OF IMMENSE VALUE

The essence of humanity’s dignity is a common creation. The fact that we are uniquely created by God places value on every human being. The unborn in the mother’s womb, the quadriplegic teenager, the young adult with Down syndrome, and the Alzheimer-afflicted grandmother all have immense value to God. He is their Father. They are His sons and daughters. “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands... And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:24–26).

Ours is a shared heritage. We belong to the same family. We are brothers and sisters fashioned, shaped, and molded by the same God. Creation provides a true sense of self-worth. When the genes and chromosomes came together to form the unique biological structure of your personality, God threw away the pattern. There is no one else like you in all the universe. You are unique, a one-of-a-kind creation, a being of such immense value that the God who created the cosmos took upon Himself our fleshly bodies and offered Himself as a sacrifice for you and your sins!
Write out Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15 from the translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
**THE JUDGMENT AND THE SABBATH**

If we are merely a collection of randomly formed cells, nothing more than the product of chance and an advanced ape, then life has little meaning beyond mere survival. If we are merely one of the estimated 8 billion people clawing at one another for living space on a planet called earth, life loses its purpose. In contrast, the biblical Creation provides a reason to live and a moral imperative for living. We have been created by God and are accountable to Him for our actions. The One who made us holds us responsible. He has established absolutes, even in a world of moral relativism.

The message of the three angels flying in midair in Revelation 14 announces that “the hour of His judgment has come” (verse 7). Since we were created by God with the capacity to make moral choices, we are responsible for the decisions we make. If we were merely a random collection of cells, products of our heredity and environment alone, our actions would largely be determined by forces over which we have no control.

However, judgment implies moral responsibility. In this crisis hour of earth's history, the judgment hour, God calls us to make decisions in light of eternity. The first angel's earnest appeal to "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of waters" (verse 7) acknowledges that the basis of all worship is the fact that we were created by God.

Meanwhile, our adherence to the seventh-day Sabbath demonstrates our belief that Jesus is worthy to be worshiped as our Creator. It reveals our acceptance of His law as divinely inspired principles for living life to the fullest. Because the law is the foundation of God's government and is a revelation of His character, it becomes the standard of judgment. Our faithfulness to the Sabbath commandment is an acknowledgment of our commitment to live according to His principles.

It is because our world so desperately needs the reassuring message of Creation that God gave us the Sabbath. In the mid-1800s, when the evolutionary hypothesis was taking the intellectual world by storm, God sent a message of incredible hope. We have been studying this message, found in Revelation 14:6, 7.

Satan has made every attempt to distort the idea of Creation because he hates Jesus and does not want Him to receive the worship He is due as our Creator and Redeemer. The Sabbath is at the center of the great controversy over Christ's worthiness to receive worship as our Creator. God's last-day message is one that calls all humanity back to worshiping Christ as the Creator of heaven and earth. The basis of all worship is the fact that He created us.

Sabbath is a symbol of our rest in Him, and it is a special sign of loyalty to the Creator (Ezek. 20:12, 20). Rather than an arbitrary legalistic requirement, it reveals that true rest from righteousness by works is found in Him. The Sabbath speaks of a God who has achieved for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Scripture calls us to rest in His love and care each Sabbath. The Sabbath day is a symbol of rest, not works; of grace, not legalism; of assurance, not condemnation; of dependence upon Him, not ourselves. Each Sabbath we rejoice in His goodness and praise Him for the salvation that can be found only in Christ.

(Cont. on p. 69.)
DECEPTION AND USURPATION

In an attempt to destroy the uniqueness of our creation, the devil has introduced a not-so-subtle counterfeit. The counterfeit, accepted by even some among us, goes like this: God is the prime cause of Creation, but He took long ages to bring life into existence because He used evolution to do it. This approach attempts to harmonize scientific “data” with the Genesis account. It asserts that the days of Creation were long, indefinite periods of time and that life on earth is billions of years old.

The biblical account is clear: God “spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9; see also Heb. 11:3). The first chapter of Genesis affirms that God created the world in six literal days of 24 hours each and rested on the seventh. The linguistic structure of Genesis 1 and 2 does not permit anything else. Even scholars who don’t believe in the literal six-day Creation acknowledge that the author’s intent was to teach the six-day Creation.

