

# Glenn Hokin: In The Beginning... God (4/5/19)

## **Introduction:**

This morning we are going to consider what I believe to be the single biggest question humans must resolve in order to be saved.

It's a question that once answered, must change the life, transform the character, and indeed convert the individual to Christianity.

Sadly though, you can be a Christian, and not ever resolve this question, and failure to do so risks being eternally lost. It's a question that has not been salvational – yet. Those who sleep in Jesus can be saved without understanding this truth, but the time is coming when failure to reconcile it may risk eternal life.

Intrigued?

## **The Message of the Three Angels:**

Open your bibles to Revelation Chapter 14:7. I will be reading from the New King James version of the Bible today.

7...saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs [or fountains] of water."

It's good old Adventist bread and butter. The three angel's messages. You'd agree with me from reading around this text the following:

- 1.It's a worldwide message. The Millerite message went global with our first overseas missionary JN Andrews in 1874.
- 2.A message of judgement. William Miller and the early pioneers fulfilled these aspects of the first and second angels message in 1843 and 44. (GC 368, 389, 611, SM2, 104)
- 3.And it is a worship message. Rachel Oakes, a Seventh Day Baptist was instrumental in bringing to the millerite movement the truth of the Sabbath. Joseph Bates was the first Adventist to connect the Sabbath with the three Angels message.

As an aside – young people, the history of our church is exciting. Our pioneers were mostly young, energetic, country people. People like you guys. If you want to know more, do some reading as part of your devotions, or watch some materials either on you-tube or from our library here, or listen to some audiobooks – freely downloadable online. The leading of God in our faith will encourage you, challenge you and excite you.

Reading on in Revelation 14:12:

12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

You can see the connection between the commandments and the three angels message.

But there's something else as well. Go back to Rev 14:7. Who are we worshipping? "Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs [or fountains] of water". There is another aspect to the three Angels message - It's a creation message.

And the word translated "springs of water" or "fountains of the deep" evokes the same imagery as Genesis 7:11 when the flood started – an Old Testament judgement and end of time judgement message.

God created all things, and he has once before destroyed them also. The bible tells us the world is reserved for destruction. It tells us of two similar judgements – these point to the climactic events of the second coming.

The analogy is important for another reason – it is endorsing a historical reality – that of a catastrophic worldwide flood.

### **Seven Distinctive's of Adventism:**

Our church holds seven unique doctrines, distinctive beliefs, all starting with the letter S:

- Scripture
- Salvation
- Sanctuary
- Sabbath
- Second Coming
- State of the Dead
- Spirit of Prophecy

These are important truths. It's why we worship here, and not across the road, or city coast church or anywhere else. These beliefs shape our values, our character, and our conduct.

We'll be revisiting these tenants, as we explore today's topic, and I hope to demonstrate how it is woven through all of them, and is foundational to a right understanding of the character of God, and Christianity.

Kids – see if you can find all seven of these as we talk together this morning.

Now around the time that our church was risen up, a number of other religions also began, along with several non-Christian belief systems. In ascending order by date, over a 150 year period, these include, but not limited to:

- Methodists
- Churches of Christ
- Mormons or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Seventh Day Adventists
- Jehovah's Witnesses

And

- Geology
- Modern Spiritualism
- And Darwinism

I don't think it was a coincidence. I believe that Satan, who we know is "the father of lies" (John 8:44), attempted to flood the world with "something for everyone" in an effort to swamp the fledgling Adventist Movement.

### **The Evolutionary Theory:**

Most of you would know of Charles Darwin, the father of the theory of evolution of living species.

Many fewer would have heard of this gentleman - Charles Lyell.

Lyell wrote "Principles of Geology" in 1830-1833. A principle objective, he writes to a colleague, was to "free the science from Moses".

His approach suggested that by diluting the authority of scripture to be a historical sketch rather than God's word, and flattering the church leaders of the day, they would come around to his way of thinking.

Further, his contempt of the church leadership, along with a strategy to "convert" them to his way of thinking is astonishing – indeed he speaks of "despising" theologians and scientists influenced by holy writ.

The book is credited with originating uniformitarianism – which is to describe geological history in ways that are observable now.

