

# An Advance On Eternity

## INTRODUCTION

The casualties on both sides were high. The shelling was intense. Heavy bombardment from the artillery lasted all day. The ground shook violently from the incessant pounding of the Axis' aircraft. The Allied Forces responded with a firefight of their own. Rival armies faced each other across the trenches. Joe, an eighteen year old American G.I., leaned back against the earthen wall of his freshly-dug trench exhausted. The sun was setting. Another day passed and he was still alive. It was Christmas Eve 1943. Thoughts of home flooded into his mind... Mom, Dad ... His brother Tom . . . his sister Alice . . . freshly baked apple pie . . . homemade raisin cookies. . . roast turkey . . . colorfully wrapped presents . . . the Christmas tree. . . smiles . . . hugs . . . logs burning in the fireplace . . . hot chocolate . . . peace. But in this nightmare called war, death stared him in the face. "Peace on earth and good will toward men" were only figments of his imagination.

The battlefield was quiet now. The air was crisp and clear. The stars twinkled in a moonlit sky. Then he heard it. Could it really be singing? Were his ears deceiving him this Christmas eve in 1943? Was this some kind of subtle trap? Was it some sinister plot? The sounds of a familiar Christmas carol gladdened the night air. Although the words were German, the tune was unmistakable. "Silent night, holy night . . . All is calm . . . All is bright. Round yon virgin . . . mother and child." German soldiers sang Christmas carols a few hundred yards away in full view. Slowly, cautiously at first, Joe pulled himself out of his foxhole. His heart was

touched. His emotions were stirred. Suddenly he couldn't restrain himself any longer. Spontaneously he too began singing. "Silent night, holy night . . . All is calm . . . all is bright."

His American colleagues joined in the singing. Soon voices which a few hours before shouted the curses of war now echoed a chorus of praise. The two opposing sides approached each other. They embraced. They laughed. They sang. For one night they were brothers. They shared a common humanity. The fighting stopped. The bombing ceased. The mortars were silent. On that Christmas eve for just a brief moment enemies became friends. In a sense, they recognized a profound truth expressed in Acts 17:24,26. "God hath made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation."

## **DEVELOPMENT**

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. God is our Father. Ours is a shared heritage. We are sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We belong to the same family. We are brothers and sisters fashioned, shaped, molded, by the same God.

Creation provides a true sense of self-worth. The Creator of the universe created me. I am special. 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. Evolution is dehumanizing. If I am an enlarged protein molecule, if I am simply the product of fortuitous chance, if I am only an advanced form of the animal creation, life has little meaning. I am merely one of five billion people clawing at one another for living space on a planet called Earth. Creation provides a moral imperative for living. I have been created by God and I am accountable to Him for my actions. The one who made me holds me responsible. He has established “absolutes in a world of “moral relativism.”

Evolution provides no moral ethic for living. Since humans are advanced animals, the highest standard is the human mind. Morality is determined from within. There is no absolute, eternal standard to govern behavior. Creation provides a sense of hope. The God who created me loves me. He cares for me. He will guide me throughout this life. Evolution looks within to find strength for life’s trials. Creation looks without. It looks to a loving, powerful, all-knowing God. Creation provides a sense of destiny. The God who loves me, who created me, who cares for me has prepared a place in heaven for me. Death is not a long night without a morning. The grave is not some dark hole in the ground. God has a glorious, new tomorrow planned. For the evolutionist, death is the end. There is no tomorrow.

Creation speaks of hope. Evolution echoes death. Creation speaks of a certain future. Evolution echoes blind chance. Creation answers the eternal questions of life. Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Evolution provides a distorted view of life’s origin, fails to address the question of life’s

purpose and leaves the soul barren regarding life's ultimate destiny. Creation unites us with God. It establishes our self-worth.

It forges ties with all humanity. It creates a common ancestry It inspires confidence in a God who cares. It links us to God's inexhaustible power and It encourages us with the hope of life after death Creation and the Sabbath. 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. It is found in **Revelation 14:6,7. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come. And worship Him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters.'"**

What do we call the One who made heaven, earth and sea? The Creator. The Bible says to worship the Creator, Revelation's message that calls us to Jesus is a call to worship the Creator. God's last-day message is one that calls all humanity back to worshipping Him as the creator of heaven and earth. The basis of all worship is the fact that God created us. Accept evolution and you destroy the very basis for worship. John the Revelator succinctly states it in these words, **"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for they pleasure they are and were created."** Revelation 4:11

