

Introduction to Chapter 9

In the aftermath of eating the forbidden fruit, the arrival of the seed which Eve would conceive would cause her agony (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:1–6, 16).¹ In addition, she would long for the intimate co-equal relationship she had previously experienced with her husband (Gen 2:18–25). Instead, Adam would rule over her (Gen 3:16, 20). However, the Lord had already promised the arrival of the “seed of the woman” who would overcome the “seed of the serpent” (Gen 3:15). This redeemer would ultimately overturn the results of the fall. After informing Eve of the results of her sin, the Lord shifted his focus to Adam.

Thorns and Thistles

1) Gen 3:17–18: According to the Babylonian creation story Enuma Elish, the gods created people as slaves to do the work that they had tired of doing for themselves, principally to provide them with food. Marduk announced, “Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage, ‘man’ shall be his name...He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!”²

Based upon Ancient Near Eastern views, humanity exists to toil to relieve the gods.³ In contrast, the Lord gave people their sustenance (Gen 1:29; Gen 2:8–9).

God put Adam in the garden to “work,” “serve,” and “cultivate” (*avadh*) it (Gen 2:15).⁴ That occurred before the fall (Gen 3:1–7). Work does not result from sin but comprises a fundamental aspect of reflecting God’s image (John 5:17).⁵ Adam’s fundamental error was “listening to (*shamar*) the voice of” his wife rather than obeying (*shamar*) the Lord’s command (Gen 3:1–6).

Just as with Eve (Gen 3:16), the Lord did not curse Adam but instead spoke of the outcome of his rebellion.⁶ Since Adam’s sin involved eating, God chose a fitting judgment.⁷ The toil behind the preparation of every meal reminded him of his guilt, making the memory of the abundant supply of food within the garden even more painful (Gen 2:9).⁸ Frustration replaced human mastery over creation (Gen 1:27–30),⁹ resulting in alienation from our environment.¹⁰

God blesses land with abundant water and fertility (Deut 33:13–16). When he curses the ground, it becomes dry and unproductive (Deut 11:13–17).¹¹ Since the Lord removed his protection and favor, the soil would yield produce only through hard labor.¹² The same Hebrew word describes what Eve and Adam each experienced: “pain” (Gen 3:16),¹³ resulting in anguishing brokenness.¹⁴ Moses likely chose the word for pain used here (*etseb*) for its

¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 200.

²“Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines 6:5–8, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:17.

⁴Holladay, “עָבַד” (*avadh*), *CHALOT*, 261.

⁵Jon C. Laansma, “Rest,” *NDBT* 727–32, 727.

⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81–2.

⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202.

⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹⁰Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 133–4.

¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

¹³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עֵצָבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *BDB*, 781,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

¹⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 202–3.

resemblance to the word for a tree (*ets*), rather than using the typical term. Ultimately, a tree led to their trauma,¹⁵ hardship, pain, and distress.¹⁶

No longer a delight, work became an enemy.¹⁷ Inedible growth replaced plants needed for food, requiring constant toil (Prov 24:30–34).¹⁸ Creation itself rebelled against humanity. Even the creatures over which people had ruled fell into disarray, becoming nature without masters, existing in rebellion and despair. That is our earth.¹⁹

The version of the Epic of Gilgamesh found in Nineveh reminisces over former times. It describes a garden paradise which Gilgamesh passed through during his quest for immortality. There lapis lazuli grew as foliage on fruit-bearing trees, while rubies, carnelians, emeralds, and hematite sprouted, rather than thorns and thistles.²⁰

a) Read Gen 3:17–18. How do we know that work itself is not an affliction? What effect did God’s curse have upon nature? How does that affect people? What made Adam’s experience like Eve’s?

Co-Heirs with Christ

2) Rom 8:16–18: After announcing that believers are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if we suffer the same thing, in order that also we may share [his] glory,” Paul immediately minimized the severity of those travails.²¹

We encounter torment resulting from our own sins, from those of others, or as a result of living in an imperfect world.²² Jesus experienced many of the travails we undergo simply by coming to our fallen planet, rather than reaping the consequences of his own transgressions (Matt 4:1–11; Heb 4:15). In that respect, the suffering borne by believers comprises a participation in the affliction of Christ. Since Paul compared our woes to those encountered by nature, they encompass more than persecution (Phil 1:29–30).²³

As we experience various distresses, our longing to participate in the resurrection increases.²⁴ For the remainder of Chapter 8, Paul elucidated our hope (Rom 8:19–39).²⁵ The promise the Lord made to Abraham that he would be heir of the world shall someday come to full fruition (Rom 4:13).²⁶

This future glory applies not only to God’s people. All of creation will receive transformation.²⁷ The process began with the resurrection of Christ.²⁸ It will culminate in the

¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 81.