For example, and rather simplistically, if we can see 1mm of erosion in the Burnett riverbanks per year now, and the river is 100 metres wide today, Lyell would argue that you can postulate it took 100,000 years for the Burnett River to form. Therefore, the earth cannot be younger than 100,000 years.

This was in stark relief to the contemporary worldview, where most of the leading geologists were catastrophist – they believed the best explanation of what was observable in geology was catastrophic events, consistent with Noah's world-wide flood. In other words, rapid change, followed by relatively stable ongoing incremental change.

Lyell is important because it was his book on Geology that Charles Darwin read whilst on his Voyage of the Beagle.

As a result, Darwin got an alternate view of time, a revised chronology of earth's history which was pre-requisite to explaining evolution, and indeed his book *The Origin of Species*.

Deep Time is a fundamental in evolutionary theory.

### **Science and the Bible:**

*Origin of Species* was published in 1859. There was growing support for such ideas among dissident anatomists and the general public, but during the first half of the 19th century the English scientific establishment was closely tied to the Church of England, while science was part of natural theology. The political and theological implications of these new ideas were intensely debated.

Fifteen years before Darwin's sentinel work was published, and 11 years after Lyell's, a young prophetess wrote:

*"All true science is in harmony with his [Gods] works, all true education leads to obedience to his government.*

*Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation.*

*Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science; but the book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other.*

*Rightly understood, they make us acquainted with God and his character by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works.*

*We are thus led to adore his holy name, and to have an intelligent trust in his word."* Ellen White, The Signs of the Times, March 20 1844

This takes us squarely to one of our Adventist S's. The spirit of prophecy is a unique Adventist Doctrine, understood by our church as the ministry of Ellen G White.

In the midst of what was the start of the postmodern era, an age where God's authority is undermined, with a consequential degradation of society and morality, God was raising up a movement, a people who would hold fast to the truth.

That people is us.

There are four points in her quote:

- 1.Science and Divine revelation should not conflict
- 2.Nature and the Bible do not disagree
- 3.There must be a "Right Understanding" of both
- 4.We are to have an intelligent trust in God's word.

Lyell and Darwin and many others since, have led the charge of science being supreme rather than God's word. As a result, most of the western population believes this fallacy, even professed Christians.

Turn with me in your bibles to 1 Corinthians 1:19:

19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

We have here a juxtaposition between earthly wisdom and eternal wisdom. Paul writes on in 1 Corinthians 3:18-20, if you would please flick over a few pages:

18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness";

20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

It is OK not to know or be able to explain everything. There is much that science is yet to discover, that will prove the accuracy of God's word.

Another of our Adventist S's is the Scriptures. A fundamental doctrine of the reformation is Sola Scriptura – by scripture alone. We believe that the Bible is the sole infallible rule of faith and practice.

In 1978, in response to a perceived trend toward more liberal interpretations of scripture, 200 evangelicals signed a statement on Biblical Inerrancy which states in part:

*We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us. We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.*

Following on:

*Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.*

*We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.*

I agree with these affirmations and denials on the inerrancy of the bible, namely that "is without error or fault in all its teaching". Not only because it aligns with empirical teaching and scholarly approaches to theology and history, but also because of this statement from Ellen G White in Education page 193

*"There should be a settled belief in the divine authority of God's holy word.*

*The Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science.*

*Human knowledge is an unreliable guide. Skeptics who read the Bible for the sake of cavilling, may, through an imperfect comprehension of either science or revelation, claim to find contradictions between them; but rightly understood, they are in perfect harmony.*

*Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God; and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be reconciled with his statements."* Ellen White, Education, pg 193

So we believe the bible means what it says, and says what it means.

### **Hermeneutical Approach to Genesis 1-11:**

This brings us to the various options surrounding origins. There are basically two choices – God was involved, or God was not involved. I think that the choice between the two options is pretty stark when considered in these terms.

But there is a confusing subset of how much God was involved.

These fall into two groups – the literalists (who believe Genesis as it is written with no special caveats) and the allegorists where Genesis is a story with spiritual truth, but not historical in nature, or perhaps poetry.

You might recall a debate on Q&A between Cardinal George Pell and Professor Richard Dawkins where Pell stated that the church did not believe the creation account or the flood, that this was an allegory for “spiritual purposes”.

