

Glimpses of Our God Lesson 8 1Q 2012

Creation Care

Before we get into this week's lesson I received the following email from an online listener regarding Sabbath ministry:

Dear Dr. Jennings,

In a recent Sabbath School class you asked the class to think of ways they might serve God in the community on Sabbath. My church, Wasatch Hills SDA in Salt Lake City, has a program started by a couple of its members called Inner-City Outreach (ICOR). Church members routinely clean out their closets and bring clothing items in good condition to a collection bin in our church coat closet. During the winter months - we have about 7 of them! - these items are taken to the city park nearest to the homeless shelter and given to the homeless. Some people choose to contribute monetarily, and these funds are used to buy new items (backpacks, thermal underwear, coats, warm head coverings and Bibles), which are also given away. Some have even conducted their own coat drives or clothing drives at their places of business or among their circle of friends to help collect needed items.

Volunteers (typically 15-25) from the church distribute items along with a smile, prayers, cookies and hot chocolate over the course of a couple of hours on Sabbath, following our morning worship services. Volunteers meet to sort the items into bins the day before distribution, which is in itself a time for sharing and getting to know each other better. The sorting makes for much easier organization and distribution, and helps better serve those looking for items. There are typically one or two planned distributions each month, allowing time for additional items to be collected and volunteers to be coordinated.

This mission has not only helped serve our community, but has been an invaluable lesson in humility for participants. The first time someone who hasn't bathed in a few days wants to give you a hug as an expression of heartfelt gratitude can be uncomfortable, but it's not long before you're the one offering the hug!

This Sabbath "work" comes with a huge paycheck: the opportunity to experience love, mercy, compassion, charity and understanding in action! God has blessed ICOR, and through ICOR we are blessed.

I thank God for you and your ministry. You have liberated my love for our wonderful God!

Sincerely,

Earl Harris

Thoughts?

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs, "What should we..."

First question, should SDAs and Christians of other faiths, have different perspective on the environment?

If so why? What makes a difference in how we understand our responsibility to the environment?

What do you understand our responsibility, as stewards to the earth, to be?

Is the earth there for our use? For what purpose?

- Air, water, and food for our health and life

- But what food? Fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables are a given
- What about dairy? Goat's and Cow's Milk, cheese, eggs?
- What about fish?
- What about raising animals for the purpose of killing them and eating them? Are there reasons not to do this? In Eden did they? Are there reasons to do it?
 - What about raising flocks in the Bible for food and for sacrifice?
 - Weren't the priests to eat the sacrificial animals?
 - Why? Was it God's original design? Then why did God have them do this?
 - Symbolically to teach internalizing Christ – but could there be other reasons?
 - Did you ever hear about the plane crash in the Andes in 1972? The survivors were stranded at over 11000 feet for over two months, with no food, so they survived by eating the dead humans. What do you think of this? While it was a necessity, would you expect them to, on some level, be sickened by it?
 - What about eating animals, should we have a similar reaction? It might, in certain situations, be a necessity, but should we relish it, or perhaps be sickened by it?
- What about harvesting trees to build houses? To use for firewood, paper, furniture? In Eden did they do this?
 - Why do we find ourselves destroying trees to make furniture, houses, paper and the like?
 - Is it because of sin? Has sin changed the environment?
- How has the environment changed because of sin?

Here is one Bible commentators view on the change after sin and why God provided clothing:

- After his transgression Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence. But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. **The air,**

which had hitherto been of a mild and uniform temperature, seemed to chill the guilty pair. The love and peace which had been theirs was gone, and in its place they felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul. **The robe of light which had enshrouded them, now disappeared,** and to supply its place they endeavored to fashion for themselves a covering; for they could not, while unclothed, meet the eye of God and holy angels. {PP 57.1}

- In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin. **The atmosphere, once so mild and uniform in temperature, was now subject to marked changes,** and the **Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins** as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold. {PP 61.5}

Did it become necessary, because of sin, to use animals for clothing? To use trees for shelter, heat, furniture? And what about food? Did the food supply change after the fall?

Are these changes healthy and good, or while they allow adaptation, do they also bring destruction?

How do these changes bring destruction?