¹⁶ Holladay, “עֵצָבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *CHALOT*, 280.

¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

²⁰ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, tablet 8.5.47–51, comments on damaged column vi, 88, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n113/mode/2up.

²¹ Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 341.

²² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 319.

²³ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 511.

²⁴ Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 115.

²⁵ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

²⁶ J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 152.

²⁷ Osborne, *Romans*, 210.

²⁸ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

long-anticipated ultimate return from exile accompanied by God’s blessing of the land.²⁹ Paul’s phrase “of the present time” denotes the unique character of these days. We live in the period between Jesus’s resurrection and his return. Thus, we experience the overlap between this evil age and our full restoration in the age to come (Dan 7:21–23).³⁰

“The glory that is about to be revealed” refers to the certainty of a future event which is on the verge of occurring.³¹ This phrase carries a sense of the final vindication of God’s strategy, a blueprint currently obscured by earthly conditions.³² Since it will merely be “revealed” (*apokaluptō*), this glory already exists in some form (1 Pet 5:1),³³ maintaining the “now and not yet” character of Paul’s theology.³⁴ The revelation of this glory shall be “unto us,”³⁵ which means it will both overtake and be bestowed upon God’s people.³⁶ We shall undergo an internal transformation which shall have an external manifestation (1 Cor 15:50–58).³⁷

a) Read Rom 8:16–18. How do Paul’s words help you to endure the difficulties of this life?

Creation’s Eager Expectation

b) Rom 8:19: Paul wrote, “For the eager expectation of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God.” “Eager expectation,”³⁸ which literally means “stretching the head forward,”³⁹ does not appear in pre-Christian literature. Elsewhere in the New Testament (NT), it occurs only in Phil 1:20.⁴⁰ Josephus ((37–100 AD) described a great warrior anticipating battle, writing, “for all those who brought ladders to the other places, he took no notice of them, but earnestly waited (*apokaradokia*) for the shower of arrows that was coming.”⁴¹ Despite the few usages of the word, the term clearly depicts an intense longing in confident expectation of fulfillment.⁴²

Scholars have debated the scope of “the creation” for centuries, with various experts arguing for some or all of the following: everything God created, including all of humanity and the angels (Origen, 185–256 AD);⁴³ angels (Pelagius, ca. 360–418 AD);⁴⁴ and the sub-

²⁹ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 451, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

³⁰ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 468.

³¹ Danker, et al., “μελλω” (*mellō*), *BDAG*, 627.

³² Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 468.

³³ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 320.

³⁴ Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 153.

³⁵ Maximillian Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2010), 476.

³⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 434.

³⁷ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

³⁸ Danker et al., “ἀποκαρδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *BDAG*, 112.

³⁹ Gerhard Delling, ἀποκαρδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *TDNT*, 393.

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 469.

⁴¹ Flavius Josephus, William Whiston, trans., *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Auburn and Buffalo, NY: Beardsley, 1895), 3.264, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D3%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D7%3Awhiston%20section%3D26>.

⁴² Verbrugge, “ἀποκαρδοκία” (*apokaradokia*), *TDNTWA*, 62.

⁴³ Origen, *The Writings of Origen* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; trans. Frederick Crombie; ANF; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), 53–9, <https://archive.org/stream/writingsoforigen01orig#page/n9/mode/2up>.

⁴⁴ Pelagius, *Pelagius’s Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul: Introduction* (TS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 191, <https://archive.org/stream/writingsoforigen01orig#page/52/mode/2up>.

human natural world (Chrysostom),⁴⁵ 347–407 AD, among many others.⁴⁶ Due to the Second Adam motif in Rom 5:12–21, the sub-human creation fits best in this context.⁴⁷ God’s reversal of the fall must include the overturning of his curse of the ground (Gen 3:17–18).⁴⁸ This personification of nature also appears in some Old Testament (OT) writings (eg. Ps 65:12–13; Ps 96:9–13). Paul depicted both the gravity of human sin and the wonder of our restoration to cosmic glory.⁴⁹