He is worthy precisely because He has created. If God has not created us, if we merely evolved and life is a cosmic accident based on chance and random selection, there is absolutely no reason to worship. In an age of evolution, God has given the Sabbath as an eternal symbol of His creative power and authority. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that we are not our own. He created us. Life cannot exist apart from Him. **“In Him we live and move and have our being.” Acts 17:28**

The Sabbath calls us back to our roots. It’s a link to our family of origin. The Sabbath has been observed continuously since time began. It is an unbroken connection back through time to our Creator. The Sabbath tells us that we are not just a product of time plus chance. It keeps us focused on the glorious truth that we are children of God. It calls us to an intimate, close relationship with Him. The truth is we all tend to forget. That’s why God says “remember”. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder of what God is like. It calls us to a new relationship with Him.

In an attempt to destroy the uniqueness of our creation, the devil has introduced a not-so-subtle counterfeit. The counterfeit which is accepted by even some among us, goes something like this. God is the prime cause of creation, but He took long ages to bring the world into existence. Evolution was the process He used. This approach attempts to harmonize so called “scientific data” with the Genesis account. It asserts that the days of creation are long, indefinite periods of time. It accepts the evolutionary viewpoint that the earth is tens of millions of years old. This synchronistic viewpoint creates far more problems than it solves. It completely disregards the Psalmist’s statement, **“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke and**

**it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.” Psalm 33:6, 9.** It overlooks the clear declaration of **Hebrews 11:3, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”**

Seventh-day Adventists believe God created the world in six literal days of 24 hours and rested the seventh. The linguistic structure of Genesis 1 and 2 does not permit anything else. The Hebrew word for day is “yom.” Throughout the Bible, every time a number precedes the word “yom” as an adjective, it limits the time period to 24 hours. There is not a single instance in the Bible when a numeral precedes the noun “yom,” and “yom” indicates an indefinite period. Without exception, it is always a 24-hour period. To accept the false idea of long, indefinite periods of creation is to challenge the linguistic structure of scripture. It is to superimpose my personal opinion upon the grammatical structure of God’s word. Furthermore, if God did not create the world in six literal days, what significance does the Seventh-day Sabbath have? How could God command, **“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11**

It would make absolutely no sense at all to leave the Sabbath as an eternal legacy of a sixday creation week if a six-day creation week never existed. To accept long ages of creation is to challenge the very need for the seventh-day Sabbath. It is to challenge the authority of the Bible. It is to raise serious questions regarding the integrity of scripture. It is to ultimately undermine the reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I believe that Satan is challenging the very heart

of God's authority by attacking the Sabbath. The Sabbath is not merely good advice. It is a command from the very throne of God. To lightly disregard the Sabbath, to treat the Sabbath as common, ordinary or as any other day is to destroy the essence of our faith relationship with God. The Sabbath is a holy day not a holiday. While our own individual choices on Sabbath observance may not always be exactly the same, there is one common principle—the Sabbath has been given to us by a loving Creator to unite us with Him. The heart of the Sabbath is relationship—the acknowledgment that God is worthy of our supremest devotion, our deepest allegiance and our total loyalty.

There is another sense in which the Sabbath speaks courage to our weary hearts. It shows us that we can rest in Christ for our salvation. The Sabbath is a symbol of rest, not works. It is a meaningful symbol of righteousness by faith, not legalism. It is a clarion call to trust in Him, not in ourselves. The writer of Hebrews uses the Sabbath as an illustration of this rest in Christ. He declares, **“There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” Hebrews 4:9**

Entering into true Sabbath rest means that we cease trying to create salvation on the basis of our own efforts. God has saved us in Christ. When Jesus voluntarily poured out His life on the cross, He died the death we deserve. He gave His perfect life as a substitute for our sinful life. The Sabbath is not a symbol of legalism. It is rather an eternal reminder that we rest in Him for our salvation.

The Carpenter from Nazareth built a special dwelling for us. We can find refuge there. We can be safe there. His work is complete. It is finished. We can know that in Christ we are accepted by our loving heavenly Father. When we rest on the

Sabbath, we are resting in His loving care. We are resting in His righteousness. Sabbath rest is a symbol of a faith experience in Jesus. It is a graphic illustration of our trust in Him. All week we work, but on the seventh day we rest. We turn from our works to a total rest in Christ. In Jesus, we have some place to belong. We need not stressfully work out our own salvation. Our lives need not be filled with guilt and fear and anxiety. The Sabbath reveals the restful attitude. Salvation comes only through Jesus. We do not deserve it. We cannot earn it. We rest and receive it by faith.

