

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

SCHOOL OF CULTURAL RESTORATION
LENT 2026 - PASTOR STEVE WILKINS



THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S - SESSION #4

"The Characteristics of Creation"

David in Psalm 19 says that the creation reveals God's glory:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.

2 Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.

It is important that we see the glory of His handiwork.

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"The Characteristics of Creation"

1. The work of creation is orderly. The way in which God reveals His work indicates the wisdom and order of the work itself.

There is a structure and pattern in the way the work of God is recorded in Genesis 1.

The first 3 days of creation correspond to the last 3 days

First the world is formed, then it is filled.

First a living space is created – then living things are created to dwell in these spaces.

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Lord does the work of creation over seven days to give a pattern for man.

We are to work like He worked.

Our lives are to follow His example.

But the structure goes even deeper than this.

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The entire account is structured around the number 7.

Not only is the work of creation done in seven days but this seven-fold pattern is repeated throughout the Bible.

Seven-fold chiasms occur about 200 more times the rest of the Bible.

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The creation week becomes one of the fundamental patterns of history.

The Genesis account is divided into seven paragraphs around the work of the seven days.

And the three nouns which are the focal points of the chapter (God, heavens, and earth) are used in multiples of seven:

The word "God" occurs 35 times, and the words "earth" and "heaven" are found 21 times each.

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Key words and phrases are repeated 7 times in the account:

- "light" and "day" are mentioned 7 times in the first paragraph
- There are 7 references to "light" in the fourth paragraph.
- "Water" is mentioned 7 times in paragraphs 2 and 3.
- In the 5th and 6th paragraphs the word translated "living" or "beasts" (the same word in Hebrew) is found 7 times.
- The expression "it was good" occurs 7 times in the passage.

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There are ten sayings of God which are divisible into a group of seven "fiats" ("let there be")

The phrase "Elohim says" occurs 10 times in the account – anticipating the 10 words Yahweh speaks from Mount Sinai.

The first verse has 7 words, the second verse has 14 words.

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It is impossible to view this as a mere coincidence.

"God's moving Spirit inescapably works in a sequence of 7 steps because that is precisely the rhythm of the song of the Spirit."

(Jim Jordan)

The dominance and pervasiveness of the number 7 through the account testifies to the glorious nature of God's work. The work of creation is fruit of the infinite wisdom and power of the eternal God.

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2. The work of creation is a covenantal work.

The creation is not something independent from God or neutral in regard to Him. **Rather all creation exists in constant communion with Him.**

God cannot be known apart from His creation.

Peter Leithart: "God is not God without us" but always "God with us." He is the One in Whom we live and move and have our being.

Ralph Smith: "God did not create the world into 'brute factuality' and then later enter into a relationship with it. He didn't impose His covenant onto the existing order. Rather, from the beginning the world was created as His kingdom in covenant relation with Him."

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Covenant is implied by the fact that God speaks the world into existence (Psalm 33:6 "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . .

⁹ **"For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast.").**

The creation didn't emanate from Him;
nor did He cause it to evolve from existing matter;
nor did He bring it into existence by an unspoken purpose . . .
He *commanded* it into existence.

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By speaking the world into existence, God reveals that all that exists, exists in obedience to His command. All creation is all subject to the Lord who commanded it into existence.

And this is a matter for joyful praise.

Psalm 148:2-5

"Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! ³ Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! ⁴ Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created."

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God is actively and constantly involved with His creation. He is not a detached, disinterested Spectator of the creation and history – but One intimately related to all that happens in the world and in history.

Genesis 9:14-17:

“It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.” ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

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3. The creation is symbolic. Everything not only bears God's "fingerprints" but reveals something about Him. Everything is a symbol of His person and His works.

Man is the ultimate symbol because he is created after God's image.

The animals also reveal God and His truth. We are commanded to go to the animals and learn from them (Proverbs 6:6-8 "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, ⁷ Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, ⁸ Provides her supplies in the summer, *And* gathers her food in the harvest.").

Job 12:7-9 "But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; And the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ⁸ Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; And the fish of the sea will explain to you ⁹ Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this."

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Herman Bavinck:

“In order to give us an idea of the majesty and exalted character of God, names are derived from every kind of creature, living and lifeless, organic and inorganic.”

This is one reason Paul says that the man who does not learn of Him through the creation, is without excuse

Romans 1:18-20 “For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

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This symbolism is not an accidental or secondary function but the primary purpose of creation. The world does not exist for its own sake. It exists primarily to reveal the glories of God.

“But can't we make things mean anything we want them to mean?” This assumes that there is no God-ordained meaning inherent in creation.

God has given us the Bible to teach us how to read the world and understand the world.

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The symbolic meaning of creation can only be known from the Scriptures. Symbols have their meanings within the world that God has created.

God has given us the Bible to teach us how to read the world – but we need to understand how the Bible does this:

- Biblical symbolism does not work like a code-book**
- God does not use a symbol when a literal statement will do.**

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Biblical symbolism does not exist in isolation. Symbols have their meanings within the world that God has created.

They are to be seen in the context of the rest of the symbolic creation and in relation to the symbolic system revealed in the Bible. Symbols must be interpreted in light of their biblical usage.

Biblical symbolism must be interpreted in terms of biblical presuppositions.

Since God created the world, the true meaning of its symbolism is assigned by Him and not by man.

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4. The creation reflects God's own Triune nature. There is both unity and diversity.

"Oneness" and "Manyness" are both equally ultimate. Because God is both One and Many – One God in Three Persons.

The creation reflects this reality. Because God is both One and Three, we know that His unity doesn't destroy diversity nor does His diversity destroy unity.

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5. Creation is the fruit of God's love.

Sergius Bulgakov, "God is love, and it is proper for love to love and to expand in love." Love is "ecstatic" – i.e. its nature is to expand and flow out from the lover. . .

"It is proper for the ocean of Divine love to overflow its limits," and it would be improper for God "not to actualize this possibility." (because it is the nature of love to exhaust "all the possibilities of love.")

The act of creation was an act of extending the glorious life and love which existed eternally between the Father, Son, and Spirit, to fill all the creation.

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Thus, Paul can speak of the whole creation groaning to be delivered from the corrupting effects of sin (Romans 8:20-23)

“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. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

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Michael Reeves:

“The very nature of the triune God is to be effusive, ebullient and bountiful; . . . This God is the very opposite of greedy, hungry, selfish emptiness; in his self-giving he naturally pours forth life and goodness. He is, then, the source of all that is good, and that means he is not the sort of God who would call people to himself away from happiness in good things. Goodness and ultimate happiness are to be found with him, not apart from him.”

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Paraphrasing Richard of St. Victor,

“There are rivers of light, life, and love flowing between the three persons of the Trinity.” And so rich and full is this life of God that it could not be contained within Himself, but had find expression outside of Himself. Creation is nothing less that the bursting forth of the life, love, and hilarity of God.

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God in His love, unbegrudgingly shares His glory with His creatures and fills creation with His glory. His glory fills the earth to the full.

Habakkuk 2:14:

“For the earth will be filled
With the knowledge of the **glory** of Yaweh,
As the **waters** cover the sea.”

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