Trees, and other plants provide oxygen we need to survive, filter the air from pollutants and provide food for animals and humans. What happens if we remove large amounts of trees from the earth? Could it affect our atmosphere and if we go far enough could it kill the planet?

What about eating animals – while, it might allow survival in some situations, what are the downsides?

- Increased cancers

- Increased cardiovascular disease
- Increased autoimmune diseases

How many remember hearing about H1N1 flu?

The N – stands for a marker on the surface of cells, in this case a sugar marker Sialic acid, Neu5Gc.

Markers like this are identifiers that help our bodies immune system identify self from non-self, and can also act as hooks or latches upon which molecules can attach to enter cells.

What is interesting is that humans have the gene for this marker, but the gene is turned off so human cells do not make this marker or express it on our cells, even though we have the gene for it. All animals express the gene and make this marker, while humans do not.

But because we have the gene for this marker when we eat meat this marker gets incorporated into human tissue and expressed on human cells, which can contribute to immune problems, plus make us more susceptible to certain pathogens.

Thoughts?

Does nature today represent accurately the way God created things? Here is what one Bible commentator suggests, do you agree?

- **Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system. Satan planted these seeds when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge** which meant disobedience to God. **Not one noxious plant was placed in the Lord's great garden, but after Adam and Eve sinned, poisonous herbs sprang up.** In the parable of the sower the question was asked the master, "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" The master

answered, "An enemy hath done this" (Matt. 13:27, 28). All tares are sown by the evil one. **Every noxious herb is of his sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation** he has corrupted the earth with tares. {2SM 288.2}

Do you believe this to be true? What problems may arise from failing to recognize nature today doesn't represent God's original design, but instead is infected with an antagonistic principle?

- Misunderstand God and His principles
- Fail to believe God exists – evolutionism
- Create false theologies of eternal dualism, the eternal existence of good and evil
- Who wants good and evil to exist eternally?
- What religions teach the eternal existence of good and evil?

Thoughts?

Still talking about how the earth is changed, not only the existence of poisonous plants, but also storms, and what is the source of coal and oil?

At this time [flood] immense forests were buried. These have since been changed to coal, forming the extensive coal beds that now exist, and also yielding large quantities of oil. The coal and oil frequently ignite and burn beneath the surface of the earth. Thus rocks are heated, limestone is burned, and iron ore melted. The action of the water upon the lime adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and fiery issues. As the fire and water come in contact with ledges of rock and ore, there are heavy explosions underground, which sound like muffled thunder. The air is hot and suffocating. Volcanic eruptions follow; and these often failing to give sufficient vent to the heated elements, the earth itself is convulsed, the ground heaves and swells

like the waves of the sea, great fissures appear, and sometimes cities, villages, and burning mountains are swallowed up. These wonderful manifestations will be more and more frequent and terrible just before the second coming of Christ and the end of the world, as signs of its speedy destruction. {PP 108.2}

Thoughts? If the vast organic deposits didn't originally exist buried in the earth, then did God create earth with oil and coal deposits? Were there volcanoes on earth when God built it? What about earthquakes and fractured tectonic plates that shift? Oceans? Tidal waves? Polar extremes? Uninhabitable mountains like Mt. Everest?

What do you think about the use of fossil fuels? Should we use them for our comfort and convenience? Is it sinful to use these products because they emit carbons?

The vast forests buried in the earth at the time of the Flood, and since changed to coal, form the extensive coal fields, and **yield the supplies of oil that minister to our comfort and convenience today**. These things, as they are brought to light, are so many **witnesses mutely testifying to the truth of the word of God**. {Ed 129.2}

What lessons are we learning from the earth? Do we see harmony between the Biblical record and the large coal and oil deposits? And what do we learn from the way humans exploit the earth?

What about God's methods? What about breaking God's design? What happens when God's design is violated?

Given we live in a world of sin, which by definition means God's law is being violated, can we do anything to stop the decay and slow death of the earth?

Then what should be the number one focus of our ministry?
Revealing the truth about God in every manner possible,
including the way we live!

SUNDAY

The lesson describes people who go into restaurants and steal lobsters and loose them in the sea.

