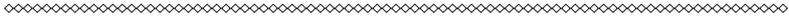


# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE...



## *Creation*

**God is Creator of all things and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished, it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1:2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)**

THE BIBLE ACCOUNT IS SIMPLE. At the creative command of God, the “heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Ex. 20:11) appeared instantly. A mere six days saw the change from “without form, and void” to a lush planet teeming with fully mature creatures and plant forms. Our planet was adorned with clear, pure, bright colors, shapes, and fragrances, put together with superb taste and exactness of detail and function.

Then God “rested,” stopping to celebrate, to enjoy. Forever, the beauty and majesty of those six days would be remembered because of His stopping. Let us steal a quick look at the Bible’s account of the Beginning.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The earth was shrouded with water and darkness. On the first day, God separated the light from the darkness, calling the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

On day two, God “divided the waters,” separating the atmosphere from the water clinging to the earth, making conditions suitable for life. On the third day, God gathered the waters together into one place, establishing land and sea. Then God clothed the naked shores, hills, and valleys; “the land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds” (Gen. 1:12, NIV).

On the fourth day, God established the sun, moon, and stars “for signs and seasons, and for days and years.” The sun was to govern the day, the moon, the night (Gen. 1:14-16).

God fashioned the birds and marine life on the fifth day. He created them “according to their kind” (Gen. 1:21)—an indication that the creatures He created would consistently reproduce after their own kinds.

On the sixth day, God made the higher forms of animal life. He said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind” (Gen. 1:24).

Then, as the crowning act of Creation, God made man “in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). God saw everything He had created and “indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

## The Creative Word of God

“By the word of the Lord,” the psalmist wrote, “the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Ps. 33:6). How did this creative word operate?

***The Creative Word and Preexisting Matter.*** The words of Genesis, “God said,” introduce the dynamic divine command responsible for the majestic events of the six days of Creation (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). Each command came charged with a creative energy that transformed a planet “without form, and void” into a paradise. “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9). Truly, “the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3).

This creative word was not dependent upon preexisting matter (*ex nihilo*): “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Heb. 11:3, NIV). Though at times God did use preexisting matter—Adam and the beasts were formed of the earth, and Eve was made from Adam’s rib (Gen. 2:7, 19, 22)—ultimately, God created all matter.

## The Creation Story

Many questions have been asked about the Genesis account of Creation. Do the two Creation narratives the first book of the Bible contains contradict each other, or are they consistent? Are the days of Creation literal, or do they represent large time periods? Were the heavens—the sun, moon, and even the stars—really made only 6,000 years ago?

***The Creation Account.*** The Bible’s two reports of Creation—one in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 and the other in Genesis 2:4-25—harmonize.

The first narrative recounts, in chronological order, the creation of all things.

The second narrative begins with the words, “These are the generations of...” (KJV), an expression that, in Genesis, introduces a family history (cf. Gen. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1). This narrative describes man’s place in Creation. It is not strictly chronological, but reveals that everything served to prepare the environment for man.<sup>1</sup> It gives more details of the creation of Adam and Eve and of the environment God provided in the garden of Eden than does the first. In addition, it informs us of the nature of humanity and of divine government. Only if these two Creation accounts are accepted as literal and historical do they harmonize with the rest of Scripture.

***The Creation Days.*** The days of the Bible’s Creation account signify literal twenty-four-hour periods. Typical of how the Old Testament people of God measured time, the expression “the evening and the morning” (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) specifies individual days with the day beginning at evening, or sunset (see Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6). There is no justification for saying that this expression meant one literal day in Leviticus, for instance, and thousands or millions of years in Genesis.

The Hebrew word translated “day” in Genesis 1 is *yom*. When *yom* is accompanied by a definite number, it always means a literal, 24-hour day (e.g. Gen. 7:11; Ex. 16:1)—another indication that the Creation account speaks of literal twenty-four-hour days.

The Ten Commandments offers another evidence that the Genesis Creation account involves literal days. In the fourth commandment, God says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work;...for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:8-11).

Succinctly, God retells the Creation story. Each day (*yom*) was filled

with creative activity; then the Sabbath climaxed the Creation week. The twenty-four-hour Sabbath day, therefore, commemorates a literal week of Creation. The fourth commandment would be meaningless were each day stretched into aeons.<sup>2</sup>

Those who cite 2 Peter 3:8, “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years,” trying to prove that the days of Creation were not literal twenty-four-hour days, overlook the fact that the same verse ends with “a thousand years” are “as one day.” Those who read into the days of Creation thousands of years or large indefinite periods of millions, or even billions, of years are questioning the validity of God’s word—just as the serpent tempted Eve to do.

