

The Language of Creation from Genesis to Revelation

By Tami Jelinek

There is much disagreement within fulfilled eschatology regarding the Genesis creation story. What is it *about*? Those who are futurist in their eschatology, and take a literal, cosmological view of “the end,” understandably view Genesis as the beginning of the same. In other words, if Revelation and other “last days” prophecies describe the end of the physical universe, then Genesis describes the beginning of that same universe. This is logical, and a consistent approach to the Bible as a whole. But what about preterists, who hold to a fulfilled view of eschatology? We see Revelation and other “last days” prophecies as pointing to the end of the Old Covenant age, and not the end of the physical universe. We recognize the language of the prophets, appreciate its metaphorical and symbolic elements and understand the *covenant context* of this language as it is employed consistently throughout the Bible. Furthermore, we submit our interpretation of this language to Jesus and the apostles, who quote extensively from those prophetic contexts. And if we are to be consistent, as consistent as those who are futurist in their eschatology and view the beginning and the end as the beginning and the end of the *same universe*; then we will likewise view the beginning and the end as the beginning and the end of the *same covenant world*. Or, we might say that they are covenantal counterparts. In other words, we will understand that Genesis’ *creation* is the same in *nature* as Revelation’s *new creation*. We will *naturally* conclude that it is a covenantal, rather than a cosmological creation.

But some preterists make an exception to their otherwise consistent approach to Scripture when it comes to Genesis. They contend that while the Bible tells the story of God’s covenant relationship with His people, a story which culminates with the ultimate and final redemption of His *covenant creation*; Genesis (the first book of the Bible and literally, “beginning”) is *not* the beginning of the *Bible’s* story, but rather the beginning of the physical universe. Even though “the rest of the story” and specifically the end of that story, in no way references universal, cosmological history.

These preterists will say that “the first heaven and the first earth” which passed away in Revelation 21 is not a reference to that which was created in the beginning, but rather to the law given at Sinai. There are many problems with this position, which are discussed elsewhere. But to summarize a primary problem here: the *language* the prophets use to describe the new creation *in contrast with the old* does not refer to Sinai; it time and time again refers to Genesis 1-3, as it contrasts the new creation with the *first* creation, and the redeemed with the fallen. The prophets use *creation language* directly from the Genesis creation story to foretell a new heaven and a new earth. The parallels are as undeniable as the examples are numerous, as the chart below illustrates.

This chart and accompanying article will lay out a series of contrasts between “the first heaven and first earth,” which I contend is the subject of Genesis creation, and “the new heaven and new earth.” It is my hope to show through the prophets’ use of Genesis creation language contrasting the old with the new, that Genesis creation is indeed the first creation John had in mind when he wrote:

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

| First Heaven and First Earth “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” | New Heaven and New Earth “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth” |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">earth (land) and sea</p> <p>Genesis 1:9,10 Then God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no more sea</p> <p>Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">day and night</p> <p>Genesis 1:14 Let there be lights...to divide the day from the night...</p> <p>Genesis 1:16 ...the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night...</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no more night</p> <p>Revelation 21:25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).</p> <p>Revelation 22:5 And there shall be no night there..</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">sun and moon</p> <p>Genesis 1:14-16 ...Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; let them be for signs and seasons, days and years; let them be for lights...to give light on the earth...then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no need of the sun or moon</p> <p>Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it.</p> <p>Revelation 22:5 ...and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light.</p> <p>Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall no more be your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light to you, but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Seasons</p> <p>Genesis 1:14 ...let [the sun and the moon] be for signs and seasons, days and years.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no more seasons</p> <p>Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon...</p> <p>Revelation 22:2 and in the midst of the street, was the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">First Creation Cursed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Cursed is the ground for your sake”</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">New Creation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Redeemed from the Curse</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“There shall be no more curse”</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">sorrow in bringing forth children</p> <p>Genesis 3:16 In sorrow you will bring forth children</p> <p>Isaiah 26:18 We have been with child, we have been in pain. We have, as it were, brought forth the wind...we have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth...</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no more bringing forth children for trouble</p> <p>Isaiah 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble, for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ruled by “husband”</p> <p>Genesis 3:16 Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">released from “husband” married to Christ</p> <p>Romans 7:1-4 ...the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives...the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives...but if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband...you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ that you may be married to Him...</p> <p>Isaiah 62:4,5 ...your land shall be married...and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God shall rejoice over you.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">cursed ground</p> <p>Genesis 3:17 Cursed is the ground for your sake</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">no more curse</p> <p>Revelation 22:3 There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">sorrow in “eating” from the ground</p> <p>Genesis 3:17 in sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">joy from labor and fruit of the ground</p> <p>Isaiah 65: 21,22 They shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them...My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">thorns and thistles</p> <p>Genesis 3:18 Thorns and thistles it will bring forth to you.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">instead of the thorn, the fir tree</p> <p>Isaiah 55:13 Instead of the thorn, will come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it will be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that will not be cut off.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">returned to dust</p> <p>Genesis 3:19 [You will] return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you will return.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">risen from the dust</p> <p>Daniel 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake... Isaiah 26:19 Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust... Ephesians 5:14 Therefore He says, "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">denied the tree of life</p> <p>Genesis 3:24 He drove out the man; and he placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">given the tree of life</p> <p>Revelation 2:7 To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.</p> |

