

Earth Day

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The Earth was made for man—not man for the Earth.

Part 1

The United Nations has declared April 22 to be Earth Day, so let's talk about holidays in general and Earth Day in particular.

The word “holiday” is derived from the phrase “holy day.” “Holy” means “set apart for a special spiritual purpose.” The first holidays were days like Yom Kippur, Rosh Hosanna, Passover, and Sabbath. They were declared to be holy by God. God set them apart and designated them for a special, spiritual purpose.

In modern times, civil governments have declared holidays. Thanksgiving Day was set apart by the federal government as a Sabbath upon which one should not work, but give thanks to God instead. Granted, it has evolved into a day devoted to gluttony and football; but the original intention was that it was to be a day set aside for a religious purpose. Although we are whole-heartedly in favor of giving thanks to God, we are more than a little bit uncomfortable with the notion that the government thinks it has the right to tell us when and how to give thanks.

More recently, the government has declared other federal holidays such as Memorial Day, Labor Day, Presidents' Day, and Martin Luther King Day. We have no objection to the spirit of these holidays, and recognize that they aren't really religious celebrations. We realize that most people just view them as a day off from work, and generally don't keep them in the spirit in which they were intended. Honestly, what did you do to honor James Garfield on Presidents' Day? Presidents' Day was just a day you didn't have to go to work. And if you did work on Presidents' Day, there was no criminal penalty for ignoring the holiday.

Our point, which has gone largely unnoticed by the general public, is that over the years governments have declared certain days to be rest days. That makes them secular Sabbaths, as oxymoronic as that is. The Book of Revelation suggests that, near the end of time, civil authorities will do this, and will enforce their observance. We might be seeing end time prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes without noticing it.

Earth Day is not a federal holiday—at least, not yet. It is a United Nations holiday. According to Wikipedia,

Earth Day is a day early each year on which events are held worldwide to increase awareness and appreciation of the Earth's natural environment. Earth Day is now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network, and is celebrated in more than 175 countries every year. In 2009, the United Nations designated April 22 International Mother Earth Day. Earth Day is planned for April 22 in all years at least through 2015.

The name and concept of Earth Day was allegedly pioneered by John McConnell in 1969 at a UNESCO Conference in San Francisco. The first Proclamation of Earth Day was by San Francisco, the City of Saint Francis, patron saint of ecology. Earth Day was first observed in San Francisco and other cities on March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. This day of nature's equipoise was later sanctioned in a Proclamation signed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations where it is

*observed each year. About the same time a separate Earth Day was founded by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in first held on April 22, 1970.*¹

Before doing the research for this broadcast, I didn't even know ecology had a patron saint, let alone that it was Saint Francis. So there is a religious aspect to Earth Day, as well as the obvious political aspect. The Earth Day Network coordinates the observance. Their website, <http://www.earthday.org/>, lists all the organizations in the Earth Day coalition, and their designated activities.

It is tempting to get into a deep theological discussion of how Earth Day politics and government-specified rest days might relate to Biblical prophecy, but let's not go there. That's a subject that might be better suited to a group Bible study.

Nor do we want to talk about what political activists say about how we must treat the Earth. Instead, let's talk about what God says about how to treat the Earth. Let's do that by reading portions of Ellen White's commentary on Genesis chapters 1 and 2, from her book Patriarchs and Prophets.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." "For He spake, and it was;" "He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6,9. He "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever." Psalm 104:5.

As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged, abounding in terrific steepes and frightful chasms, as they now do; the sharp, ragged edges of earth's rocky framework were buried beneath the fruitful soil, which everywhere produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist. The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace. The angelic host viewed the scene with delight, and rejoiced at the wonderful works of God.

After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of action. To him was given dominion over all that his eye could behold; for "God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over . . . all the earth. . . . So God created man in His own image; . . . male and female created He them." Here is clearly set forth the origin of the human race; and the divine record is so plainly stated that there is no occasion for erroneous conclusions. God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved by slow degrees of development from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man's narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. He who set the starry worlds on high and tinted with delicate skill the flowers of the field, who filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power, when He came to crown His glorious work, to place one in the midst to stand as ruler of the fair earth, did not fail to create a being worthy of the hand that gave him life. The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day

germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was "the son of God."

