

The Environment¹



SABBATH—APRIL 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Genesis 1–2:7; Genesis 2:18–24; Genesis 3:7, 17–19; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 25:34–46; Mark 2:27, 28; Mark 3:4.

MEMORY VERSE: “The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it” (Psalm 24:1, NIV).

THE CREATOR (JESUS) SPENT THE FIRST FIVE DAYS OF CREATION WEEK GETTING THE ENVIRONMENT READY FOR ADAM AND EVE. They were to be created soon. He put them in a Garden (Genesis 2:8, 15) and gave them the responsibility (work; duties) over all living creatures. This offered Adam and Eve the opportunity (chance) for study, enjoyment, and growth as God’s representatives² on earth. The Sabbath would seal their relationship³ with Him.

Sin changed God’s chosen plan. The environment became an enemy of humankind.⁴ Hard work took the place of enjoyable work. Selfishness ruled. Abuse of the earth’s natural things began and continues to this day. Forests have been cut down. Water courses (paths) have been changed, and pollution⁵ is bad. The richness of the soil has been spoiled thoughtlessly. Sunlight is important for health, but it can become an enemy of health if we are exposed to it too much. But the world still supports our life here, even through our endless abuse of the planet.

To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week’s lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

1. environment—the natural world.

2. representatives—people who are chosen to act or speak for someone else.

3. relationship—your emotional connection (tie) to another person and how deep your feelings are for that person.

4. humankind—all the people of the world.

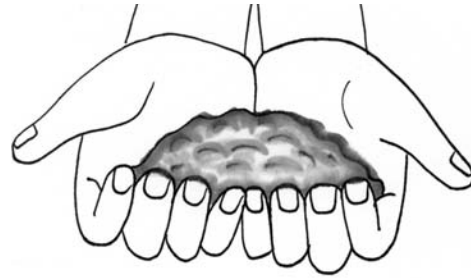
5. pollution—the action or process of making land, water, air, and other things in the natural world dirty and not safe or suitable to use.

SUNDAY—APRIL 25**CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT
(Genesis 2:1–7)**

Some theories⁶ today picture the creation of the earth and life on it as nothing but accidents. It just happened by chance over time and without thought. All living things were believed to be brought to life by luck or chance. But the Bible shows a different picture of our beginnings. The difference between the godless model of our beginnings and the Genesis Creation story is very big. These two views are so different that they cannot agree.

Read Genesis 1 and Genesis 2: 1–7. How did God’s acts of Creation week prepare the way for the most important part of Creation—man and woman? How was the creation of man and woman different from the rest of Creation?

Let us stop for a minute at the scene of Creation. The Creator God is working on the creation of man and woman. First, He makes Adam from the ground. God is the Sculptor. Then, when all else is ready, He bends down and breathes His own breath into Adam’s waiting form (shape). God the Giver of life brings Adam to life. What a marvelous picture of our God at work!



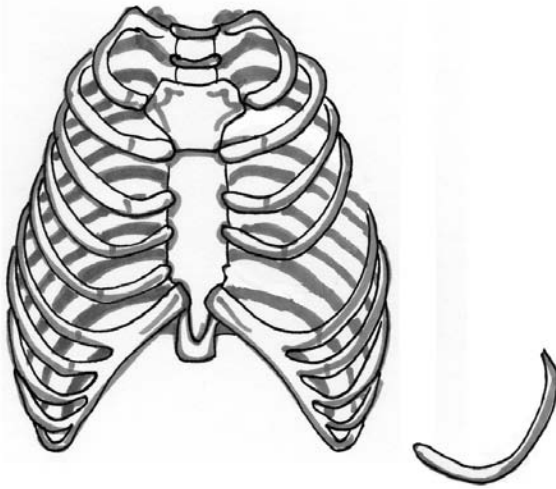
God, the Sculptor, makes Adam from the ground.

But that is not all. He becomes God the Surgeon as He takes a rib from Adam. And He forms Eve to be the partner of Adam and the mother of the race. She is also to stand by his side as his helpmate in this perfect, beautiful place. (Read Genesis 2:18–24.) He then puts these new humans (man and woman) into the place of beauty He has prepared.

God gave Adam and Eve the most healthful place to live. The restful green leaves, the colorful flowers, and the fruit made a perfect home for them. The Lord did not plan for our first parents to be lazy. They were to work in the Garden and take care of it. In this way they would find satisfaction and enjoyment. They would learn more of God from “God’s second book—nature.”

Read through the Genesis Creation story again in Genesis 1 and 2. What do we find there that points us toward the idea that as humans we should be good stewards (managers) of the earth?

6. theories—ideas or sets of ideas that are intended (meant) to explain facts or events.