The above chart displays a series of *contrasts* between the beginning and the end, or the old and the new. In Christ, in the new creation, "old things have passed away; all things have become new." Interestingly, the *same* serpent is identified at both the beginning and the end, and is the only element of the old creation which remains unredeemed in the new:

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| Serpent Cursed in the Garden “You are cursed above all cattle” | “Serpent of Old” Remains Cursed in the New Creation “The serpent of old was cast out” |
| cursed to eat dust Genesis 3: 14 Dust you shall eat all the days of your life | dust for food Isaiah 65:25 Dust shall be the serpent’s meat |

Now let’s look at some specific examples of contrasts between the first heaven and first earth created in Genesis and the new heaven and new earth which the prophets describe using Genesis creation language. The first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and in the new heaven and new earth:

There is no more sea...

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And there was no more sea.

Notice that John is contrasting the new heaven and new earth with the first heaven and first earth, which has passed away, by stating that there is no longer a sea. This is indeed a point of contrast as the first heaven and the first earth did have a sea:

Genesis 1:9,10 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

Throughout the prophets, the distinction between land and sea represents the distinction between Jew and Gentile. In Isaiah’s prophecy to Israel of her coming Messiah and His kingdom, “the sea” refers to the Gentiles believing the gospel:

Isaiah 60:4,5 Lift up your eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you will see, and flow together, and your heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you.

In the New Testament, the mystery revealed was that the Gentiles, who under the Old Covenant were strangers to the promises and without hope (hence the separation of “land and sea”), would be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of Israel’s promise through the gospel:

Ephesians 2:11-16 So then remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That

at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; in order to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Ephesians 3:5,6 ...[the mystery of Christ] in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.

In the old covenant (or first heaven and earth) there was a division between land and sea, Jew and Gentile. In the new covenant (or new heaven and earth) there is no more sea. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, for all are one in Christ:

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

As stated earlier, some would say that the “first creation” of Revelation 21 refers not to Genesis creation, but to the law given at Sinai. But as we have shown, John’s point of contrast between the new creation and the first creation is that in the new creation there is no more sea. The Genesis creation story includes the creation of the sea. The sea is not mentioned at Sinai. The identity of the first heaven and the first earth is therefore confirmed by John’s use of Genesis creation language.

There is no more night...

When the apostle John describes the new creation in Revelation, he contrasts it to the first creation in Genesis. When God created the first heaven and the first earth, there was “day and night,” or light and darkness:

Genesis 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

But in the new heaven and new earth, or the heavenly Jerusalem¹, there is no more night:

Revelation 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

Revelation 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. There can be no night there, no darkness, because the light of the Lord's presence is an everlasting light.