He was placed, as God's representative, over the lower orders of being. They cannot understand or acknowledge the sovereignty of God, yet they were made capable of loving and serving man. The psalmist says, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet: . . . the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, . . . and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Psalm 8:6-8.

Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.

As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty. The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.

After the creation of Adam every living creature was brought before him to receive its name; he saw that to each had been given a companion, but among them "there was not found an help meet for him." Among all the creatures that God had made on the earth, there was not one equal to man. And God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him [a] help meet for him." Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Even communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship. There was none of the same nature to love and to be loved.

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided "[a] help meet for him"--a helper corresponding to him--one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Ephesians 5:29. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one."

God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. "Marriage is honorable" (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed." Everything that God had made was the perfection of beauty, and nothing seemed

wanting that could contribute to the happiness of the holy pair; yet the Creator gave them still another token of His love, by preparing a garden especially for their home. In this garden were trees of every variety, many of them laden with fragrant and delicious fruit. There were lovely vines, growing upright, yet presenting a most graceful appearance, with their branches drooping under their load of tempting fruit of the richest and most varied hues. It was the work of Adam and Eve to train the branches of the vine to form bowers, thus making for themselves a dwelling from living trees covered with foliage and fruit. There were fragrant flowers of every hue in rich profusion. In the midst of the garden stood the tree of life, surpassing in glory all other trees. Its fruit appeared like apples of gold and silver, and had the power to perpetuate life.

The creation was now complete. "The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Eden bloomed on earth. Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the fair creation. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7.

The great Jehovah had laid the foundations of the earth; He had dressed the whole world in the garb of beauty and had filled it with things useful to man; He had created all the wonders of the land and of the sea. In six days the great work of creation had been accomplished. And God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author, and He rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory.

After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God's great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God's wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy or of restricted application to any people.

God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.

God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men to the contemplation of His created works. Nature speaks to their senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Psalm 19:1, 2. The beauty that clothes the earth is token of God's love. We may behold it in the

everlasting hills, in the lofty trees, in the opening buds and the delicate flowers. All speak to us of God. The Sabbath, ever pointing to Him who made them all, bids men open the great book of nature and trace therein the wisdom, the power, and the love of the Creator.

...

The home of our first parents was to be a pattern for other homes as their children should go forth to occupy the earth. ... The blue heavens were its dome; the earth, with its delicate flowers and carpet of living green, was its floor; and the leafy branches of the goodly trees were its canopy. Its walls were hung with the most magnificent adornings--the handiwork of the great Master Artist. In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time--that true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works. If men would give less attention to the artificial, and would cultivate greater simplicity, they would come far nearer to answering the purpose of God in their creation. Pride and ambition are never satisfied, but those who are truly wise will find substantial and elevating pleasure in the sources of enjoyment that God has placed within the reach of all.

To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, "to dress it and to keep it." Their occupation was not wearisome, but pleasant and invigorating. God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence. And when, as a result of his disobedience, he was driven from his beautiful home, and forced to struggle with a stubborn soil to gain his daily bread, that very labor, although widely different from his pleasant occupation in the garden, was a safeguard against temptation and a source of happiness. Those who regard work as a curse, attended though it be with weariness and pain, are cherishing an error. The rich often look down with contempt upon the working classes, but this is wholly at variance with God's purpose in creating man. What are the possessions of even the most wealthy in comparison with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? Yet Adam was not to be idle. Our Creator, who understands what is for man's happiness, appointed Adam his work. The true joy of life is found only by the working men and women. The angels are diligent workers; they are the ministers of God to the children of men. The Creator has prepared no place for the stagnating practice of indolence.

While they remained true to God, Adam and his companion were to bear rule over the earth. Unlimited control was given them over every living thing. The lion and the lamb sported peacefully around them or lay down together at their feet. The happy birds flitted about them without fear; and as their glad songs ascended to the praise of their Creator, Adam and Eve united with them in thanksgiving to the Father and the Son.

...