The term “revelation” (*apokaluptō*) has the force of an end-time unveiling from heaven, as if someone drew the curtain back to reveal those already on stage.⁵⁰ When that happens, everyone shall recognize our current status as God’s vice-regents—the sons and daughters of God (Eph 1:5–6).⁵¹ Sonship bears a strong link to image-bearing (Gen 5:3). For example, an ancient hymn describes the Son of God as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15).⁵² In the covenant which the Lord made with David, God promised, “I shall be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:14). Later in Israel’s history, the Lord expanded those designated as his sons from only the messiah to the end-time people of God (Hos 1:10).⁵³

According to a Jewish apocryphal book:

“And after this they will turn to Me in all uprightness and with all [their] heart and with all [their] soul, and I shall circumcise the foreskin of their heart and...the heart of their seed, and I shall create in them a holy spirit, and I shall cleanse them...And their souls will cleave to me...and they will fulfill my commandments, and I shall be their Father...And they will all be called children of the living God, and every angel and every spirit will know, yea, they will know that these are my children...and that I love them.”⁵⁴

Note that the concept of being a son or daughter of God was not a NT innovation. The Lord had promised to redeem righteous Jews from their exile in a second exodus, joining the gentiles with Israel as God’s people (Isa 2:1–4; Zech 8:20–23).⁵⁵ Although Jews in the Old Testament (OT) era recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel, in reality God welcomed and included gentiles who called upon him in faith (Josh 6:25; Ruth 4:9–12; 2 Sam 11:6–11).⁵⁶ By applying several OT texts to gentiles (Isa 52:11; 2 Sam 7:14), with an overt expansion to include women, Paul demonstrated that all believers comprise the people of God (2 Cor 6:16–18).⁵⁷

Read Rom 8:19. What is all of creation anticipating? Who are the sons of God? How does this knowledge encourage you?

⁴⁵Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 244–5, <https://archive.org/stream/homiliesofsjohnc07john#page/244/mode/2up>.

⁴⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:410.

⁴⁷Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 452, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁴⁸Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 469.

⁴⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 514.

⁵⁰Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 470.

⁵¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

⁵²Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

⁵³J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 104.

⁵⁴Charles, “The Book of Jubilees, or The Little Genesis,” 1:23–5, 6–7, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofjubileesor00char#page/6/mode/2up>.

⁵⁵Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 272.

⁵⁶Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 269–70.

⁵⁷Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 771.

Subjected to Futility

c) **Rom 8:20:** Paul now turned his attention to why all of creation waits eagerly (Rom 8:19).⁵⁸ He wrote, “For creation not willingly was subjected to futility because of the one who subjected it, in hope.” Although “futility” (*mataiotēs*) occurs in only two other New Testament references (Eph 4:17 and 2 Pet 2:18), the Greek translation of the Old Testament uses it fifty-three times, with thirty-nine citations in Ecclesiastes.⁵⁹ The term connotes lack of value, emptiness, purposelessness, and a transitory state (Ecc 1:1–11).⁶⁰

Many Greco-Roman philosophers viewed matter as inherently corrupt.⁶¹ For example, Plotinus (ca. 204–270 AD) contended, “Cut off as we are by the nature of the body, God has yet given us, in the midst of all this evil, virtue the unconquerable.”⁶²

Contrary to that view, nature is not diabolical but the innocent victim of humanity’s disobedience (Gen 3:17–18; Deut 11:13–17).⁶³ Since Adam and Eve obeyed the creature rather than the creator (Gen 3:1–7), their actions profoundly affected the mandate and promise of Gen 1:26–29. As a result, creation no longer functions as the Lord originally intended.⁶⁴ “Not willingly” (*hekōn*) emphasizes the unjust and involuntary servitude of creation in this state.

The passive voice of “was subjected” (*hypotassō*) connotes an authoritative action,⁶⁵ removing any suspicion that creatures now reign over humans.⁶⁶ That this condition was “on account of him who subjected it” indicates that God functions as the agent of this state.⁶⁷ By succumbing to temptation, Adam lost rather than gained control over the created order (Gen 3:4–7, 17–19).⁶⁸ In keeping with the threats of Deut 28:15–24, Isa 24:3–7 eloquently expresses the consequences of breaking the covenant.