Isaiah 60:19-21 The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Notice the other elements that accompany the everlasting light of day in the above context: glory, the end of mourning, righteousness, and the inheritance of the land. In other words: salvation. Salvation is light. And light is resurrection life:

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Notice how Paul uses the same image of night to day, darkness to light, to proclaim the salvation that was near in the first century:

Romans 13:11,12 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

The “day” of salvation which was at hand was the day of everlasting light, and also the day of everlasting joy:

¹ The “New Heaven and New Earth,” and the “Heavenly Jerusalem” are synonymous terms in Scripture. I discuss this equation in an article entitled, “The Heavens: Conscience or Cosmos” (<http://newcreationministries.tv/the-heavens-conscience-or-cosmos.html>). Interestingly, some of the same preterists who hold to a physical, cosmological view of Genesis creation deny that these two are synonymous; they recognize “Jerusalem” as the church, but universalize and globalize (and even partially ‘futurize’ and ‘physicalize’) the “New Heaven and New Earth.” This paradigm is not merely coincidental with their literal view of Genesis creation; it is dictated by it.

Isaiah 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 30:5 Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.

There is a great deal of theology in the above contexts, which is beyond the scope of this article. Again, my purpose here is to show that the prophets use the language of Genesis creation when contrasting the new covenant with the old covenant. The pattern of evening to morning, night to day, and darkness to light in the creation story traces all of redemptive history, pointing to its ultimate fulfillment²: the ending forever of night and the dawning of the everlasting day, when the Sun of Righteousness would rise with healing on His wings (Malachi 4:2).

The city has no need of the sun or the moon...

Here again we see a specific reference to Genesis creation in John's contrast between the new creation and the first creation. In the new creation, there is no need for the sun or moon:

Revelation 21:23-25 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

Isaiah's prophecy is a clear parallel to John's:

Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.

² Genesis creation not only records the beginning of redemptive history, the Bible's story, but it serves as a prologue to all of it. The evening to morning pattern continues until the seventh day, which metaphorically refers to our eternal Sabbath rest in Christ. That is why there is no evening after the seventh day. It is a prophecy of an everlasting day ruled by the "Sun of Righteousness," the eternal "bright and morning Star." I would like to acknowledge my friend Norman Voss for his contribution to my understanding of Genesis creation as a comprehensive prologue, and not merely a chronological beginning. For further discussion of this, listen to NCMI's podcast series, "Exploring the Garden Scene" (<http://newcreationministries.tv/exploring-the-garden-scene.html>).

In both of the above contexts, light is equated with glory, and glory is equated with salvation. As previously stated, there is no more night in the new heaven and the new earth, or the heavenly Jerusalem, because God's presence is its everlasting light. Hence, there is no need for the sun or the moon to give light. The "night" represents spiritual darkness, or the absence of God's presence, under the old covenant. The "lesser light" which rules the night is the glory of the old covenant, which was passing away in the first century; and the "greater light" which rules the day symbolizes the exceeding glory of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:7-18). In contrast to the new heaven and new earth, the sun and moon are present in the first heaven and the first earth, and are identified as serving two purposes: to divide night from day; and to mark signs, seasons, days, and years:

Genesis 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

We have already shown that the first purpose for the sun and the moon, to divide the day from night, no longer exists in the heavenly city where there is no night. But what about the second purpose for the sun and the moon? We will now see that just as there is no more night in the new creation, there are no more seasons.

The tree yields its fruit every month...

By now it should be apparent that John consistently refers to Genesis creation with his use of creation language when he contrasts the new heaven and earth with the first heaven and earth. In the first creation, the sun and the moon are given to mark seasons:

Genesis 1:14 ...let [the sun and the moon] be for signs and seasons, days and years.

But in the new creation, there is no need for the sun and the moon:

Revelation 21:23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon.

We can reasonably infer from this that just as there is no more night in the new creation, there are also no more seasons in the new creation. And thereby we have an answer for this statement about "the tree of life," which may seem at first to be a bit of a riddle:

Revelation 22:2 and in the midst of the street, was the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.

Question: How could a tree bear fruit *every month*? Answer: Only if there are no seasons.

But under the old covenant:

Genesis 8:22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.³

We have already seen that the absence of night, or darkness, in the heavenly Jerusalem is symbolic of the presence of God and the light of salvation. The physical images of the sun and moon are metaphorical references to covenantal things. It would not make sense then, to view the image of “seasons, days and years” as pertaining to the physical universe either. If the sun and moon are covenant symbols, then so are the seasons which they mark. What does the contrast between the presence and absence of “seasons” represent? Notice that Paul’s language in this passage is almost identical to the language of Genesis creation, when he speaks of the elements of the old covenant:

Galatians 4:9,10 But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Genesis 1:14 ...let [the sun and the moon] be for signs and seasons, days and years.

