

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2022: *Life Everlasting: On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope*
Lesson 3 “Understanding Human Nature”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 1:24–27; Genesis 2:7, 19; Matthew 10:28; Ecclesiastes 12:1–7; 1 Kings 2:10; 1 Kings 22:40.

Memory Text

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. “A Living Being”
- III. “The Soul Who Sins Shall Die”
- IV. “The Spirit Returns to God”
- V. “The Dead Know Nothing”
- VI. Resting With the Forefathers
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The topic of this week’s lesson is what Adventists understand the Bible teaches about human nature, particularly in the Old Testament. To address this topic, it will be helpful to start with what nearly all Christians (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant) believe about the topic. The Great Tradition of the church is that human beings are essentially good (by design) and existentially estranged (in reality). Human beings were designed to be good, they were created in the image of God with dignity and value, each human being is unique and precious. They were made for intimate relationship with a holy God. But at the same time, human beings are seriously messed up in reality. They are estranged from God. They are corrupted by sin and helpless to change that reality apart from God’s grace. This corrupted is not inherent, it is the result of Adam’s choice. Like so many issues in theology, this good/evil tension is a great paradox. (Introduction of Topic)

2. Within that broad Christian consensus, there are three choices regarding human nature: Trichotomy (three-part person; body, soul, and spirit), Dichotomy (two-part person—body and soul), and Wholism. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the wholism view is the most biblical. Human beings were not made with two or three distinct parts but are unified wholes. Whatever affects the mind affects the body, and vice-versa. Just as computer software does not function apart from the hardware, so there is no human life or consciousness apart from the body. When resurrection occurs, it is the resurrection of the whole person, “an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life, breath, and all else” (SDA Fundamental Belief, number 7). (Introduction of Topic)
3. Read Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:4-5. What God and Satan say in these verses seems like a direct contradiction. How do the Dichotomy and Trichotomy views many Christians hold find a way to harmonize what both God and Satan say here? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
4. Read Genesis 1:24-27 and 2:7, 19. What are some of the similarities and differences between the way God created the animals and human beings? What is the biblical definition of a “soul”? What is consciousness and how can material tissue come to have such consciousness? (Sunday’s Lesson)
5. Read Ezekiel 18:4, 19-20 and Matthew 10:28. How do these verses help us understand the nature and ultimate destiny of the human soul? (Monday’s Lesson)
6. Read Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. What striking contrast do you see between these two passages? What does Ecclesiastes have to say about what happens to human identity when we die? What is the breath of life? What exactly returns to God when people die? Do you feel death is “a part of life” or “the very opposite of life”? Why do you feel that way? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
7. How do the following Old Testament texts describe the condition of human beings in death (Psalm 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10)? What are the implications of what these texts are saying? Does it make any difference in one’s experience whether one goes directly to heaven at death or only at the Second Coming? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
8. How do the following Old Testament texts describe death (Genesis 25:8; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 22:40)? What can we learn about death from the concept of “resting with one’s fathers”? (Thursday’s Lesson)
9. What difference does an Adventist understanding of the state of the dead make in real life? Why are many Adventists so passionate about this issue? (Friday’s Lesson)
10. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a “no go” zone within the Garden of Eden. Ellen White suggested that theaters were a “no go” zone in her day. What are some of the “no go” zones in our communities today? Would you make an exception for going there to do missionary work? (Friday’s Lesson)
11. According to Ellen White, Satan is trying to lead God’s people to believe that “the requirements of Christ are less strict than they once believed, and that by

conformity to the world they would exert a great influence with worldlings.” How would you apply statements like that today? (Friday’s Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I believe that the three most fundamental questions in the Great Controversy have been: Did God tell the truth? Because if not, we can’t trust Him. Did He tell the truth in the beginning, when He said, “This is a free universe. I value nothing higher than your freedom. All I ask is trust and love. But if you prefer to go some other way, it will lead to nothing less than death. It’s that serious.” Has He told the truth? But what causes the death?

Does justice demand that God torture His children to death for refusing to love Him?

But you men, did it ever occur to you to take your beloved by the scruff of the neck and say, “Look, you either love me, or I’ll kill you. And I won’t make it easy. I’ll torture you to death! Now, let me try again. Will you be my wife?” Why, wouldn’t you women run for your lives under those circumstances? Who do you suppose has taught the idea that justice demands that God torture His children to death? It’ll be fair. You’ll only be tortured as long as you deserve, that’s all. Where did that come from? Ellen White says that nothing has turned more millions against God than that idea. Has it been answered? Not in words, but in an actual occasion, did God come and say, watch me die? Did anybody take His life from Him? He says, “I lay it down of myself.” The angels knew that it was God Who was going through this, and it gave them the answer. Yes, death is the result of sin, but it is not torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God.

Why did He want us to understand that? Why is He willing to pay such a supreme price that we may understand that clearly? Because, the obedience that springs from fear, that He might have said “Love Me or I’ll kill you” produces the character of a rebel. And in these last days how stunning to hear Ellen White say that, more than once. And in the little book *That I May Know Him*, page 120, she says, sullen submission produces the character of a rebel. Such a one would sin, and disobey if he dared. But he doesn’t dare; he’s scared. His rebelliousness is only suppressed, waiting to burst forth at any time in bitterness and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. I’m paraphrasing it, but it’s even better than that.

And God demonstrated to the family, “I do not want you to serve me from fear, because if you do, you’ll not be my friends. You will be my pious, pretentiously pious enemies. And when my Son comes the second time, you’ll hate Him as those pious Sabbath-keepers hated Him nineteen hundred years ago.”

Now why do we obey? Is it clear to us there's not a streak of arbitrariness in our God? And of all the commandments, the least arbitrary to me is the seventh-day Sabbath, and I wince if it's ever described as a mere arbitrary test of obedience. It could leave us vulnerable, just as the Jews were back in these ancient times. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. {Ed 17.2}

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power. {MH 415.1}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth. They were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives. {SD 7.2}

A Christianity that is spiritual will be opposed by the children of disobedience. But Jesus bade His disciples, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Those who

are true to God need not fear the power of men nor the enmity of Satan. In Christ their eternal life is secure. {DA 356.1}

As they are called forth from their deep slumber they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death; the last thought, that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Verse 55. {GC 549.3}

Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death—a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity. According to the popular belief, the redeemed in heaven are acquainted with all that takes place on the earth and especially with the lives of the friends whom they have left behind. But how could it be a source of happiness to the dead to know the troubles of the living, to witness the sins committed by their own loved ones, and to see them enduring all the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? How much of heaven's bliss would be enjoyed by those who were hovering over their friends on earth? And how utterly revolting is the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body the soul of the impenitent is consigned to the flames of hell! To what depths of anguish must those be plunged who see their friends passing to the grave unprepared, to enter upon an eternity of woe and sin! Many have been driven to insanity by this harrowing thought. {GC 545.2}

When the voice of God awakes the dead, he will come from the grave with the same appetites and passions, the same likes and dislikes, that he cherished when living. God works no miracle to re-create a man who would not be re-created when he was granted every opportunity and provided with every facility. During his lifetime he took no delight in God, nor found pleasure in His service. His character is not in harmony with God, and he could not be happy in the heavenly family. {COL 270.1}