But all is not lost. Countering the pessimistic view of the first century that death and decay reign supreme,⁶⁹ Paul concluded this verse with “in hope” due to the condition under which the curse took place.⁷⁰ The apostle likely alluded to the promise of Gen 3:15,⁷¹ invoking the right and responsibility of God to judge and dispense with evil.⁷²

Read Rom 8:20. Why doesn’t nature function as had been intended? How does God’s promise in Gen 3:15 provide hope to the created order?

⁵⁸ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

⁵⁹ Logos 7 word search on “ματαιοτης” (*mataiotēs*) in Swete’s version of the Septuagint.

⁶⁰ Danker, et al., “ματαιοτης” (*mataiotēs*), *BDAG*, 621.

⁶¹ Harry Alan Hahne, “The Whole Creation Has Been Groaning,” in *Apocalyptic Vision* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 19–26, 19, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

⁶² Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, 2nd Ed. (trans. Stephen Mackenna, revised by B. S. Page; London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 2.3.9,97, <https://archive.org/stream/plotinustheennea033190mbp#page/n9/mode/2up>.

⁶³ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 8:20

⁶⁴ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 470.

⁶⁵ Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 21,

<http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 109.

⁶⁷ Mounce Robert H., *Romans* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 184.

⁶⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, 435.

⁶⁹ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Rom 8:20

⁷⁰ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 516.

⁷¹ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:414.

⁷² N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 22.

Set Free from the Slavery of Corruption

d) Rom 8:21–22: After noting that nature has been subjected to futility due to human sin (Rom 8:20), Paul continued, “Even creation itself will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails together until the present time.” Paul declared the content of creation’s hope: that it “itself will be set free.” God has set his people free from the slavery of sin and death (Rom 6:18, 22; Rom 8:2; Eph 1:3–11). So shall he liberate creation from its bondage.⁷³ Christ’s death and resurrection ensures this eventuality (Col 1:15–20; 1 Cor 15:20–23, 50–58).

Even nature shall undergo redemption. God will not rescue us from it.⁷⁴ The apostle’s choice of “will be set free” (*eleutheroō*)⁷⁵—rather than “undone” (*luō*)⁷⁶ or “destroyed” (*apollumi*)⁷⁷—counters the notion that the world shall end in destruction. Thus, this passage contradicts the Greek dualism and the spirit/matter dichotomy which remain prevalent in our churches.⁷⁸ Note that in 2 Pet 3:6–7, “the world” (*kosmos*) which God annihilated by the flood refers to the ungodly people inhabiting the earth during the time of Noah, not to the planet itself (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43).⁷⁹ We await the renovation of the earth when the new Jerusalem descends (Rev 21:1–2), not its replacement.⁸⁰

“The slavery (*douleia*) of corruption (*phthora*)” alludes to the inevitable decay of all created things.⁸¹ This is consistent with Greek thought, with Paul’s earlier writing in 1 Cor 15:50,⁸² and with the Second Law of Thermodynamics. John Calvin noted, “We may...infer from this how dreadful is the curse which we have deserved, since all innocent creatures from earth to heaven are punished for our sins (Jer 12:4). It is our fault that they struggle in corruption.”⁸³ In Greco-Roman society, the strict dichotomy between slavery and freedom accentuated the radical nature of the transformation envisioned by Paul.⁸⁴ The Old Testament (OT) depicts Israel’s exile as a reversal of creation order into chaos (Jer 4:23–27).⁸⁵

However, due to the Lord’s justice,⁸⁶ he assures us of a return to the conditions of Eden in the new Adam (Gen 2:8–14; Gen 1:31; Rom 5:12–21).⁸⁷ God will overturn creation’s systemic deficiencies due to the curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17–18), so that nature may enter “into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Ps 96:7–13; Jer 31:10–14; Hos 2:18–23).⁸⁸

Then people will say, “This land which was desolate has become like the garden of

⁷³ Osborne, *Romans*, 212.

⁷⁴ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

⁷⁵ Danker, et al., “ἐλευθεροῶ” (*eleutheroō*), *BDAG*, 317.

⁷⁶ Danker et. al., “λυῶ” (*luō*), 607.

⁷⁷ Danker, et. al., “ἀπολλύμι” (*apollumi*), 117.

⁷⁸ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 450, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁷⁹ Danker et al., “κόσμος” (*kosmos*), 562.

⁸⁰ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 455, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁸¹ Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (PCNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 201.

⁸² Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 452, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁸³ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. Ross MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 174. <https://archive.org/stream/commentaryonepis00calv#page/330/mode/2up>.