The observance of “days, months, seasons and years” was required under the old covenant, hence the presence of the sun and the moon. But in the new covenant, these elements of the law have been done away and there is no longer any need for the sun or the moon to mark them:

Colossians 2:16,17 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

We now see why there is no need for the sun or moon to mark seasons in the new creation. They were a shadow of things to come. Now we are in Christ, in the new creation. He is our Sun, and He is our eternal Sabbath rest. The purpose for those elements of the old covenant has been fulfilled. As we see Genesis creation in its proper context, confirmed by both Paul’s and John’s use of creation language to speak of covenantal things, we see what the creation story is really *about*. There is now no more night, and yet we still have a physical night. There is now no more need for the sun, and yet we still have a physical sun. There are now no more seasons, and yet

³ There are many aspects of the flood account, and God’s subsequent promises to Noah, which reiterate what was established as part of the covenantal created order in Genesis 1. With specific reference to Genesis 8:22, Tim Martin writes: “What is going on with this covenant with Noah? God is re-affirming an extension of the created order related to the land that was first inaugurated in Genesis 1...The creation of the old heavens and earth set up a covenant, or legal order. It’s not talking about the physical universe. Seedtime and harvest match the seasons ordained in the old covenant economy from the very beginning; the feasts in the worship calendar matched the changes in the year. Cold and heat refer to God’s blessing and judgment on his people during the old covenant creation. Day and night matches the order of daily temple worship in the law.” (from Tim Martin’s lecture entitled “The Covenant Context of the Curse and the Flood,” which was delivered at the 2009 Covenant Creation Conference, <http://beyondcreationscience.com>).

we still have physical seasons. If we were indeed looking for these *physical* things to end in our future, as the fulfillment of the new heavens and the new earth, then it would make sense to see the creation story as about these physical things. But we understand that the “first heaven and earth” of Revelation 21 is a *covenantal* heaven and earth which has passed away. Furthermore, we have shown this “first heaven and earth” to be synonymous with the “heaven and earth” of Genesis creation. Therefore, the elements of the sun and moon, and the seasons for which they were given in the creation story are metaphorical representations of a covenantal, not a cosmological world.

We will now look at some contrasts identified in Scripture, using the same language of Genesis creation, between the curse pronounced at the fall and the removal of that *same* curse in the new creation. But first, most of us were taught that the curse, in all aspects, was physical in nature: physical pain in childbirth, physical thorns in a physical ground, physical bodies returning to physical dust. Of course this would make sense if the creation itself recorded in Genesis is physical in nature. Then we would naturally be looking for the removal of a physical curse, and a physical new creation. But as believers in fulfilled eschatology, we appreciate both the spiritual nature and covenant context of the curse, and understand that it has been removed in Jesus Christ. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13); we are a new creation in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17); and in this new creation there is no more curse (Revelation 22:3). The problem comes for those who hold to a literal, cosmological reading of Genesis creation and yet see eschatology, and thereby redemption from the curse, as fulfilled. They are forced to employ a pretty convoluted hermeneutic in the early chapters of Genesis:

Eve, “the mother of all the living,” is the mother of all the physically living, but her “pain in childbirth” is not referring to physical procreation. The “ground” is a physical ground, but the “thorns” it produces are not physical thorns. And perhaps the most convoluted construction of all: Adam is physically formed from the physical “dust of the ground,” but the “dust” he returns to is a metaphor for “spiritual death.” It is no wonder then that when some get to passages like these:

Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...

Isaiah 26:19 Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust...

that they often abandon their belief in fulfilled redemption and place their hope instead in a future, bodily resurrection, as if physical death was the curse Christ died to redeem us from. While there are some who still *do* at least profess fulfilled redemption, and do *not* ‘physicalize’ and ‘futurize’ resurrection, they do this in contradiction to their physical reading of Genesis

creation. Regarding the problem of this incongruence between creation and the curse, Tim Martin writes:

Not only must the nature of creation and new creation match, but the nature of the original curse must also match the nature of the original creation described in Genesis. Or to put it another way, it is textually indefensible to say that Genesis creation is all about the formation of the physical universe and then insist that the curse in Genesis 3 is non-physical covenant death or spiritual separation from God. The text mentions an increase of pain in childbirth, God's curse on the ground, thorns and thistles, sweat, and return to dust. God's curse falls on what God had created.....Here is the problem. How can we pick and choose our way through the creation account? If it is a material creation being described in Genesis 1 and 2, then how can we possibly avoid a material view of the curse that falls on the creation in Genesis 3, and a corresponding material view of resurrection?⁴

To answer Tim's rhetorical question, we cannot. If the first creation was physical in nature then so was the curse upon that creation. But in the new creation, there is no more curse. We have been redeemed from the curse of sin and death. In the new heavens and new earth, where righteousness dwells:

There is no sorrow in childbirth...

Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children;

This passage in Isaiah sheds some light on the covenantal nature of this curse pronounced in Genesis:

Isaiah 26:17,18 Like a woman with child, that draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs; so have we been in your sight, O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

The "sorrow" in bringing forth children was that in the old covenant they all remained in bondage under the law, awaiting deliverance. As Paul stated, "Jerusalem [in the first century was] in bondage with her children" (Galatians 4:25). That was the problem, now for the cure. In

⁴ This quote is from Tim Martin's lecture entitled "The Covenant Context of the Curse and the Flood," which was delivered at the 2009 Covenant Creation Conference (<http://beyondcreationscience.com>).

the very next verse, the prophet makes it plain that the curse of “sorrow in childbirth” is removed by resurrection:

Isaiah 26:19 Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Furthermore, in this familiar passage describing the new heaven and the new earth, Isaiah foretells a reversal of the curses pronounced in the garden, including this specific reference to child bearing:

Isaiah 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them.

Whereas those under the curse of the Old Covenant were in bondage with their children, those under the blessing of the New Covenant are free. This is illustrated by the two women, Hagar and Sarah, who represent the contrast between bondage and freedom, respectively:

Galatians 4:22-26,31 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all...So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

“Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all” is the church. Eve is called “the mother of all the living” in Genesis 3:20, which is also a prophetic reference to the church. Again, if that statement was a reference to *physical* life, as inconsistent preterists suggest, *both* the curse *and* its removal in Christ would by definition have to be physical as well.

We are released from our old “husband” and married to Christ...

God said to the woman, “what is this that you have done?” She answered, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” And a curse was pronounced as a consequence for sin, the transgression of God’s commandment:

Genesis 3:16...your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.

This text is often cited as a pattern for the husband's authority over the wife in marriage, and while I affirm and wholeheartedly embrace the Biblical principle of headship, there is a significant piece of *this* context which has been completely ignored: "*he shall rule over you*" is an element of the *curse*. This should set off alarm bells for believers in fulfilled redemption; for if our salvation has indeed been accomplished, we are now in the new heaven and new earth where "*there is no more curse.*" (Revelation 22:3) Therefore, we must consider the curse of "the husband's rule" in this story as a reference to that *from which we have been redeemed in Christ*.

Even Paul, when discussing the intimate, "flesh and bones" relationship between husband and wife, acknowledged that he was primarily and preeminently speaking of Christ and His church:

Ephesians 5:20-33 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The marriage relationship is a picture of Christ's union with his "bride," the church. We are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We have already seen that Eve, "the mother of all the living," is a prophetic picture of the church in the Genesis creation story. Accordingly, Adam said of her, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Whereas in the new covenant, God's people the church are married to the new man Christ; under the old covenant, God's people Israel were married to the old man, Adam. This "marriage" metaphorically pictures her condition of bondage under the law. Paul describes it this way:

Romans 7:1-4 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be

called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

In the same way that Eve *desired* the tree as that which would make her wise (Genesis 3:6); Israel, under the bondage of the law, looked for life in that law, and in self-righteousness (John 5:39). And thereby she proved the curse she was under:

Genesis 3:16...your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.

Again, we look to Paul for clarification. The rule of the old man was the curse of the law:

Galatians 3:10-13 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that does them shall live in them. 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

Christ, our new “husband,” has redeemed us from the curse of the law, to which we have died. We are no longer under its rule, or its condemnation:

Romans 8:1,2 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

And our desire is now toward *Him*:

Psalms 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you.

The ground is no longer cursed...