The Hebrew word for “day” in Genesis 1 is יומ (yom). Throughout the Bible, every time a number modifies the word יומ as an adjective (third day, first day, etc.), it limits the time period to 24 hours. Without exception, it is always a 24-hour period.

Additionally, and to the immediate point, if God did not create the world in six literal days, what significance does the seventh-day Sabbath have? Why would God command it? It would make absolutely no sense at all to leave the Sabbath as an eternal legacy of a six-day Creation week if a six-day Creation week never existed to begin with. To accept long ages of creation is to challenge the very need for the seventh-day Sabbath. It also raises serious questions regarding the integrity of Scripture.

By attacking the Sabbath, Satan is challenging the very heart of God’s authority, and what could be more effective in destroying the memorial of the six-day Creation than by denying the reality of the six-day Creation? No wonder so many people, Christians included, ignore the seventh-day Sabbath. What a setup for the final deception.

The great controversy, which began in heaven millennia ago, is over the question of God’s authority. In the last days the central issue in the conflict between good and evil, Christ and Satan, is worship. Do we worship the Creator or the beast? And because Creation forms the ground of all our beliefs (after all, what do we believe that makes any sense apart from God as our Creator?), the seventh-day Sabbath, embedded in the Genesis Creation account itself (Gen. 2:1–3), stands as the eternal and immutable sign of that Creation. It’s the simplest symbol of the simplest teaching. The only thing more fundamental to it is God Himself.

Hence, to usurp the seventh-day Sabbath is to usurp the Lord’s authority at the most prime level possible, that of Him as Creator. It’s to get behind everything and uproot it at the core. It is, indeed, to seek to take the place of God Himself (2 Thess. 2:4).

Of course, the real issue in the last days is our love and loyalty to Jesus, but according to the Bible, this love is expressed in obedience to the commandments (1 John 5:3; Rev. 14:12)—and the Sabbath alone among the commandments gets behind everything because it alone points to God as Creator (Exod. 20:8–11). No wonder it will be the outward symbol of the final divide between those who worship the Lord and those who worship the beast (Rev. 14:11, 12). Considering how fundamental the Sabbath is to everything else, it’s hard to see how the final issue of worshiping the Creator could be about anything else.

(Cont. on p. 69.)
Review your memorized verse from Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15.

What relationship do the following verses have with the Sabbath and the end?

- Psalm 33:6, 9
- James 2:8–13
- 2 Peter 3:13
- Revelation 21:1
- Romans 14:10
- Hebrews 11:3

What other verses come to mind in connection with Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15?

Psalm 33:6, 9
James 2:8–13
2 Peter 3:13
Revelation 21:1
Romans 14:10
Hebrews 11:3

The Sabbath is also the eternal link between the perfection of Eden in the past and the glory of the new heavens and the new earth in the future (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). It calls us back to our roots; it’s a link to our family of origin. The Sabbath has been continuously observed since time began. It is an unbroken connection back through time to our creation, and therefore keeps us focused on the glorious truth that we are children of God. It invites us into an intimate, close relationship with Him.

The reason provided… to worship God is that He is the Creator. In the heavenly liturgy, celestial beings expressed the idea in a very succinct way: ‘For You created all things’ ([Rev.] 4:11). On earth, God’s creatorship needs to be emphasized as much as possible, so the angel says, ‘Worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters’ ([Rev.] 14:7, NKJV). It has been correctly indicated that the angel is using the language of the fourth commandment to justify the call to worship God (Exod. 20:11). . . .

“Within the Decalogue the Sabbath commandment stands as its seal in that it identifies who God is—the Creator; confirms the territory over which He rules—everything He created; and reveals His right to rule—for He created everything. In order for the dragon to succeed, he had somehow to set aside this memorial” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Closing of the Cosmic Conflict: Role of the Three Angels’ Messages,” unpublished manuscript, 40, 41).

The decree which is to go forth against the people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther . . . Satan instigated the scheme in order to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God. But his plots were defeated by a counterpower that reigns among the children of men. . . . The Protestant world today see in the little company keeping the Sabbath a Mordecai in the gate. His character and conduct, expressing reverence for the law of God, are a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling upon His Sabbath; the unwelcome intruder must by some means be put out of the way.

