

Sabbath Lesson #9 – Creation: Genesis as Foundation — Part 2 – 23-29 May 2020

Christ would have us know the Creator as revealed in Scriptures, as declared by His handiwork. Thus the psalmist says: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). The pagans and the philosophers who deny the Genesis account of creation, are without excuse in that ignorance (Romans 1).

Sunday: A Flat Earth? – It is sad that the Lesson raises this question, which according to Ellen White, is nonessential. “It is better to pray and humble the soul before God and let the world, round or flat, be just as God has made it. Try most earnestly by faithful continuance in well-doing to seek for a clear title in the inheritance in the earth made new. Better lead the flock of God to drink at the higher streams; better by precept and example seek God while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. There is a revival needed in the church. When the teachers are drinking fresh draughts from the well of Bethlehem, then they can lead the people to the living stream” {21MR 413.2}. “Whether the world is round or flat will not save a soul, but whether men believe and obey means everything” {21MR 413.3}.

“On Sunday afternoon I urged the truth with more decided firmness and power. A man was present who had expressed a desire to see me and talk with me in regard to the round and flat world. I sent him a message that when Christ gave my commission to do the work He had placed upon me, the flat or round world was not included in the message; the Lord had taken care of His house, His world here below, better than any human agency could care for it, and until the message came from the Lord, silence was eloquence upon that question” {21MR 414.2}. “The great question is, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? This is the science of what constitutes the higher education, and when this question is properly adjusted, the capabilities of the whole man are called into full exercise. There will be no agitation of the question whether the world is round or flat, but the whole burden of the soul is: What shall I do to inherit eternal life? We need now to make every talent that God has given us to be employed to His name's glory” {21MR 414.5}. “Let those who are presenting theories as to whether the earth is round or flat, leave this question, for God has not given it to them to solve, and earnestly inquire, ‘What shall I do that I may have everlasting life?’ Let them heed the answer, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.’” {21MR 419.6}. “Nonessential questions will be brought in by those who do not purify their souls by obeying the truth. They fall far short of the standard of loving God supremely and their neighbor as themselves. I am bidden to say that sophistries will be brought in to take the place of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. The message is given, ‘Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’ This word has been fulfilling among our people” {21MR 420.1}. A Flat Earth? Nonessential Question!

Monday: Creation in Ancient Literature – The Babylonian creation myths, as are noted in the ‘excerpts from the Atra-Ḫasis Epic’, claiming that the heathen gods created man to carry the loads of the gods, is but a restatement of heathen myths of the philosophers at Athens that Paul encountered, as recorded in seventeenth of Acts. When Paul came to Athens, his spirit was stirred, powerfully agitated, because he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, or full of idols. “Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him” (Acts 17:18). The Epicureans derived their name from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before Christ. Epicureans denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs. The Stoics believed that the universe was created by God, but that all things were fixed by fate; that even God was under the dominion of fate. Paul's teaching was diametrically opposed to that of these philosophers.

Knowing the reliable Genesis account, we confidently declare the heathen philosophers were very unsafe men to follow. We would not be at all out of the way to conclude that any idea advanced by them is to be held in suspicion; whatever stands on the sole authority of philosophers such as Plato or Socrates or Aristotle or Epicurus, is to be rejected as false. Not only will these conclusions hold good as regards the heathen philosophers themselves, but also concerning those who put great confidence in those philosophers. And when we learn that many who professed Christianity, still adhered to the pagan philosophy, even

holding the view that the Genesis account borrowed from Babylonian myths or doctrines of philosophers, we can better appreciate the earnestness with which the apostle made this exhortation: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Tuesday: Genesis Versus Paganism – In holding a distorted view of creation, paganism has no excuse. Thus, Paul indicates the justice of God in pouring out His wrath upon them: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in to them; for God hath showed it unto them" (Romans 1:19). The next verse tells how God revealed Himself unto them. As we quote it, we transpose the clauses, to save the necessity of explanation by comment: "For [*i.e.* since] the creation of the world, the invisible things of him [God], even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; so that they [those who deny God] are without excuse." The same apostle tells us that God "left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). The psalmist also tells us that "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). So plainly does nature teach the existence of God, that he who even in his secret thought says, "There is no God," is justly called a fool (Psalm 14:1). As shown in the first chapter of Romans, paganism is without excuse in distorting the Genesis account.

Wednesday: Creation and Time – "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). In the beginning of what? Not of God's existence, because He is from eternity. Not the beginning of eternity, because eternity has no beginning. Then the text must mean that in the beginning of time God created the heaven and the earth. Time begun with the first act of the creation of this earth. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:3-5). Here we have the work of the first day. What was it? It was the creation of the heaven and the earth, and the creation of light, and the separating of the light from the darkness, thus forming day and night. The measurement of time by days and nights must have begun as soon as time began. "In the beginning" refers to the first day of the first week of time, in which the heaven and the earth were created.

Thursday: Creation in Scripture – Christ is the Beginning, the source, of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14). Proverbs 8 is the call of wisdom; but Christ is the wisdom of God, so this concerns Christ Himself. "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old" (verse 22). Now there is in the Hebrew of this verse no word indicating "in", so that, as expressed in some translations, it properly reads, "the beginning of His way." Christ is the Beginning of God's way, as stated in Revelation 3:14; also, in the Hebrew, the word rendered "possessed," in Proverbs 8:22, is the same as that used by Eve when Cain was born, "I have gotten a man from the LORD" (Genesis 4:1); and so we may read the text: "Jehovah brought Me forth, the beginning of His way, before His works of old." With this passage compare 1 Corinthians 1:24; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; and Revelation 3:14; and then read Proverbs 8:24-31. Scripture points to creation; to the Beginning. Christ, the Word of God, is the Beginning of His way. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). It is through Him alone we have access to the Father. He died for us, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). What we must come to is the Beginning. We are so anxious to get to the end, that we almost entirely lose sight of the Beginning. Just as though it were possible ever to attain the end while ignoring the Beginning! When we come to Christ, the Beginning, we have the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9). The last message of the Gospel directs us to the Beginning, as the preparation for the end. "Worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." This points us back to creation; to the Beginning. The devil successfully beguiles us from "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3); but now as the end approaches, the call is sounded "with a loud voice" for us to come to the Beginning, and to remain there, that we may rejoice in the end. The Gospel of John begins where Genesis begins, and Revelation ends with the beginning. So the Gospel is an infinite circle, ending where it begins, and enclosing the universe. If we abide in the Beginning, we have everything.