Read sixth paragraph, “All of which...” thoughts?

Should we spend time focusing on saving the planet?
What about promoting a healthy environment? What is the
difference between promoting a healthy environment and
working to “save the planet?”

Why is it appropriate to promote a healthy environment, but
not appropriate to focus on saving the planet?

A healthy environment is essential to maximize brain health
and a healthy brain is necessary to know God.

The planet in its current form cannot be saved, it is dying as it
is infected with Satan’s principles. Only God can heal us and
planet earth, thus our primary focus is to be on all activities
which promote the truth about God and bring people a
knowledge of Him.

And unhealthy environment damages the brain and obstructs
the ability to know God and work usefully for Him.

Examples:

- Lead in paint has caused numerous children to have mental retardation – eliminating this allows children to have healthier brains, thus healthier lives and also the ability to more effectively come to know God and work for Him

- Air pollution increases disease, a diseased body undermines brain health, but also impairs our usefulness in God's cause
- Water pollution causes health problems, and health problems undermine usefulness and ability to help others
- Other examples?

MONDAY

Caring for creation – does our view of God impact how we relate to creation? How?

If we view ourselves as created in God's image, to reveal God's character, and view God as Jesus who did not think equality with God was to be grasped but humbled Himself to save us, and the earth as a microcosm in which mankind stands in for God and all other life is symbolic of God's creatures, would we slaughter animals for food, if there was any other option?

If we view God like a Roman emperor, who is to be served by others and others are to sacrifice to benefit the emperor, might we view all of earth's resources for our privileged pleasures?

Read fourth paragraph, "These problems are largely due..."

If we live this way what do we say about God?

As we become like Jesus do we become less selfish and more protective of others? What about animals, how do we treat animals if we become more like Jesus? How big is the gap between Jesus pre-incarnate and humanity? How far down did Jesus step to become human? Would it be a bigger gap than if we became a rat?

What do you think of this commentator's thoughts?

It is because of man's sin that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (Romans 8:22).

Suffering and death were thus entailed, not only upon the human race, but upon the animals. Surely, then, **it becomes man to seek to lighten, instead of increasing, the weight of suffering which his transgression has brought upon God's creatures. He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant.** {2MCP 514.2}

A disposition to cause pain, whether to our fellowmen or to the brute creation, is satanic. Many do not realize that their cruelty will ever be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, as were those of Balaam, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness to testify against them in the courts above. A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures.--PP 443 (1890). {2MCP 514.3}

Thoughts?

So, what is the principle you are hearing? What are we to be doing? Conserving and protecting God's creatures?

- Then what about culling deer populations so they don't over populate and thus starve to death? Satanic cruelty, or Godly mercy?
- What about using mice and rats in lab experiments to develop treatments for disease? Satanic cruelty, or Godly mercy?
- What about industrial farms raising animals in cages to slaughter for furs or food? Satanic cruelty or Godly mercy?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The issue of the..."

What are the Bible principles?

- Love others more than self
- Sacrifice self to help others
- Seek to protect not exploit
- Build up not tear down
- Truthfulness
- Loyalty
- Freedom

How do these principles relate to the environment?

- Do we dump toxic waste unsafely or illegally to make more money?

WEDNESDAY

Read Proverbs 27:20 at the top – what do you understand this to mean?

Read second paragraph, “In other words...” thoughts?

In the movie matrix – Mr. Smith said to Morpheus that humans were a virus, taking and not giving anything, and that humans were destroying the planet, a disease that needed to be cured. What do you think?

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. **There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself.** No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold

their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud. {DA 20.2}

Thoughts? Are humans diseased? Yes, and what is the cure? Jesus Christ – how?

Read bottom green section – thoughts?

Did Sabbath keeping prevent the Jews from being greedy and wanting more and more?

THURSDAY

Read top section, “And God said...”

Question in the lesson, “How complete was humanity’s control over the earth to be?”

Thoughts?

- What might it have been like before sin?
- Did Adam have control over inanimate nature?
- Could he by thought affect weather?
- In the book of Job, do we have any evidence that Satan can affect weather?
- Might Adam had that control before turning it over to Satan?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-3