There are Christian teachers, even in Adventist schools, colleges and universities who do not believe the bible should be taken as it plainly reads. This is because they cannot reconcile their scientific training with the bible. These are good folks, well-meaning Christians, but following a deception. And it is dangerous because generations of Christian young people are being confused with these teachings – teachings which undermine the entire bible and our seven S pillars.

Some argue that God created the big bang, but after that evolutionary process took over. Others read the bible in different ways, and these include attempts to fit evolution into the seven days recorded in genesis – ideas such as the “day Age” theory where a day could mean millions of years. Time does not permit examination of all options, but I do wish to deal briefly with the idea that the Genesis accounts of Creation and the Flood are poetry rather than a narrative account of history.

Basically the argument is that your interpretation or hermeneutic depends on the genre of the writing. It's OK to exaggerate in poetry for effect, but you don't do that in prose – in a narrative or story, especially a historical record.

You would not preface the chapter of Arthur Phillips landing in Sydney Cove with those timeless words of Alfred Noyes “The moon was a ghostly galleon, tossed upon cloudy seas”. Everyone knows that the moon cannot be a ship, and the sea is not in the sky. But it's OK because metaphor is a device used by poets for effect.

Rather, you'd expect dry, formal prose:

On 26 January 1788, the Fleet weighed anchor and sailed to Port Jackson. The site selected for the anchorage had deep water close to the shore, was sheltered, and had a small stream flowing into it. Phillip named it Sydney Cove, after Lord Sydney the British Home Secretary. This date is celebrated as Australia Day, marking the beginning of British settlement.

Short sentences, simple description. Facts.

For those interested in the source of the academic side of the presentation, and who wish to read more, this is the textbook I am referencing. Heavy reading in places, but a brilliant piece of scholarly work.

Professor Steven Boyd. He holds three masters degrees – one in Physics, another in Theology and a third in Philosophy. He holds a PhD in Hebraic and Cognate Studies. His PhD emphasises learning from the original language of the Biblical writings- taking into consideration the historical, religious, and cultural meanings behind the Scripture.

He is considered an authority on word use in both poetry and narrative in Hebrew.

This gentleman set out to prove that the Genesis accounts in chapters 1-11 are narrative not poetry. How did he approach the problem?

1. Source from academic literature descriptions of narrative and poetry genre in Hebrew Bible.
2. This was 522 texts, 295 were narrative and 227 poetic.
3. Generate a random sample of 48 narrative and 49 poetry. None of these were from Genesis Ch1-11.
4. Calculate ratios of verbs and determine if they were different enough to predict genre.
5. Classify each of the texts according to the model.
6. Test if the model accurately predicted poetry or narrative.

The results – 95 out of 97 correctly aligned!

Other academics report that the model is a superb classifier of texts within the sample.

The final step was to apply the model to all 522 texts, which included Genesis 1:1-2:3.

Findings: The probability that the Genesis creation account is narrative rather than poetry is between 0.999942 and 0.999987, with a confidence interval of 99.5%.

I'm no statistician, but I know this is compelling. Indeed, the researcher states:

*"It is statistically indefensible to argue this text is poetry."*

Let me repeat that: "It is statistically indefensible to argue this Genesis creation account is poetry".

When I read this chapter of the textbook, I recall shivers running up and down my spine – I was excited. This is proof that we are talking about history, a literal recording of creation.

When deciding your worldview, you need to be intellectually honest. You shouldn't base it on a single piece of evidence. This morning, I am building a case, from multiple sources, that the Biblical Account is true, and should be taken literally.

We've seen that the Bible account recorded in Genesis should read as is.

We've refuted the argument that it is not the same type of writing as other books – that it is a different genre so should be given a different weight.

### **What did Jesus and New Testament writers have to say?**

Turn in your bibles to John 10:35. This is the scene where the Jews want to stone Jesus for calling himself the Son of God.

35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Jesus is saying here that the bible is faithful, true, and reliable – they cannot be contradicted or confounded.

Then in Luke 24:25-27:

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Jesus equates Moses' writings with all the scriptures, which cannot be broken. Jesus is saying "Moses writings are faithful and true".

Another way we can see that Jesus revealed complete trust in the scriptures is by treating as historical fact old testament accounts, which today many consider as mythical.

For example: Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Lot and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses and the Serpent plus the manna, Elijah's miracles, the story of Naaman, and of course Jonah.