God, the Surgeon, takes a rib from Adam and forms Eve.

MONDAY—APRIL 26

THE SABBATH ENVIRONMENT (Genesis 2:2, 3)

God was not done with Creation until He created the Sabbath day. What a big difference: all the work of creating the world, the animals, the seas, the grass, and finally humans. And then, one final act, the act of resting.

According to Genesis 2:2, 3, what can we read into the fact that God Himself rested on the Sabbath day?

Is God Himself, in the role of Creator, keeping the seventh-day Sabbath? Talk about showing us the deep roots of the Sabbath! One thing is sure: the seventh-day Sabbath came from God long before there ever was a Jewish nation and people.

Meanwhile, the Sabbath has given us an opportunity to focus attention on the Creator, His love, and His care for His creatures (people and animals). It helped set a limit on labor, even when labor was very easy and fruitful.

After sin entered and work became much harder and tiring (Genesis 3:17–19), this limit on work and the call to remember the Creator became even more important. As a reminder of Creation itself, it should help us focus on our responsibility to our created world too.

As the centuries⁷ passed, the true meaning of the Sabbath rest became lost in many man-made rules that turned the thoughts of the people away from the true meaning of the Sabbath.

What was Jesus' understanding of the Sabbath in Mark 2:27, 28 and Mark 3:4?

Christ restored⁸ the meaning of the Sabbath to what God had planned at first. He showed how God viewed the day as a time for doing good, for improving His kingdom, and for being of service to all in need.

How could and should Sabbath keeping help us better understand the wonderful gift we have been given of this created world? And, more so, how could and should it help us understand better our responsibility for taking care of it?

7. centuries—hundreds of years.

8. restored—to make something as it was in the beginning.

TUESDAY—APRIL 27**CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT AFTER SIN (Genesis 3:7, 17–19)**

What was the first sign for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:7, 17–19 that their actions in eating the forbidden fruit had sad results?

When sin entered into their lives, Adam and Eve faced its terrible results. First, as Ellen G. White wrote, the clothing of light that had covered them disappeared. The environment that had clothed them changed. The environment of the plant world changed too. Thorns and thistles grew. It became hard to grow crops in the soil. And, worst of all, there was now death. Death was something Adam and Eve never were to have known.

Suddenly, the wonderful environment that had been theirs to enjoy now had a new face. It also presented to them new challenges that became worse over time. Meanwhile, humans (men, women, and children) began to abuse⁹ the earth, often for their own gain and glory.

What does 1 Kings 10:14–22 tell us about how humans had come to view Creation?

We may take abuse, decay, loss of nutrients (valuable food for growing things), and death for granted as part of the cycle of life. But it was not so in the beginning. It also is not in God's final plan. Humankind's management

9. abuse—to treat something in a harsh or harmful way; to use or treat something in a way that causes damage; to use wrongly.

of the earth has turned into an abuse of it. This is because greedy people try to take all from the earth that they can, no matter what may happen in the future.

The pollution of air and water, the spoiling of soil, the presence of new and fearful diseases point to the aging of the earth and the growing need for renewal. As more and more countries try to improve their standards of living, the health challenges become greater because of the damage done to the environment.



After sin entered the world, thorns and thistles grew.

Years ago, a political leader made a statement: “We don’t [do not] have to worry about the environment because Jesus is coming back soon.” What is the danger in the thinking behind that argument? How would you answer it?

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 28**OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (Psalm 24:1)**

What does Psalm 24:1 suggest

to us about how we relate to the world? As we think about the conditions in our world, we need to ask the question, What can we do to improve the environment?

We need to begin by reminding ourselves of the Lordship of God over the earth. We are not free of responsibility to Him and His created works. Not only is the earth His but all the people are His too. We have responsibility to Him for other people and for the rest of the earthly creation. We can still protect good things on earth.



The earth and all that is in it is the Lord's.

One example is water. We can be thoughtful in using water. We can support efforts (work) to give clean water to those who do not have it. In certain parts of the world, lack of clean water is a serious problem. This leads to a great loss of life.

We can follow the diet that the Lord

has outlined for us. If more people were on a vegetarian diet, there would be more food to go around because it takes a lot more resources (good things) to support a meat-eating diet than it does a vegetarian one.

We can care for the plants and trees that we have responsibility for. This will help to keep the air clean.

As much as we can, we should try to lessen carbon emissions (output). This is becoming more and more of a world-wide concern due to the dangerous influence¹⁰ of carbon emissions (output) caused by cars upon the environment. We try to be good stewards (managers) of the earth. We try to take care of the environment. We try not to abuse (hurt) resources (good things) on earth. We try to share with others all the good things that we have. By doing this, we can improve the daily lives of those who need our help. As Christians, we are responsible for helping those in need.