When Jesus breathed His last and cried, "It Is Finished," He closed His eyes and died. The work of redemption was complete. He rested on the Sabbath, symbolizing a completed or finished work. At the end of creation week, God rested, symbolizing a finished work. Each Sabbath as we rest on the last day of the week, we, too, declare, "God I am resting in the completed work of Christ on the cross. 'Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to Thy cross I cling.'"

There is still more that rounds out the picture. The prophet Ezekiel declares, **"Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12.** Here's another reason why God gave us the Sabbath. It shows that the Lord is the One who sanctifies us. How is that? Well, that's what God did to the seventh day. It was an ordinary slice of time just like any other at the end of creation week, but God set this particular day apart. He sanctified it. And through the Sabbath, God tells us, "That's what I want to do for you, too. I want to set you apart as my special child. I want to pour Myself into you. I want to sanctify you. I want to share my holiness with you."



The Sabbath reminds us of where we develop character—in relationship with our heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is a continual living promise of God’s ability to help us grow through all the ups and downs, tragedies and triumphs, of our lives. We need that distinctive time with the heavenly Father. We need Sabbath quality time with the God who sanctifies us, the God who helps us keep growing.

The Sabbath has continued in the weekly cycle from the dawn of creation until now. The Sabbath began in the Garden of Eden, and the Sabbath will be celebrated when this earth is renewed after Christ’s second coming. The prophet Isaiah talks about the time when God will make the “new heavens and the new earth.” He says: **“It shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord.” Isaiah 66:23 NKJV.** The Sabbath beautifully represents a forever relationship with God. It stretches from the Garden of Eden at creation to the garden that God will make of this planet at the end of time. It stretches from paradise lost to paradise restored.

We need that kind of forever in our lives. We need a place that reassures us that we are in an eternal relationship with the heavenly Father. We need a palace in time where that assurance can sink in deep, a place that says our heavenly Father will always be there for us. In the Sabbath, we can find a sense of contented rest. We can get in touch with our roots as His children there. We can grow and mature there. Yes, we need that kind of forever place that ties the whole of our lives to an eternal relationship with God.

## CONCLUSION

Readers Digest wrote of the late Harvey Penick, "For 90-year-old golf pro, Harvey Penick, success has come late." His first golf book, Harvey Penick's Little Red Book, sold more than a million copies. His publisher, Simon and Schuster, believes the book is one of the biggest selling sports books of all time. The story of the book's publishing is fascinating. Harvey Penick certainly didn't write it for the money. In the 1920s Penick bought a red spiral notebook and began jotting down his personal observations regarding golf. He never showed the book to anyone except his son for nearly 70 years. In 1991 he shared it with a local writer and asked the man if he thought it was worth publishing. The writer was elated. He contacted the publishing giant Simon and Schuster immediately. The next evening the publishers agreed to a \$90,000 advance. The jubilant writer passed the news on to Penick's wife. When the writer saw Penick later in the evening, the old man seemed troubled. Something was seriously bothering him. Finally he came clean. With all of his medical bills, there was no way he could advance Simon and Schuster that much money to publish his book. The writer had to explain that Penick would be the one to receive the money.

An advance of \$90,000 was his and he didn't even realize it. In the Sabbath, God has given us an "advance" on eternity. Every Sabbath heaven touches earth as the Jewish author Abraham Heschel so aptly put it, "The Sabbath is a palace in time." The Sabbath calls us from the things of time to the things of eternity. It calls us to enter into His heavenly rest. It calls us to experience a foretaste of heaven today. It calls us to a relationship with our Creator that will continue throughout eternity.

The Sabbath is in actuality an advance on eternity. There is much more coming, but in the Sabbath we have the first installment.

Is it possible that in the busy-ness of life Sabbath is a day we are too exhausted to renew our relationship? Is it possible that in the stress of life, Sabbath is a day of superficial worship rather than intimate fellowship with God? Is it possible God is calling us to something deeper, something broader, something higher, something larger than we have ever experienced before? Is it possible God longs for us to see a new depth of meaning in the Sabbath? Is it possible God yearns for us to experience a genuine heart revival this Sabbath? Do you hear Him speaking to your heart today, Come ... **“Come unto Me, all you that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:26-28**

Why not open your heart to Him right now. Why not plead with Him to satisfy the inner hunger of the soul. Why not ask Him right now to give you a foretaste of eternity this Sabbath. Why not right now ask Him to open your eyes to see new beauty in a renewed Sabbath fellowship with Him as we pray.