

# THE CREATION AND ME

## Genesis 1:26-28

The Bible opens with a description of the purpose God gave to humanity in the creation – to rule His world. Although humanity’s rebellion against God changed its relationship with the world, it did not remove that responsibility. The changes introduced by rebellion conspire with the increasingly prominent and contentious place our culture gives to environmental concerns to further complicate the relationship God intends humanity to have with His creation. This lesson will therefore consider what it looks like to have a proper relationship with the creation.

### Cursed people, a cursed world, and future healing

- God created the world to host His intended relationship with humanity and gave humanity the responsibility of managing it.
  - God created the world and humans to coexist in a mutually beneficial relationship (*Genesis 1:1-2:3*).
  - God commanded both animals and humans to “be fruitful and multiply”<sup>1</sup> (*Genesis 1:22, 28*) while He gave to humanity alone the responsibility of dominion, which raises an important point – human dominion did not preclude animal proliferation.
  - Humanity’s dominion finds a template in God’s own rule of the creation in which His creative activity reveals Him making a world filled with goodness and organizing it in a way that created the potential for even more goodness (*Genesis 1:1-31*).
  - Later material in the Old Testament adds some additional insights into the character of humanity’s dominion – God expected humanity to exercise its dominion with a care that reflected His own care for the creation (*Deuteronomy 25:4; Proverbs 12:10; Matthew 6:25-33*).
  - Part of the care God expects humanity to display in its dominion comes from the role the world occupies - the Bible presents the creation as part of God’s royal throne room and as evidence of His sovereign identity (*Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:35; Psalm 8:1; cf. Psalm 99:5*).
- Humanity’s rebellion, however, changed the relationship God’s intended people to have with the creation.
  - Sin’s consequences included introducing tensions between humanity and the creation so that the creation would be in rebellion against humanity in a way that mirrored humanity’s rebellion against God (*Genesis 3:17-18*).
  - Humanity’s continuing sin led to another change in its relationship with the creation – God gave to humanity the right to take animal life (*Genesis 9:1-4*), bringing into

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

humanity's life constant, graphic reminders about sin and its consequences (cf. *Genesis 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:54-56*).

- Part of God's response to humanity's rebellion included the promise of a restored and purified creation.
  - Paul adds an insight into the creation's cursed state when he wrote that "the creation waits with eager longing" to be released from its curse (*Romans 8:18-25*).
  - The release Paul describes the creation waiting for connects to God's promises of a "new heavens and a new earth" (*Isaiah 65:17; 66:22-23; Revelation 21-22*)
  - The new creation does not merely refer to a second creation but instead describes a return to the purity of the pre-sin world and of God's intentions for humanity and the creation as represented in Eden (*Genesis 2:8-9; 3:8; Revelation 21:1-4; 22:15; cf. Isaiah 11:1-9; Mark 1:13-14*).
- While we do not yet enjoy the "new heavens and new earth", Christians exist in the world as a down payment on that future reality by living in ways that begins to restore God's intentions in the world through their transformed lives. We fulfill that role by living in ways that model the character of God through our lives, which includes developing a proper relationship with His creation.

## Applications

- The Bible's discussion about humanity's relationship with the creation offers a theological – not political - issue; we must not, therefore, allow our culture's politics to inappropriately shape our understanding of the dominion God has entrusted to us.
- Although the Bible includes insights into humanity's dominion, it does not offer a detailed description of what proper stewardship of the creation looks like; God expects us to work it out in ways that faithfully mirror His revealed character.
- Developing a proper relationship with the creation involves learning to balance the following two items:
  - God created the world as a human-centered place and gave to humanity the right to use the creation (cf. *Genesis 1:14-15; 3:21; 9:1-4*)
  - God expects humanity to exercise care-filled stewardship over His creation in ways that mirrors His own rule (cf. *Deuteronomy 25:4; Proverbs 12:10*).
- Our dominion over the creation should, therefore, use the world in ways that accentuates its praise of God and exemplifies God's character through our conduct in, and with, the world.
- The goal of creating an ordered and cultivated world that declares God's praises stands in stark contrast to the following two common ways people interact with the world:
  - Too often self-centered uses of the world characterize human activity.
  - Increasingly, people idolize the creation by elevating it to an inappropriately high place (cf. *Romans 1:19-23*).