*What Are the “Heavens”?* Some people are puzzled, and understandably so, by the verses that say that God “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1; cf. 2:1; Ex. 20:11) and that He made the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day of Creation week 6,000 years ago (Gen. 1:14-19). Were all heavenly bodies brought into existence at that time?

Creation week did not involve the heaven that God has dwelt in from eternity. The “heavens” of Genesis 1 and 2 probably refer to our sun and its system of planets.

Indeed, the earth, instead of being Christ’s first creation, was most likely His last one. The Bible pictures the sons of God, probably the Adams of all the unfallen worlds, meeting with God in some distant corner of the universe (Job 1:6-12). So far, space probes have discovered no other inhabited planets. They, apparently, are situated in the vastness of space—well beyond the reach of our sin-polluted solar system, quarantined against the infection of sin.

## The God of Creation

Just what kind of God is our Creator? Is such an infinite personage interested in us—minute specks of life in a distant corner of His universe? After creating the earth, did He go on to bigger and better things?

*A Caring God.* The Bible’s Creation account begins with God and moves to human beings. It implies that, in creating the heavens and the earth, God was preparing the perfect environment for the human race. Mankind, male and female, was His glorious masterpiece.

The account reveals God as a careful planner with a concern for His creation. He planted a special garden home for them and gave them the responsibility of cultivating it. He created human beings so they could have a relationship with Him. This was not to be a forced, unnatural relationship; He created them with freedom of choice and capacity to love and serve Him.

***Who Was the Creator God?*** All the members of the Godhead were involved in Creation (Gen. 1:2, 26). The active agent, however, was the Son of God, the preexisting Christ. In the prologue to his Creation account, Moses wrote, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Recalling those words, John specified Christ’s role in Creation: “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Subsequently, in the same passage John makes abundantly clear of whom he was writing: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Jesus was the Creator, the One who spoke the earth into existence (see also Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2).

***A Display of God’s Love.*** How deep is God’s love! When Christ, with loving care, knelt over Adam, shaping this first man’s hand, He must have known that men’s hands would someday abuse and ultimately nail Him to the cross. In a sense, Creation and the cross merge, since Christ the Creator was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). His divine foreknowledge<sup>3</sup> did not stop Him. Under the ominous cloud of Calvary, Christ breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, knowing that this creative act would deprive Him of His breath of life. Incomprehensible love is the basis of Creation.

## **The Purpose of Creation**

Love motivates all that God does, for He is love (1 John 4:8). He created us not only so we could love Him but so that He could love us, too. His love led Him to share, in Creation, one of the greatest gifts that He can confer—existence. Has the Bible, then, indicated for what purpose the universe and its inhabitants exist?

***To Reveal God’s Glory.*** Through His created works, God discloses His glory: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world” (Ps. 19:1-4, NIV).

Why such a display of God’s glory? Nature functions as a witness for God. He intends His created works to direct individuals to their Creator. “For since the creation of the world,” Paul says, “God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20, NIV).

As we are drawn to God through nature, we learn more about the qualities of God—qualities that can be incorporated into our own lives. And, by

reflecting God's character, we bring glory to Him, thus fulfilling the purpose for which we are created.

***To Populate the World.*** The Creator did not intend the earth to be a lonely, empty planet; it was to be inhabited (Isa. 45:8). When the first man felt the need of a companion, God created the woman (Gen. 2:20; 1 Cor. 11:9). Thus, He established the marriage institution (Gen. 2:22-25). And the Creator not only gave the couple dominion over this newly created world—but, with the words “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28), He gave them the privilege of participating in its creation.

### **The Significance of Creation**

People are tempted to ignore the doctrine of Creation. “Who cares,” they ask, “how God created the earth? What we need to know is how to get to heaven.” Yet the doctrine of a divine Creation forms “the indispensable foundation for Christian and biblical theology,”<sup>4</sup> A number of fundamental biblical concepts are rooted in the divine Creation.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a knowledge of how God created “the heavens and the earth” can ultimately help one find his way to the new heaven and earth John the Revelator speaks of. What, then, are some of the implications of the doctrine of Creation?