The laws and operations of nature, which have engaged men's study for six thousand years, were opened to their minds by the infinite Framer and Upholder of all. They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. God's glory in the heavens, the innumerable worlds in their orderly revolutions, "the balancings of the clouds," the mysteries of light and sound, of day and night--all

were open to the study of our first parents. On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written. The order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power. They were ever discovering some attraction that filled their hearts with deeper love and called forth fresh expressions of gratitude.

So long as they remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unending love of God.²

The Earth was made for man—not man for the Earth. God didn't create the world, plant a beautiful garden in it, and later decide he needed a slave to take care of it, and created Adam for that purpose. No, God created that paradise so that Adam could enjoy it. The Garden of Eden was God's gift to man. Perhaps the best way to explain it is to use a parable.

A man had three sons, who he loved. As they were growing up, he built magnificent homes for them to give them as wedding presents.

The first son got married and moved and moved into his mansion, and treated it like a bad renter. He didn't put any chlorine in the swimming pool, and it soon turned green with algae. He never took out the trash, and soon the house was filled with smelly garbage. The dirty dishes piled up in the sink.

The second son saw how badly his brother treated the house his father gave him. So, when he got married, he was afraid to live in it. Instead, he and his bride moved into a smaller house he built himself next door.

The third son saw what his two older brothers had done, and how much it pained his father. So, he and his bride moved into the mansion his father gave him. They swam in the pool, and kept it clean and chlorinated. They took out the trash, and washed the fine china after eating on it. They took excellent care of the house and grounds because it was an expensive gift they didn't deserve, and they really appreciated it. They enjoyed living in the mansion his father gave him all their lives.

God wants us to enjoy the world He has given us. He doesn't want us spilling oil all over it; but he doesn't want us traveling across the country in a covered wagon because we don't have any fuel for cars or airplanes, either. He expects us to use the natural resources He has given us. When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, he expected Adam to enjoy and care for it. God expects no less of us. The Earth is a blessing God has given to us. But if we leave it, unwrapped in the gift box, we will never enjoy it as God intended. God can't bless us if we refuse to receive the blessings He gives us.

We must not pollute the Earth, like the first son polluted his house; but we must not be afraid to enjoy the Earth, like the second son. Like the third son, we must find a responsible balance. We must be good stewards while enjoying the planet God has given us to live upon.

The Earth isn't the only blessing God has given us that many people have neglected, misused, and ignored. We will talk about that, right after Judy Harper sings, "Eden: A Perfect Place".

[music – Eden, A perfect place]

² Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 2, "The Creation", <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/pp/pp2.html>

Part 2

Today we are talking about the blessings God has given us, and how He expects us to use and enjoy them. In the first segment we focused on the Earth. God expects us to enjoy and care for the Earth. He doesn't want us to exploit natural resources with reckless abandon; but He doesn't want us to be so environmentally conscious that we never make good use of the natural resources He has given us, either. Christians need to find a proper balance. We should enjoy God's blessing; but enjoy them responsibly.

But in this segment I want to move on to a different blessing that God has given us that is often unused or misused. It, too, goes back to the original blessings God gave man in the Garden of Eden.

We said earlier that the Earth was made for man—not man for the Earth. That statement was inspired by Jesus' statement that the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath. Just as man wasn't made to be a slave to tend the Garden of Eden, man wasn't made so that there would be someone to keep the Sabbath. Sabbath is the other blessing made for man that man has neglected and misused.

In a previous broadcast we examined the history of how the Sabbath was changed. We aren't going to go over that ground again. We will just remind you that Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea changed the Christian day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath to pagan Sunday in the 4th century because of widespread hatred of the Jews. Anti-Semitism lasted in Germany well into the 20th century, as evidenced by Hitler's actions. So, it is not surprising that the German reformers were still influenced by anti-Semitism in the 16th century. Although the Lutheran reformers recognized that Saturday is the true Sabbath, they tried to justify Sunday worship in Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession of faith on the grounds that they were not under the law, but under grace.

If you missed that broadcast, you can find it in the program archives at our website, KRSF.NET. The broadcast is titled, "Augsburg Confession – Part 3", first broadcast on March 11, 2012. If you don't have access to the Internet, write to us at P.O. Box 716, Ridgecrest, California, 93556, and ask for a free CD titled, "Augsburg Confession – Part 3."