If the physical ground was cursed according to the physical terms used in Genesis 3, we as preterists would certainly be hard-pressed to defend our position that the “creation” is no longer “groaning” (cf. Romans 8:15-25).⁵ But in the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells, there is no more curse:

⁵ For an exegesis of Romans 8:15-25 which discusses the “groaning creation,” please see Liberty, Adoption and Glory in Romans 8 (<http://www.newcreationministries.tv/romans-8.html>).

Revelation 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

The connection and contrast on this point between old and new is more subtly stated, but its implications are no less profound. Notice first the “but” in the above passage. *Instead* of the curse, the throne (or presence) of Christ is in the land, and His servants serve *Him*. Whereas under the curse, they served the *ground*, as indicated by their perpetual, life-long “toiling”:

Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil [i.e., labor, pain, sorrow] you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

Then, in contrast to the toiling upon a cursed ground, suggesting vanity and futility (see again Romans 8:15-25), we find a direct reversal of this condition described in Isaiah’s vision of the new heaven and new earth, or the heavenly Jerusalem:

Isaiah 65:21,22 They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

Perpetual pain, sorrow and fruitless labor are replaced by everlasting refreshment and prosperity:

Psalms 1:3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Again, we recognize these physical images as speaking of covenantal things, and the contrast between bondage under the law and freedom in Christ Jesus. Whereas the letter kills, the spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6). And the enjoyment of work in the new creation pictures *His* work in making us righteous, and the victory and prosperity of the gospel:

Isaiah 60:21 Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Isaiah 55:10,11 For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us manifests the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

Instead of the thorn comes up the fir tree...

It could not be clearer: “thorns and thistles” are evidence of a cursed creation, and proof that we live in a fallen world:

Genesis 3:18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

That is, for futurists awaiting a cosmological regeneration, or a re-creation of the physical planet in fulfillment of the new heaven and new earth, it could not be clearer that our redemption is yet to be accomplished (and the cross to this day remains ineffectual). But those of us who appreciate the covenantal mindset and language of the Old Testament prophets, and see the new heaven and new earth they envisioned as the new creation in Christ, are thankful that Jesus spoke the truth when he cried, “it is finished!” We can truly rejoice in our salvation and rest in His completed work. But again, there is a problem for those who ‘spiritualize’ or ‘covenantalize’ the curse while ‘physicalizing’ the creation which was subjected to it. For again we see the prophets using *Genesis creation language* foretelling the removal of the *same curse* pronounced in the Genesis creation story:

Isaiah 55:13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

And whereas in the cursed creation, God’s people ate “the herb of the field;” in the new creation, where there is no more curse, they feast on “fat things”:

Isaiah 25:6 And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees.

It could not be clearer: The curse upon the creation of Genesis *has been removed* in the new creation of Revelation.

We have risen from the dust...

Genesis 3:19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.

In conjunction with the curse, Adam was told he would return to the dust; but it is important to remember also that under the old covenant, or the first heaven and first earth, all men dwelt in the dust, for as natural men, that is what they were:

1 Corinthians 15:47-49 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Paul's use of Genesis creation language to contrast the natural, unregenerate, mortal man with the heavenly Man Jesus is obvious. The "image of the heavenly" they were to bear was the image of Christ they were all being changed into, from Old Covenant glory to New Covenant glory, as each one turned to the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:14-18). It was a covenantal, not a physical, bodily transformation, or resurrection. A thorough study of 1 Corinthians 15 in its context, and with appreciation of the Old Testament prophetic texts from which Paul is quoting, will prove this.⁶ But here, it is simply my purpose to show that under the old covenant, "the dust" was their natural, mortal, corruptible condition. This is why David spoke of the grave as a place of virtual annihilation, without even an awareness of God. In an unregenerate state, there was no consciousness after physical death:

Psalm 30:9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

But even while physically living, he acknowledged that he was dwelling in the dust of the earth, awaiting resurrection:

Psalm 44:24-26 Why do You hide Your face, And forget our affliction and our oppression? 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust; Our body clings to the ground. 26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for Your mercies' sake.

Psalm 119:25 My soul clings to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.