***The Antidote to Idolatry.*** God's creatorship distinguishes Him from all other gods (1 Chron. 16:24-27; Ps. 96:5, 6; Isa. 40:18-26; 42:5-9; 44). We should worship the God who made us, and not the gods we have made. By virtue of His creatorship, He deserves our total allegiance. Any relationship that interferes with this allegiance is idolatry and subject to divine judgment. Thus, faithfulness to the Creator is a life-or-death matter.

***The Foundation of True Worship.*** Our worship of God is based on the fact that He is our Creator and we are His creatures (Ps. 95:6). The importance of this theme is indicated by its inclusion in the call extended to earth's inhabitants just before Christ's return—to worship the One “who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14:7).

***The Sabbath—a Memorial of Creation.*** God established the seventh-day Sabbath so that we would have a weekly reminder that we are creatures of His making. The Sabbath was a gift of grace, speaking not of what we did, but of what God has done. He especially blessed this day and sanctified it so we would never forget that, besides work, life should include communion with the Creator, rest, and celebration of God's marvelous creative works (Gen. 2:2, 3). To emphasize its importance, the Creator placed the injunction to remember this sacred memorial of His creative power in the center of the moral law as an everlasting sign and

symbol of Creation (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Eze. 20:20—see chapter 20 of this book).

***Marriage—a Divine Institution.*** During the Creation week, God established marriage as a divine institution. He intended this sacred union between two individuals to be indissoluble: The man was to “be joined to his wife,” and they were to “become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24; see also Mark 10:9; see chapter 23 of this book).

***The Basis for True Self-worth.*** The Creation account states that we were made in God’s image. This understanding provides a true concept of the worth of the individual. It leaves no room for a low estimate of ourselves. Indeed, we have been given a unique place in creation, with the special privilege of constant communication with the Creator and the opportunity of becoming more like Him.

***The Basis for True Fellowship.*** God’s creatorship establishes His fatherhood (Mal. 2:10) and reveals the brotherhood of all humanity. He is our Father; we are His children. Regardless of sex, race, education, or position, all have been created in God’s image. Understood and applied, this concept would eliminate racism, bigotry, and any other form of discrimination.

***Personal Stewardship.*** Since God created us, we belong to Him. This fact implies that we have the sacred responsibility to be faithful stewards of our physical, mental, and spiritual faculties. Acting in complete independence of the Creator is the epitome of ungratefulness (see chapter 21 of this book).

***Responsibility for the Environment.*** At Creation God placed the first man and woman in the garden (Gen. 2:8). They were to cultivate the earth and to “have dominion” over all animal life (Gen. 1:28). This indicates that we have the divinely bestowed responsibility of preserving the quality of our environment.

***Dignity of Manual Labor.*** The Creator asked Adam “to tend and keep” the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). His assigning mankind this useful occupation in a perfect world reveals the dignity of manual labor.

***The Worth of the Physical Universe.*** At each stage of Creation God said what He had made was “good” (Gen. 1:10, 12, 17, 21, 25), and when He had finished creating, He pronounced the whole “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Thus, created matter is not intrinsically evil, but good.

***The Remedy for Pessimism, Loneliness, and Meaninglessness.*** The Creation narrative reveals that, rather than coming into existence because of chance evolution, everything was created with a purpose. The human race was designed for an everlasting relationship with the Creator Himself. When we understand that we were created for a reason, life becomes meaningful and rich, and the painful emptiness and dissatisfaction that so many express vanishes, replaced by the love of God.

***The Holiness of God's Law.*** God's law existed before the Fall. In their unfallen state human beings were subject to it. It was to warn against self-destruction, to reveal the limits of freedom (Gen. 2:17), and to safeguard the happiness and peace of the subjects of God's kingdom (Gen. 3:22-24—see chapter 19 of this book).

***The Sacredness of Life.*** The Creator of life continues to be involved in the formation of human life, thereby making life sacred. David praises God because of His involvement in his birth: "You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; ...my frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written" (Ps. 139: 13-16). In Isaiah the Lord identifies Himself as the One "who formed you from the womb" (Isa. 44:24). Because life is a gift of God, we must respect it; in fact, we have a moral duty to preserve it.

## **God's Creative Work Continues**

Has God finished His Creation? The Creation narrative ends with the statement, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished" (Gen. 2:1). The New Testament affirms that God's Creation was completed at the "foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3). Does this mean that Christ's creative energy is no longer in operation? Not at all. The creative word still operates in various ways.

**1. *Christ and His creative word.*** Four thousand years after Creation a centurion said to Christ, "Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8). Just as He had done at Creation, Jesus spoke—and the servant was healed. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry the same creative energy that brought life to Adam's lifeless body raised the dead and brought new life to the afflicted who requested His help.