⁸⁴ Ceslas Spicq, “δοῦλος” (*doulos*), *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament (TLNT)*, Vol. 1, (James D. Ernest, trans., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 380.

⁸⁵ Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 273.

⁸⁶ Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 25.

⁸⁷ Matera, *Romans*, 201.

⁸⁸ Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 273.

Eden” (Ezek 36:35).⁸⁹ The Lord shall banish evil and his elect will enter into complete harmony with our creator.⁹⁰ At that time, God shall at last achieve his original intention for our planet (Gen 1:28).⁹¹

This theme of the spread of God’s kingdom throughout all of creation appears in the Assumption of Moses, a Jewish apocryphal book dating from the time of Christ’s birth: “And then his [God’s] kingdom will appear throughout all his creation, and then Satan will be no more, and sorrow will depart with him...For the Heavenly One will arise from his royal throne, and he will go forth from his holy habitation and his wrath will burn on account of his sons. And the earth will tremble: to its confines will it be shaken. And the high mountains will be made low and the hills will be shaken and fall...For the Most High will arise...and he will appear to punish the gentiles, and he will destroy all their idols. Then thou, Israel, wilt be happy, and thou wilt mount upon the neck[s and wings] of the eagle, and (the days of thy mourning) will be ended. And God will exalt thee, and he will cause thee to approach to the heaven of the stars, and he will establish thy habitation among them.”⁹²

Of all the OT prophets, Isaiah delivered the most complete picture of the state of the universe after Christ announces, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5). Isaiah 11 describes “the root of Jesse” (v. 1) who shall destroy all evil (v. 4), leaving even a little child to lead a lion who will lie down with a lamb (v. 6). God said, “For they shall not cause evil nor ruin in all my holy mountain because the earth [shall be] filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters cover the sea” (v. 11). Other passages with such end-time promises include Isa 51:3–11;⁹³ Isa 55:6–13; Isa 65:17–25 and Isa 66:22–23.⁹⁴

Since redeemed people must inhabit a fitting environment,⁹⁵ the reclamation anticipated by believers shall extend to the created order.⁹⁶ Indeed, the resurrection of people without the restoration of creation bears little resemblance to the gospel preached by the apostle (Eph 1:9–10; Col 1:15–20).⁹⁷ The God-focused perspective of the mandate in Gen 1:26–28 states our commission not in terms of domination but of stewardship. It does not give people license to abuse the environment.

In fact, we should fashion the model for our own rule of the earth after Jesus’s charge to his disciples (Mark 10:45). When a man asked Christ to name the greatest commandment, he responded with two of them (Matt 22:34–40). Currently, we face ecological crises all around us. Can we adhere to the command to “love our neighbors as ourselves” without caring for the environment in which they live?⁹⁸

Our desire to love and honor the Lord affects the way we interact with what he created. God calls his people to align ourselves with his plans (Rom 12:1–2; Col 1:9–10).⁹⁹ Since the Lord intends to redeem creation rather than to annihilate it, this has profound implications for how we view and care for the environment. We must seek to limit the

⁸⁹ Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 34.

⁹⁰ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 456, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁹¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 81–2.

⁹² R. H. Charles, trans., “The Assumption of Moses,” in *The Assumption of Moses* (Edinburgh; London: Black, 1897), 10.1–9, 38–43, <https://archive.org/stream/assumptionofmose00unknuoft#page/38/mode/2up>.

⁹³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 564–5.

⁹⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 16.

⁹⁵ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 471.

⁹⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, 437.

⁹⁷ Ciampa Roy E., “Paul’s Theology of the Gospel,” in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner; London: T & T Clark, 2011), 187.

⁹⁸ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 458–60, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

⁹⁹ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 460, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

damage we inflict upon both the inorganic and the living creation by behaving in ways which anticipate the age to come.¹⁰⁰

As co-heirs with Christ, our destiny conforms to his image (Rom 8:29). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord calls and enables us to live as he originally intended for those created in his image (Gal 5:13–25).¹⁰¹ Thus, we must seek that his “will [be done] on earth as [it is] in heaven” (Matt 6:9–10). God commissioned Adam and Eve with cultivating and serving what he had created (Gen 2:15, 18). Now that charge extends to us (Ps 8:5–10).¹⁰²

