepted the curse of sin for us. This was a change in His standing (position) with the Father. The sacrificed lamb was brought to the altar and became a substitute for the death of the sinner. In the same way, when Christ went to the cross, His position before the Father changed. Shut off from the Father, Jesus felt the curse that our sin had caused. In other words, Jesus, who always had been One with the Father, experienced a separation from the Father. Ellen White called it "the sundering [separation] of the divine [God's] powers."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 93*, 1899. It is hard to fully understand what happened. But we know enough to realize that a great price was paid in order to save us.



By dying on the cross, Jesus bruised the serpent's head.

THURSDAY—MARCH 21

A NEW CREATION (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The great news of the gospel centers around the death of Jesus as our Substitute. Jesus took our sins upon Himself. He accepted in Himself the penalty (price; punishment) that should be ours. As we have studied, too, the whole idea of Christ as our Substitute is also connected with the Creation story. Christ came to destroy death, which is an enemy in God's creation. If evolution⁴ were the chosen way that God used to create humans, it would mean that death would be part of God's first plan for humans. That would mean death would play an important part in the way that God created us. So, it is no surprise that Christians must not accept evolution as a good way of understanding the Creation story.

The Genesis Creation story is

4. 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.

important in helping us to understand Christ's death for us. But it also helps us to understand another part of the plan of salvation. This second part is God's work of creation in us as we take part in His holiness now.

Read Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Colossians 3:10; and 2 Corinthians 5:17. What promises are given to us here that are connected with our understanding of God as Creator in Genesis 1 and 2?

A new heart is a creation that only God can make. We cannot do it ourselves. We must depend on the same Creator who formed the world and created our first parents. In Psalm 51:10, David recognizes this need and asks God to solve the problem by an act of creation.

Really, the person who is "in Christ" is a new creation. The old way of thinking must be taken away and replaced with a newly created mind. Our new mind is created for good works. This is God's will. This kind of creation is an act of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. God's creative power, as shown in the Creation story, gives us faith in God's creative power to change our lives and to bring us back into relationship with Him.

How have you experienced what it means to be a new creation in Christ? What does this mean to you? What is it that changes in the life of someone who has had this experience?



Our new mind is created for good works.

FRIDAY—MARCH 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "The Lord our God keeps certain things hidden. But He makes other things known to us and our children forever' [Deuteronomy 29:29, NIV]. Just how God did the work of creation He has never shown to mankind. Human science cannot search out God's secrets. We cannot understand God's creative power as much as we cannot understand His eternal life."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders in Early Bible Times] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 113.

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. God makes darkness His pavilion [shelter] and hides His glory [power and beauty] from human eyes. God and His holy angels were near the cross. The Father was with His Son. But Jesus did not know that God was nearby. If God's glory had flashed forth from the cloud, every human watcher would have

been destroyed. And in that terrible hour Christ was not to be comforted with the knowledge that the Father was nearby. Jesus had to go through the suffering alone. And there was no person helping Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 753, 754.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ How is the gospel connected with the story of Creation? What parts of Genesis 1–3 are important parts of the gospel too? How is the story of Jesus based on the historical truth of Genesis? How would one tell the story of Jesus if there were no Adam and Eve?
- ❷ The Bible maintains that the Creation was achieved by acts of God, acts which are not known to science but can only be made known by God. Only God can show us how His acts can be completed. Science cannot. No wonder there are struggles between the Bible and science. Why is it a mistake to expect science to be able to explain all of God’s creative works?
- ❸ What connections are there between the gospel, Creation, and judgment as shown in Revelation 14:6, 7?
- ❹ Critics of Christianity will often argue that Jesus knew ahead of time that He would die. And that He would be brought back to life a short time later. So, they ask, what was the big deal about His death when He knew it would be only a short time? How do Matthew 27:4 and the Ellen G. White statement from *The Desire of Ages* in today’s study help to answer that argument?