**2. *The creative word today.*** Neither this world nor the universe operates on any inherent power of its own. The God who created them pre-

serves and sustains them. He “covers the heavens with clouds,” “prepares rain for the earth,” and “makes grass to grow on the mountains. He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry” (Ps. 147:8, 9; cf. Job 26:7-14). He upholds all things by His word, and “in Him all things consist” (Col. 1:17; cf. Heb. 1:3).

We are dependent upon God for the function of every cell of our bodies. Every breath, every heartbeat, every blink of the eye speaks of the care of a loving Creator. “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

God’s creative power is involved not only in Creation, but in redemption and restoration. God re-creates hearts (Isa. 44:21-28; Ps. 51:10). “We are His workmanship,” Paul said, “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). God, who hurled the many galaxies across the cosmos, uses that same power to re-create the most degraded sinner into His own image.

This redeeming, restoring power is not limited to changing human lives. The same power that originally created the heavens and the earth will, after the final judgment, re-create them—make of them a new and magnificent creation, a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17-19, Revelation 21, 22).

## Creation and Salvation

So, in Jesus Christ, Creation and salvation meet. He created a majestic universe and a perfect world. Both the contrasts and the parallels between Creation and salvation are significant.

***The Duration of Creation.*** At Creation Christ commanded, and it was instantly accomplished. Rather than vast periods of metamorphosis, His powerful word was responsible for Creation. In six days He created all. Yet why did it take even six days? Could not He have spoken just once and brought everything into existence in a moment?

Perhaps He took delight in the unfolding of our planet in those six days. Or perhaps this “extended” time has more to do with the value He placed on each created thing, or with His desire to reveal the seven-day week as a model for the cycle of activity and rest He intended for man.

But Christ does not just speak salvation into existence. The process of saving people stretches over millennia. It involves the old and new covenants, Christ’s thirty-three and one-half years on earth and His nearly 2,000 years of subsequent heavenly intercession. Here is a vast span of time—according to Scripture chronology, about 6,000 years since Creation—and people still have not been returned to the Garden of Eden.

The contrast between the time required for Creation and for re-creation demonstrates that God’s activities are always in the best interest of

the human race. The shortness of Creation reflects His eagerness to bring about fully developed individuals who could enjoy His creation. Delaying the completion of Creation by making it dependent on a process of gradual development over long periods of time would have been contrary to the character of a loving God. The amount of time allowed for re-creation reveals God's loving desire to save as many people as possible (2 Peter 3:9).

***Christ's Creative Work.*** In Eden Christ spoke the creative word. In Bethlehem, the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)—the Creator became part of Creation. What utter condescension! Though no one witnessed Christ's creation of the world, many did witness the power that gave sight to the blind (John 9:6, 7), speech to the dumb (Matt. 9:32, 33), healing to lepers (Matt 8:2, 3), and life to the dead (John 11:14-45).

Christ came as the second Adam, the new beginning for the race (Romans 5). He gave man the Tree of Life in Eden; man hung Him on a tree at Calvary. In Paradise, man stood tall in the image of God; at Calvary, Man hung limp in the image of a criminal. On both Creation Friday and crucifixion Friday, "It is finished" spoke of a completed creative work (Gen. 2:2, John 19:30)—one Christ accomplished as God, the other as Man; one in swift power, the other in human suffering; one for a time, the other for eternity; one subject to the Fall, the other in victory over Satan.

It was the perfect, divine hands of Christ that first gave man life; and it is the hands of Christ, pierced and blood-stained, that will give man eternal life. For man is not only created; he may be re-created. Both creations are equally the work of Christ—neither has come from within through natural development.

Created in the image of God, we have been called to glorify God. As the crowning act of His Creation, God invites each of us to enter into communion with Him, daily seeking the regenerating power of Christ so that, to God's glory, we will be able to reflect His image more fully.

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## References

1. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1941), p. 182.
2. Even considering that each day of Creation was a mere 1,000 years in length would cause problems. With such a schema, by the evening of the sixth "day"—his very first "day" of life—Adam would have been much older than the total life span the Bible allots him (Gen. 5:5). See Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, pp. 116, 117.

3. See chapter 4 of this book.
4. "Creation," *SDA Encyclopedia*, p. 357.
5. Ibid.; Arthur J. Ferch, "What Creation Means to Me," *Adventist Review*, Oct. 9, 1986, pp. 11-13.