Even as in first century Rome, we see the effects of sin almost everywhere we look: destruction, decay, and despair. As those who wait expectantly for the ushering in of the new age, we must fully engage ourselves in the advancement of the cause of Christ, seeking the righteousness, justice, and true life which God intended from the beginning.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, we must remain cognizant that, although they are not in vain, our own efforts cannot bring an end to the groaning around us: the Lord himself will accomplish that at the dawning of the age to come (Ps 96:7–16; Ps 98:4–9).¹⁰⁴

Read Rom 8:21–22. What clues did Paul give to indicate that the Lord will not destroy this world? Why does God plan to renew our planet? How does knowing that the Lord desires to renew the earth affect the way you live? What are some specific things you can do differently to enhance your care for the environment?

Return to the Ground

3) Gen 3:19: Great reversals have occurred since God formed Adam from the ground and caused food to grow (Gen 1:29–30; Gen 2:7–9). The pure joy and satisfaction from working the ground which God intended no longer exists.¹⁰⁵ Instead, the ground (*adamah*) would resist and eventually swallow Adam back into itself, rather than continuing to submit to his care.¹⁰⁶

This struggle would continue until death occurred,¹⁰⁷ quite different from the elevated state Adam and Eve expected to attain by trespassing the Lord’s restriction (Gen 3:4–7).¹⁰⁸ God’s pronouncement confirms the curse for eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16–17).¹⁰⁹ However, it also promises respite from the difficulty of living under these conditions. Even

¹⁰⁰ Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 24–5,

<http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 459,

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁰² Hahne, “The Whole Creation has been Groaning,” 25,

<http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/106707.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Ciampa, “Genesis 1–3 and Paul’s Theology of Adam’s Dominion in Romans 5–6,” 113.

¹⁰⁴ Moo, “Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,” 460,

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_449-488_Moo.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 117.

¹⁰⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 203.

¹⁰⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

repentance cannot free humanity from the toil of labor to provide sustenance for our bodies while this life lasts.¹¹⁰

The Lord's decree hinted that exclusion from Eden was imminent, for a death sentence implied that he would obstruct the way to the tree of life (Gen 2:9). Only by remaining in the garden could Adam and Eve experience life to the fullest.¹¹¹ Since the word "die" does not appear here, physical death would not come instantly, as they might have expected (Gen 5:5).¹¹² They would inevitably—not immediately—return to dust as a penalty for their sin.¹¹³ In their disobedience, Adam and Eve experienced death before they died. Thus, the serpent had spoken the truth even while lying (Gen 3:1–4).¹¹⁴ By desiring to live, being unable to fully live, and being forced to live, humanity without God remains dead (Eph 2:1–3).¹¹⁵

a) Read Gen 3:19. What great reversals did the Lord pronounce? How can people be dead even while living? In what ways have you experienced this?

Clothed by God

c) Gen 3:21: According to the Akkadian tale "Adapa," the protagonist lost the opportunity to eat the bread and water of life. Then the god Anu clad him in mourning garb before sending Adapa away from his presence.¹¹⁶ Throughout human history, clothing has served not only to protect against "thorns and thistles" (Gen 3:18) but also as an indicator of one's role and social status. Replacing their inadequate loincloths of fig leaves (Gen 3:7), God provided Adam and Eve with leather "tunics" (*ketoneth*),¹¹⁷ long shirts reaching the knees or ankles.¹¹⁸ Similar garments remain the clothing of choice for many Middle Eastern people.¹¹⁹

Moses mentioned neither animal death nor blood when God made skin garments for Adam and Eve. The emphasis here does not fall upon sacrifice for their sin. In fact, the skins of sacrificial animals were often burned (Lev 9:7–11). Instead, clothing people in the Ancient Near East comprised an act of investiture, such as for kings and priests during their installation ceremonies (Lev 8:1–10). Moses clothed Aaron and his sons in tunics (*ketoneth*) (Exod 28:4), and Nehemiah donated 530 to the priests who returned to Jerusalem after the exile (Neh 7:70). In Gen 49:26, Jacob called Joseph—who also wore a tunic—"one consecrated among his brothers."

Ashurbanipal, a 7th century BC king of Assyria wrote:
"Those kings who had repeatedly schemed, they brought alive to me to Nineveh. From all of them, I had only mercy upon Necho and granted him life. I made [a treaty] with him

¹¹⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 203–4.

¹¹¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

¹¹² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 204.