So if the destruction of the flood as a judgement of God is an issue for some people theologically, and it was therefore not worldwide, or not a judgement, what about Sodom and Gomorrah?

Just this Thursday gone, the media reported a story that risks shaking people's faith in the Biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now I don't know if an airburst asteroid destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – perhaps that was what Moses meant when He wrote "fire and brimstone".

I don't know if it was the equivalent of a 10 mega ton nuclear weapon. I don't know if it caused a tidal wave that caused the dead sea to flood once lush farmland into an arid waste, decimated by salinity problems.



But I do know that the bible says in Genesis 19:25 that God “overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land”.

So when experts suggest that 50,000 inhabitants left due to crop destruction and the inability to grow food, that they are wrong.

This was a place of wickedness. God destroyed the cities and their inhabitants as a judgement.

But he also saved a family. Because of intercessory prayer. The prayer of a concerned family member. Prayer works. Pray for your loved ones. See what God did for Abraham.

He led them out by the hand. They didn’t deserve it. But He is a God who is personally interested in individuals.

Jesus did not allegorise these accounts, instead He used them as straightforward history to teach the events leading up to his own death, resurrection and second coming as occurring in the same time-space reality.

Jesus used Old testament teachings on all manner of topics, and in fact 11 times he questioned “Have you not read?” and 30 times He defended his teachings by the statement “It is written”.

Jesus knew the difference between parables and history; between the traditions of men and God’s truth.

And this is the crux of the matter. Believing what Jesus said on earthly, time spaced realities is grounds for accepting heavenly realities such as salvation, the spiritual rebirth, character development and the second coming. In other words, if we don’t believe him about things that can be verified, how can we legitimately believe the things that are unseen?

Turn to John 5:45-47:

45 Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust.

46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.

47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Jesus is saying if you don’t believe Moses, you won’t believe him either!

And here is the kicker. Let’s say we reject the creation record because it doesn’t align with science, because it is “miraculous”, and therefore breaks the physical laws of the universe.

What will you do with any other miracle in the bible? Joseph's Dreams. The plagues of Egypt. Parting the red sea. The 10 commandments. Manna for 40 years. Jericho's walls. Samson. David and Goliath. The sun turning back in Hezekiah's day.

Fast forward to the New Testament. We all know where babies come from. The virgin Birth is impossible scientifically. Now the ancients might not have been as smart as we are today regarding science, but they sure knew where babies come from.

So too is the resurrection. Do we scrap that too? Oh dear – there goes Salvation – an SDA seven S doctrine not yet mentioned.

You see our entire worldview rests upon the veracity of the Bible, as it reads.

Creation gives the 7 day week. There's no orbiting of the sun or moon to give rise to 7 days in a week. The French tried to abolish it in favour of a 10 day week. That ended in tears!

Creation gives the Sabbath – another of our seven S's.

The miracles of Moses bring us God's holy Law – with the Sabbath commandment in the middle of it.

It brings us the Sanctuary – You guessed it – another S!

The captivity, which resulted from Hezekiah's sun dial experience, bring us Daniel and the Hebrew slaves, the fiery furnace (another miracle) and these things bring us the prophecies of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7-8.

The second coming (is that all of the s's yet kids???), and again the Sanctuary.

No we didn't yet touch on State of the Dead – that's the last one. How about a snake talking and saying "you will not surely die" or "God forming man out of the dust of the earth" and after the fall saying "for dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19). No talking snake, no fall, no evil, no need for a saviour...

### **Natural Selection vs Origin of Species:**

Having mentioned death, let's consider for a moment Christians that also hold to evolutionary time frames and processes. Now to be clear, I am a supporter of natural selection, as long as this is contained within the "kinds" that the bible references in the creation account. This is consistent with our understanding of the different breeds of dogs and cats, and all other animals that were to reproduce after their kind.

Indeed, God told Jacob in a dream how to manipulate breeding to express specific attributes so that his wages were not robbed of him by Laban his Father in law. As a result, his flocks flourished.

I also believe this concept is consistent with the re-populating of the earth following Noah's global flood event.

I agree with this concept, known as “micro evolution”.

But let’s adopt the main origin of species model of evolution where simpler organisms became more complex for a moment.