According to Matthew 25:34–46, how might our stewardship (management) of the earth help us in doing what Jesus asks us to do? What other verses can you think of that also could help us be better stewards?

THURSDAY—APRIL 29

SUN WORSHIPERS (2 Kings 23:5)

When we live in eternity,¹¹ we can better understand the negative (bad)

10. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

11. eternity—forever, for all time; life without end.

influence of sin on the environment. It is hard for us to imagine what this world must have looked like to Adam and Eve, our first parents.

Of course, sin did not just influence the earth. It influenced humans too. Among the negative influences of sin on humans was their downfall into idolatry.¹² It was shown in their worshiping and serving “created things” (Romans 1:25, NIV), rather than worshiping the Creator Himself.

Read 2 Kings 23:5; Jeremiah 8:2; and Ezekiel 8:16. What was going on here? What reason do you think these people gave for worshiping the sun?

One thing we know for sure about the environment of the earth today is that sunlight is important for our health. But it can have dangerous results if we are out in it too much. We now know that too much exposure¹³ to sunlight increases the risk of different skin cancers. So, in a way, modern sun worshipers are almost as ignorant (foolish; unwise) as old-time sun worshipers.

On the other hand, sunlight helps to make vitamin D. Vitamin D is important for body metabolism¹⁴ and the building of strong and healthy bones. Adequate exposure to sunlight also helps to pre-

vent certain types of cancer.

What, then, is the overall amount of exposure to sunlight that we need to get the maximum benefit (profit)? Near the equator,¹⁵ light-skinned people who depend on sunlight for their vitamin D require at least five minutes per day of direct exposure. Dark-skinned people in the same environment require about thirty minutes to make the same amount of vitamin D. In areas where the hours of sunlight are more limited, vitamin D should be added under the supervision of doctors.

It also is healthful to open curtains and windows to allow sunlight to enter our rooms. This will help to destroy certain bacteria.¹⁶

Studies show that people without enough sunlight exposure are more likely to suffer from seasonal depression (known as “seasonal affective disorder”). This problem happens in areas where the days are short in winter. The cure is more exposure to light, even artificial (man-made light), in the winter months.

The bottom line? As with so much else about healthful living, wise balance in the use of sunlight exposure is very important.

FRIDAY—APRIL 30

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G.

12. idolatry—idol worship (bowing down to or serving false gods or statues); loving something more than we love God.

13. exposure—being affected by something or experiencing something.

14. metabolism—the chemical processes by which a plant or animal or a person uses food, water, and so forth, to grow and heal and to make energy.

15. equator—an imaginary circle around the middle of the earth that is the same distance from the North Pole and the South Pole.

16. bacteria—very small living things that often cause disease.

White, “The Creation,” pages 44–51, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*;¹⁷ “The Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan] Ended,” pages 675–678, in *The Great Controversy*.

“ ‘Ever since the world was created it has been possible to see the qualities [good things] of God that are not seen. I’m [I am] talking about his eternal [for-ever; without end] power and about the fact that he is God.’ Romans 1:20, NIV. The things of nature that we can now see give us only a weak understanding of Eden’s glory.¹⁸ Sin has spoiled earth’s beauty. We can see the work of evil on all things on earth. But still there remains much that is beautiful. Nature testifies [gives witness] that the Eternal God, who is great in goodness, mercy, and love, has created the earth and filled it with life and gladness. Even in their spoiled condition, all things show the handiwork of the great Master Artist. Wherever we turn, we may hear the voice of God and see examples of His goodness.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Health and Healing*, page 234.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ The environment and global warming¹⁹ often have been the subject

of today’s news on television and in the newspapers. How do your nation, community,²⁰ and church answer these issues?

❷ How should a Christian, someone who believes that God did create the world, deal with questions about the environment differently than someone who believes we are here by pure chance alone?

❸ How can and should the Sabbath play a part in the environment? How does Sabbath keeping help us be better environmentalists?²¹

❹ If Jesus is coming back soon, should we really worry about the environment? Explain your answer.

❺ Do some research on how damage to the environment also has bad results on health in different parts of the world. What about in your own community? What part could and should your church take in this area? How might you be able to help in this kind of outreach?

❻ What lifestyle changes could you make that could influence the environment for good? How much self-sacrifice²² would you need to make?

17. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men and women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

18. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.

19. global warming—the recent increase in the world’s temperature that is believed to be caused by the increase of certain gases (such as carbon dioxide) in the atmosphere.

20. community—a group of people living, working, or worshiping together.

21. environmentalists—people who work to protect the natural world from pollution (harm to air, water, or earth) and other effects.

22. self-sacrifice—the act of giving up something you want to have or keep in order to help someone else.