¹¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 83.

¹¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 135.

¹¹⁵ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 142.

¹¹⁶ "Adapa," *ANET*, lines 59–69, 102,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n127/mode/2up.

¹¹⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "כֵּתוֹנֶת" (*ketoneth*), *BDB*, 509,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/508/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 84.

¹¹⁹ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 3:21.

[protected by] oaths which greatly surpassed [those of the former treaty]. I clad him in a garment with multicolored trimmings, placed a golden chain on him [as the] insignia of his kingship, put golden rings on his hands; I wrote my name [phonetically] upon an iron dagger [to be worn in] the girdle, the mounting of which was golden, and gave it to him.”¹²⁰

While putting a garment on someone usually occurred in conjunction with an elevation of status, Adam and Eve stood on the brink of demotion (Gen 3:8–13).¹²¹ Clothing a person or removing apparel also functioned as symbols of inheritance or disinheritance.¹²² Hittite Law # 171 states, “If a mother draws her garment away from a son of hers, she is repudiating her sons.”¹²³ A Ugaritic man’s last will and testament concurs, saying, “And now therefore, my two sons...whichever of them shall bring a lawsuit against...or shall abuse...their mother, shall pay 500 shekels of silver to the king; he shall set his cloak upon the door bolt, and shall depart into the street.”¹²⁴

Spreading a garment over a woman indicated a man’s intention to marry her (Ruth 3:7–10).¹²⁵ Accordingly, nudity comprised the penalty for marital unfaithfulness (Hos 2:2–3). An Akkadian text says, “If my wife would follow a strange man, let her place her clothes upon a stool, and go whither she will.”¹²⁶ After repeated calls for Israel and Judah to return to him, the Lord eventually suspended his covenant with them, allowing other nations to strip them naked and take them into exile as a penalty for their spiritual adultery (Ezek 23:24–30).

In contrast, God’s act in Eden pointed to a future for Adam and Eve beyond their misery.¹²⁷ His mercy enabled him to accept them despite their fallen state.¹²⁸ Therefore, he covered them, rather than exposing their shame to him and to one another.¹²⁹ By cladding their naked bodies, the Lord signified his intention to conceal their humiliation, return their dignity,¹³⁰ and bring them back into relationship with himself.¹³¹

The Lord’s action embodied order and restraint, not breaking the new laws that applied to the earth and people but choosing to participate in them (Gen 3:14–19).¹³² He graciously reaffirmed humanity’s inheritance rights over creation (Gen 1:26–28).¹³³ By clothing Adam and Eve, God revealed his plan to restore his covenant with humanity,¹³⁴ doing for them what they could not do for themselves.¹³⁵

Read Gen 3:21. Why did the Lord clothe Adam and Eve in animal skins? How does that provide hope to you?

¹²⁰Assurbanipal, “Campaigns Against Egypt, Syria, and Palestine,” in *ANET*, trans. Daniel David Luckenbill, section 2, 295,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n319/mode/2up.

¹²¹Walton, *Genesis*, 229–30.

¹²²Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

¹²³Albrecht Goetze, trans., “The Hittite Laws,” in *ANET*, 195

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n219/mode/2up.

¹²⁴J. J. Finkelstein, trans., “Additional Mesopotamian Legal Documents: (17) Will and Testament,” in *ANET*, 546,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n577/mode/2up.

¹²⁵Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

¹²⁶John Huehnergard, “Biblical Notes on Some New Akkadian Texts from Emar (Syria),” *CBQ* 47, no. 3 (July 1985): 428–34, text 2:18–24, 431.

¹²⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 207.

¹²⁸Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 119.

¹²⁹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 139.

¹³⁰Alicia J. Batten, “Clothing and Adornment,” *BTB* 40, no. 3, 2010: 148–59, 149.

¹³¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 150.

¹³²Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 139.

¹³³Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 30.

¹³⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 151.

¹³⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 207.

Clothed with Christ

4) Gal 3:26–27: The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to counter the arguments of Christian missionaries from a Jewish background. They sought to have gentile “half-converts” become “full converts” by obeying the law of Moses, specifically through circumcision (Gal 6:12–16). By writing, “For all sons of God you are through your faith in Christ Jesus,” Paul emphasized “all” by placing it first in his sentence.¹³⁶ This message infuriated those insisting on circumcision (Gal 2:12; Gal 5:11–12).¹³⁷ Jewish people of that era recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel. However, God welcomes and includes gentiles into the covenant community (Eph 1:5–6; Rom 10:8–13).¹³⁸

Paul contrasted the status of freedom believers enjoy with the slavery and fear of those under the Mosaic law (Gal 3:23).¹³⁹ While Greco-Roman women could become heirs, they faced restrictions regarding how they could use an inheritance.¹⁴⁰ This is probably why Paul designated believers of both genders “sons” (Gal 3:28–29).