As I see it there are two glaring theological issues with this:

1. There is death prior to sin.
2. God is a liar because he said His creation was very good, and if you are either of these two smaller fish you’d agree this isn’t “very good”.

An associated issue is that it is inefficient. In his book “Living with Darwin”, Phillip Kitcher wrote, referring to the evolutionary process:

*There is nothing kindly or providential in any of this, and it seems breathtakingly wasteful and inefficient. Indeed, if we imagine a human observer presiding over a miniaturized version of the whole show, peering down on his “creation,” it is extremely hard to equip the face with a kindly expression.*

Evolution is, according to Kitcher, “breathtakingly wasteful and inefficient.”

That’s the question: why would God (if He is a good God), set in motion the awful process of creation via evolution by natural selection? Death to create progress and life? Is God perfect, good, benevolent, all powerful?

Why is it theologically superior to think God would create through evolution by natural selection, a cruel process that does not inevitably lead to the creation of intelligent life, when the Bible itself lays out an alternative that avoids these problems?

See another issue with evolution is the origin of evil, and moral good. This is not a problem for the Christian as we have a narrative that goes back prior to earth’s history. Christians believe that death and evil or sin on earth coincided with Adam’s fall.

### **God’s Good Character:**

Where you stand on this issue dictates to a large degree on both God’s character and his plan for our race.

If God created via evolution, then he must consider suffering humans and animals as “very good” as he stated in Genesis 1:31.

He must be sadistic.

We know this is not his character:

1. He made man caretaker of the earth (Gen 1:26).
2. He commands a Sabbath rest for the animals (Ex 20:10; 23:12)
3. Condemns animal cruelty (Prov 12:10)

- 4.Cares for fallen creatures (Ps 104:14-16, 26-28)
- 5.Cares for Birds of the air (Matt 6:26-28; 10:29)
- 6.Permission to eat animals was not till after the flood (Gen 9:3).

I don't see a creator who sets things in motion and walks away allowing suffering as a good thing, or consistent with the benevolent creator God I serve.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:19-21 that something awful happened to creation, but that restoration or deliverance is coming.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

He backs this up in Acts 3:21:

whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

And finally, that Jesus is reconciling creation to himself, because of his sacrifice on the cross.

1 Colossians 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

We all know references in Isa 11 and Rev 21-22 about the new heavens and new earth. This second coming message provides part of the hope that we as a

people hold dear. No more tears, pain or suffering – these are intruders to God's very good creation.

**Conclusion:**

This morning we have covered a lot of ground. Geology, Biology, Evolution and Church History.

We've listed the seven S's that make us uniquely Seventh Day Adventist.

We've considered how the bible is to be interpreted, and proven that Genesis is Historical Narrative, not poetry. It is to be read and understood literally.

The New Testament writers and Jesus' own teachings were examined and are consistent with Genesis being literal historical account of creation.

And we considered the implications for not taking a literal reading of the creation account.

I had hoped to include a section on the plausibility of Noah's flood – but couldn't fit it in – that has been saved for next time.

The issue of Origins and Genesis is a salvational matter. Upon it hangs the fabric of our denomination. There are many world-views out there that attempt to answer these eternal questions, but a straight reading of scripture is the only safe way to go.

The inescapable conclusion of evolutionary theory, whether theistic or the secular scientific variant is the view of humanity as an unintended consequence of purely physical laws unfolding over fifteen billion years.

Millions of years of death and suffering prior to the appearance of human beings. If we are the results solely of natural laws, then what is left of the idea of salvation?

What type of God do we serve?

We are strangers and pilgrims in the land. Life here on earth is a blip in eternity. Romans 8:18-19:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

As we close, I'd like to leave you with this statement from the pen of inspiration.

*"Even the mechanism of the human body cannot be fully understood; it presents mysteries that baffle the most intelligent."*

*Yet because human science cannot in its research explain the ways and works of the Creator, men will doubt the existence of God, and ascribe infinite power to nature.*

*God's existence, his character, his law, are facts that all the reasoning of men of the highest attainments cannot controvert."*

Ellen White, *Healthful Living*, pg 294

I pray that you will not strip God of infinite power in favour of the inanimate things of nature.

God bless you all as you learn more of Him, Trust in His words, and walk in His Ways.