

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

How to Interpret Scripture

Lesson 9: Creation: Genesis as Foundation—Part 2

"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 came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:1-5, *New American Standard Bible*).

This settles the question of the pre-existence of Christ, for all who have any respect for the Bible as the word of God. It is true that the body of Jesus was not "in the beginning with God." The writer of Hebrews tells us that a body was prepared for Him (Heb. 10:5). This likely was accomplished in the womb of Mary by the joining of humanity with divinity by the Holy Spirit. We are not told exactly how this happened, probably since some things are impossible for humans to understand.

Our lesson this week looks at some of the ways "science" can be used to explain Bible stories. Last week, we noticed that the Genesis account identifies four different rivers that God placed in and around Eden to keep the earth and living things adequately hydrated. The differing temperatures between night and day would generate condensation during the cooler hours, a fact that science has adequately established. Even though we generally think of precipitation from the sky as being our primary source of moisture, the condensation phenomena continues to occur but on a less dramatic scale.

Before the flood, God tells us that the earth had a "firmament" which acted like a greenhouse which contributed to keeping earth's humidity regulated. All of these concepts are recognized by scientists who study the effects of atmosphere and have identified the "greenhouse" effect. The fact that humans have failed as stewards of the earth and are dumping harmful things into our atmosphere doesn't prove that God created a physical world that wasn't perfect. It is not a complete leap of faith to believe the hydrological dynamics described in the book of Genesis.

If God can provide this kind of evidence, it begs the question, why didn't He leave more evidence of the events recorded in Genesis? Why not allow all four rivers to survive the flood? Why not preserve the ark as Noah originally built it as irrefutable evidence corroborating the story of the flood? Since many scientists do not believe in a global flood, very little study is done to demonstrate the effects of such an event. Common sense dictates that if the global flood lasted almost an entire year, it must have had profound effects on the earth and its atmosphere. Why didn't God provide irrefutable evidence? All He did was inspire His friend Moses to write what we now know as the book of Genesis.

As Ellen White described it: "As the years rolled on, and he [Moses] wandered with his flocks in solitary places, pondering upon the oppressed condition of his people, he recounted the dealings of God with his fathers and the promises that were the heritage of the chosen nation, and his prayers for Israel ascended by day and by night. Heavenly angels shed their light around him. Here, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis ..." [1]

To finite humans, it can be frustrating to think of how easily God could have allowed absolute proof of His actions and existence, so there would be no room for doubt. His "failure" to provide such evidence has given rise to theories, fabrications, and myths, most of which deny that a single, all powerful God even exists. Much of what was believed that gods interacted with the world, amounts to magic.

"However, it was no longer ago than the 17th century that men believed that the vital processes in the bodies of plants and animals were impossible to study or even to begin to understand ... it was assumed that the Creator was a being who chose to accomplish His acts in the animate world and, for that matter, also in the inanimate world, by magic." [2]

Then William Harvey (1578-1657) was able to demonstrate the circulation of blood in 1628. Instead of believing that "the phenomena of life were special, personal acts of God," people began to believe that it was all just a process of mechanics and chemistry. If God was or ever had been involved, it was just to get things started, an early version of the "big bang theory."

One of the more reassuring concepts of the 1888 message is how close Christ had to come to humanity in order to be touched with our feelings, which qualified Him to be our High Priest. The Old Testament details the history of how God dealt with His chosen people through cycles of rebellion and return. He finally sent His Son to show all of us exactly who He is and how involved He wants to be in our lives. There are many ways that Jesus demonstrated who God is, but the trust and faith He showed during His earthly life not only gives us a perfect example, but He worked out a faith that He wants to give us.

Our lesson lists many times when Jesus showed that He had faith in the accuracy of the scriptures available to Him. Even though Jesus, the Son of God created the entire universe before His incarnation, He had "laid aside" that part of His being (cf. Phil. 2:5-8) so He didn't remember the time when He personally inspired the writers of the Old Testament. As a child He learned the scriptures at his mother's knee. By the age of 12 He often quoted many Old Testament authors, especially Isaiah, which He apparently realized described Him and His mission. He used the scriptures to resist the temptations of Satan and often criticized the religious leadership and the disciples for their minimal understanding of the prophecies.

On the cross, Jesus relied on the "script" as related in Psalm 22 and other places. For example, His statement, "Why have You forsaken Me?" and His final statement that He submitted to His father, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." Because we know He could not "see through the portals of the tomb," as Ellen White tells us, Jesus was operating on faith on the cross. He is ready to give each one of us His faith if we consent, so we can "keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus." This will give us the patience to endure whatever is necessary, just as He did. Praise God for Jesus!

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 251.

[2] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 46.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/WbkAvsyjpRE>

Many of Pastor Penno's sermons are on YouTube in Spanish. Just type **pastor paul penno en español** in the search bar.

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