Those “in Christ Jesus” experience unity with each other and a new relationship with God as his children,¹⁴¹ a status achieved by means of faith.¹⁴² Being “in Christ” facilitates communion with Jesus in the most intimate connection imaginable.¹⁴³ Indeed, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us sets us apart as the people of God (Gal 4:6–7).¹⁴⁴ Yet this neither minimizes nor destroys the Christian’s and Jesus’s distinct personalities; it enhances them.¹⁴⁵

Most likely, Paul derived Gal 3:27–28 from an early Christian baptismal confession.¹⁴⁶ In the early church, baptism served as the first and necessary response of faith,¹⁴⁷ resulting in the practice becoming identified as a rite of initiation into a new humanity with Christ as its head.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, faith and baptism remain distinct so that faith does not negate the need for baptism and baptism fails to make faith unnecessary (Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 12:13).¹⁴⁹

Paul wrote, “All of you who into Christ have been baptized, [with] Christ have clothed yourselves.” Enveloping ourselves with Jesus as our garment symbolizes a new spiritual existence (Job 29:14). By stripping off sin and putting on the virtues of Christ (Eph 4:20–24; Rom 13:12–14),¹⁵⁰ we have died to our old evil ways, stepping into new life (Rom 6:1–14; Rev 3:5–6).¹⁵¹

In the early church, converts disrobed just prior to baptism and put on white clothing after receiving the rite.¹⁵² According to Hippolytus ca. 170–235 AD):

¹³⁶Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 100. In Koine Greek, the word “for” can never occur first in a sentence or clause. Authors placed their points of emphasis first in a sentence or clause.

¹³⁷Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 197.

¹³⁸Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 269–70.

¹³⁹Brendan Byrne, “Sons of God,” *ABD* 6:156–9, 158.

¹⁴⁰Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, 43.

¹⁴¹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 152.

¹⁴²Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 171–2.

¹⁴³Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154.

¹⁴⁴Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 270.

¹⁴⁵Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154.

¹⁴⁶Longenecker, *Galatians*, 155.

¹⁴⁷McKnight, *Galatians*, 198.

¹⁴⁸Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 172.

¹⁴⁹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 155–6.

¹⁵⁰McKnight, *Galatians*, 198–9.

¹⁵¹Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical and Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 380.

¹⁵²Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156. See <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310120.htm>.

“Let the candidates stand in the water, *naked*, a deacon going with them...He who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say thus, ‘Dost thou believe in God, the Father Almighty?’ And he who is being baptized shall say, ‘I believe.’ Then holding his hand placed on his head, he shall baptize him once.

“And then he shall say, ‘Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the quick (living) and the dead?’ And when he says, ‘I believe,” he is baptized again.

“And again he shall say, ‘Dost thou believe in [the] Holy Ghost, and the holy church, and the resurrection of the flesh?’ He who is being baptized shall say accordingly, ‘I believe,’ and so he is baptized a third time... And so each one...is immediately *clothed*, and then is brought into the church.”¹⁵³

This explains why baptism took place away from the congregation.¹⁵⁴ A third century AD document describes female deacons administering baptism to women converts to prevent men from seeing their nudity.¹⁵⁵

Read Gal 3:26–27. What is the significance of being a son of God? How does the ancient form of Christian baptism reflect the transformation we experience through our identification with Jesus? Specifically, how does clothing yourself with Christ affect the way you live?

¹⁵³Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (trans. Burton Scott Easton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 46–7, [Http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibilothèque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_\(1934\).pdf](http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibilothèque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_(1934).pdf). Italics mine.

¹⁵⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, “Baptism, Baptismal Rites,” *DLNT*, 112–25, 121.

¹⁵⁵Margaret Dunlop Gibson, trans., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English* (HSem; London; Cambridge: Clay; Cambridge University Press, 1903), 16, 79–80, <https://archive.org/stream/didascaliaaposto00gibsuoft#page/78/mode/2up>.