The point we want to make this week is that the Protestant acceptance of the change of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday has had lasting deleterious effects. First, let me remind you of exactly what the Augsburg Confession says, and then let's see what this common misunderstanding has led to.

What, then, are we to think of the Sunday and like rites in the house of God? To this we answer that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church, not that thereby we should merit grace or make satisfaction for sins, or that consciences be bound to judge them necessary services, and to think that it is a sin to break them without offense to others. So Paul ordains, [in] 1 Cor. 11, 5, that women should cover their heads in the congregation, [and in] 1 Cor. 14, 30, that interpreters be heard in order in the church, etc.

It is proper that the churches should keep such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquility, so far that one do not offend another, that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion, [1 Cor. 14, 40; comp. Phil. 2, 14;] but so that consciences be not burdened to think that they are necessary to salvation, or to judge that they sin when they break them without offense to others; as no one will say that a woman sins who goes out in public with her head uncovered provided only that no offense be given.

Of this kind is the observance of the Lord's Day, Easter, Pentecost, and like holy-days and rites. For those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that, since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. And yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord's Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary.

3

The Reformers recognized that the church leaders had changed Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday in the 4th century because widespread anti-Semitism was causing trouble in the church. In order to keep the peace and promote unity, they changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, and changed the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the Jewish Passover to the pagan fertility holiday, Easter. In this way they removed all Jewish stigma from Christianity in the 4th century.

Because anti-Semitism was still so strong in the 16th century, the Reformers didn't want to open a can of worms by going back to Sabbath worship. As we just heard, they tried to justify Sunday worship on the grounds that which day you keep holy doesn't really matter, and it is just fine to keep whatever day causes the least dissention.

They also tried to spin the change of Sabbath not as an abuse of church authority—which it certainly is—but as an example of Christian liberty. This has caused so much trouble for Protestants ever since. It is true that we aren't saved by perfectly keeping all of God's commandments. We are saved by God's generosity. But that doesn't mean we can ignore God's laws. They are the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Obsolete Suggestions. As the Protestant Reformers said in Article VI of the Augsburg Confession,

[We] teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. ⁴

And, again in Article XX,

Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding good Works. For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God.

5

The problem is, “How can you emphasize the importance of keeping God's commands when you intentionally break the Fourth Commandment every week by worshipping on Sunday?” The early Protestants tried to rationalize the intentional disobedience away by saying, “It doesn't matter which day you keep holy, as long as you keep one day in seven holy,” but that doesn't really work. You either keep God's commandment to honor the Sabbath, or you don't. Once you take the step that says that which day you keep doesn't matter, it is a very short step to say that how you keep it doesn't matter.

³ <http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/concord/web/augs-028.html>

⁴ <http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/concord/web/augs-006.html>

⁵ <http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/concord/web/augs-020.html>

That's why it isn't surprising that so many Protestants don't really keep Sunday holy, either. They work and shop on Sunday, saying they are under grace, not under the law. They say they are honoring God by honoring His resurrection day; but without realizing it, they are dishonoring God by disobeying a direct command and keeping the day an anti-Semitic church/state coalition decreed should be kept instead.

Earlier we told a parable about a man who gave his three sons wonderful homes as wedding presents. The first one trashed it, and didn't honor it. Imagine how his father felt. That's the way God feels when we trash the Sabbath day God has given us. The second son wouldn't live in the house his father gave him. He moved into an inferior one he built next door. That's the way God feels when we half-heartedly keep the day next door instead of the day He gave us. It is only the third son, who lives in, and appreciates, the house his father gave him, who brings joy to his father's heart. Our parable wasn't really just about caring for the planet. It was about caring for Sabbath, too.

This beautiful planet, and the holy Sabbath, are two blessings God gave mankind right from the beginning. Both were made for man—and sadly, many people neglect them both.

Governments tells us how to take care of the Earth, and upon what days we should not go to work. God has told us how to take care of the Earth, and upon what days we should not work. Who are you going to listen to?