In the first century, Paul invited physically living people to rise from the dead:

Ephesians 5:14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

In so doing, he was quoting from two contexts in Isaiah, both speaking of resurrection, and both in their larger contexts equating resurrection with salvation and the forgiveness of sins:

⁶ For a comprehensive, verse-by-verse exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15, please see the video series, The Resurrection of the Dead (<http://newcreationministries.tv/the-resurrection-of-the-dead.html>).

Isaiah 26:19 Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.⁷

Hopefully all now see the problem for those preterists who on one hand profess a covenantal resurrection from the dead, or dust; and on the other cling to a literal view of “the dust of the ground” from which Adam was formed. Here again, speaking in covenantal terms of the natural man, prior to resurrection, Paul quotes Genesis:

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit.

Compare his language to:

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The contrast between dwelling in the dust and being risen from the dust is the contrast between natural and spiritual, soul and spirit, old covenant death and new covenant life.

We have right to the tree of life...

Genesis 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

In the Genesis creation story, man is expelled from God’s presence, and kept from “the tree of life,” which metaphorically pictures Christ. In Revelation’s depiction of the new creation, those obedient to the gospel are given the right to the “tree of life,” and enter into God’s presence:

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

The “city” is the church, where God dwells with his people (Revelation 21:1-10). To be in the church is to be in the presence of God. To be in the church—that great city, the holy Jerusalem—

⁷ For a comprehensive, verse-by-verse exegesis of Isaiah 60, please listen to this segment of our podcast series, The Heavenly Visions of the Prophets (<http://www.newcreationministries.tv/isaiah-60.html>).

is also to be in the “Paradise of God.” Notice this undeniable reference to Genesis creation in John’s description of Paradise:

Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is *in the midst* of the Paradise of God."

Compare the location of “*the tree of life*” in “Paradise” to the *same* tree’s location in the garden:

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also *in the midst* of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁸

This begs the question of inconsistent preterists who hold to a physical, cosmological view of Genesis creation (one of whom I actually heard say that “the tree of life” in the garden scene was a woodenly literal tree which was destroyed by Noah’s flood!): How many “trees of life” are there? Remember that in the new creation, “*the tree of life*” is for the healing of the nations, and irrefutably speaks of Christ and the eternal life found only in Him:

Revelation 22:1,2 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Furthermore, in every other place in Scripture where the phrase “tree of life” is used, the reference is to Christ or some aspect of the quality of life in Him (Proverbs 3:18; 11:30; 13:12). And in the garden scene, “*the tree of life*” is that which granted immortality (how could the Source of immortality, which must by definition be immortal, be destroyed by a flood?):

Genesis 3:22...And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). And finally, if there is still any doubt how many “trees of life,” or sources of eternal life there are:

⁸ Yet an additional point of contrast between the first creation and the new creation is that in addition to the tree of life, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is in the midst of the garden in the first creation, but not in the new creation. This is because “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20); and in the new creation there is “no more condemnation” (Romans 8:1); as He has taken away our judgments (Zephaniah 3:15). Again, it is this contrast between the old and the new which places them both in the same story, as covenantal counterparts.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Inconsistent preterists cannot have it both ways: if their Genesis “tree of life” was a literal tree destroyed by Noah’s flood, then the “life” Adam was denied in the garden was merely a physical life, pertaining to a physical body. The glaring contradiction in their view of the curse in relation to the cursed creation is exposed, and they are forced to reconcile it. To hang on to their cosmological view of Genesis creation, they must posit a (at least partial, or in the case of some, “dualistic”) physical, global, and future fulfillment of the new heaven and new earth of Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21 and 22. In the end, they must refuse a fulfilled redemption, and deny a victorious cross. They must exchange the kingdom of God, which is “not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17), for a kingdom sought by those Jesus rebuked in the first century, who didn’t walk with Him anymore upon hearing Him say, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:66). Harsh words? Perhaps. Unduly harsh? I don’t think so. I don’t think we can ever be too zealous in pursuing the glory of the cross, and only the cross. The ‘sensitized’ kingdom being sought by inconsistent preterists, driven by their physical, cosmological reading of the creation story—the *beginning* of *redemption’s* story—will always end with a diminished view of the cross because it denies its victory by suggesting that there are redemptive blessings which remain unfulfilled. But in truth, “all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The language of creation, from Genesis to Revelation, tells one story:

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.”