The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey His law. Satan will excite indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. . . . Not having a “Thus saith the Scriptures” to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. . . . On this battlefield comes the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Now, as in the days of Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people. (Ellen G. White, Maranatha [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976], 198.)
THE SABBATH AND ETERNAL REST

The Sabbath is a place of refuge in a weary world. Every week, we leave the cares of this world and enter God's retreat center: the Sabbath. In his work *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, famed Jewish author Abraham Heschel calls it “a palace in time” ([New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005], 12). Each seventh day, God's heavenly palace descends from heaven to earth, and the Lord invites us into the glory of His presence for this 24-hour period to spend a time of intimate fellowship with Him.

In the introduction to Heschel's book on the beauty and solemnity of the Sabbath, Susannah Heschel, his daughter, writes of the significance of the Sabbath in these words: “The Sabbath is a metaphor for paradise and a testimony to God's presence; in our prayers, we anticipate a messianic era that will be a Sabbath, and each Shabbat prepares us for that experience: Unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath . . . one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come” (XV).

At Creation, Jesus built a special dwelling for us. We can find refuge there. We can be safe there. His work is complete. It is finished. When we rest on the Sabbath, we are resting in His loving care. We are resting in anticipation of our eternal rest in the new heavens and the new earth that is soon to come.

The same God who created the earth the first time will create a new one, and the Sabbath remains an eternal reminder of Him as the Creator (see Isa. 66:23). In fact, the Jews saw the Sabbath as a symbol, a foretaste of what in Hebrew was called the *olam haba*, the world to come.

The message of three angels flying through the heavens commanding to worship the Creator is heaven's answer to the hopeless despair of many in the twenty-first century. It points us to our Creator, the one who first made all things, and to our Redeemer, the one who will, after the judgment, after sin is eradicated, make all things new. “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful’ ” (Rev. 21:5).
I cannot too strongly urge all our church members, all who are true missionaries, all who believe the third angel’s message, all who turn away their feet from the Sabbath, to consider the message of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. The work of beneficence enjoined in this chapter is the work that God requires His people to do at this time. It is a work of His own appointment. We are not left in doubt as to where the message applies, and the time of its marked fulfillment, for we read: “They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.” Verse 12. God’s memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath, the sign of His work in creating the world, has been displaced by the man of sin. God’s people have a special work to do in repairing the breach that has been made in His law; and the nearer we approach the end, the more urgent this work becomes. All who love God will show that they bear His sign by keeping His commandments. They are the restorers of paths to dwell in. The Lord says: “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.” Verses 13, 14. Thus genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God’s commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God’s creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. This is the ministry which God’s people are to carry forward at this time. This ministry, rightly performed, will bring rich blessings to the church. (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948], vol. 6, 265, 266.)

The law of God, through the agency of Satan, is to be made void. In our land of boasted freedom religious liberty will come to an end. The contest will be decided over the Sabbath question, which will agitate the whole world.—Ev 236 (1875).

A great crisis awaits the people of God. Very soon our nation will attempt to enforce upon all the observance of the first day of the week as a sacred day. In doing this they will not scruple to compel men against the voice of their own conscience to observe the day the nation declares to be the Sabbath.—RH Extra, Dec. 11, 1888.

Seventh-day Adventists will fight the battle over the seventh-day Sabbath. The authorities in the United States and in other countries will rise up in their pride and power and make laws to restrict religious liberty.—MS 78, 1897.

The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.—GC 588 (1911). (Ellen G. White, Last Day Events [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992], 144.)

Wonderful events are soon to open before the world. The end of all things is at hand. The time of trouble is about to come upon the people of God. Then it is that the decree will go forth forbidding those who keep the Sabbath of the Lord to buy or sell, threatening them with punishment, and even death, if they do not observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath.

(Cont. on p. 69.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Why is the idea of fallen humans being able to add anything to what Christ did on the cross such a heretical idea?

How does the Sabbath commandment reveal the link between Creation and Redemption?

How does our understanding of Creation influence our behavior?

What relationship do heredity and environment have with the daily choices we make?

How does the message of the Sabbath answer the great questions of life, such as where we came from, why we’re here, and what our eternal destiny is?

How do we show someone who believes in millions or even billions of years of evolution as the means of creation the irrationality of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial to that creation?