

The Drama of Scripture

Restoration (Part 2)



Introduction. This morning we come to our final message in our sermon series on the Drama of Scripture. We've devoted two weeks to each of the four acts of this drama. Creation describes God's design and the way things **ought** to be. The fall describes how the world actually **is** due to sin. After being lured away from God's design by Satan, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Consequently, they were banished from the Garden of Eden. This was partially an act of mercy on God's part because if they stayed in the Garden they might eat from the Tree of

Life and live in their fallen state forever.

Redemption describes the way things **can** be because of Jesus. Jesus came announcing that He was establishing God's kingdom; God was now in the process of retaking every square inch of creation. Those who want to live in God's Kingdom need to radically reorient their lives (i.e., repent) and believe the good news that Jesus is the King who died and rose again. As followers of Jesus we co-labor with God and seek to extend His reign on this earth by sharing the good news and by representing our King in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and beyond.

Restoration describes the way things **will** be when God restores all things. Last week Brian taught about the **restoration of redeemed humanity**. When Christ returns those who know Him will experience full spiritual transformation and will be given a restored, resurrected body similar to Jesus' resurrection body. The chart in your bulletin (and on the screen) explains humanity's relationship with sin in the four acts of the drama of Scripture (using Augustine's formulation)

	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
Ought/Is/Can/Will	The way creation ought to be	The way the world actually is due to humanity's rebellion	The way things can be because of the death and resurrection of Jesus	The way creation will be when God "makes all things new"
Humanity and sin (Augustine's formulation)	Able to sin (<i>posse peccare</i>)	Unable to not sin (<i>non posse non peccare</i>)	Able to not sin (<i>posse non peccare</i>)	Unable to sin (<i>non posse peccare</i>)

Today we are going to discuss the **restoration of the rest of creation**. Since all of creation was affected by the fall, all of creation must be fully redeemed. God's plan of redemption involves fully restoring **everything** that was lost at the fall (and then some)!

The Anticipation of Creation's Restoration.

The Redemption of People from Every Nation. (Genesis 12:3, Isaiah 2:2, Matthew 28:18-20) This is part of the fulfillment of the command to Adam to “be fruitful and multiply” and to “fill the earth.” God’s image was always meant to spread to every corner of the earth. In the OT, God promised Abraham (Genesis 12:3) that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. The prophets envisioned a day when all the nations of the earth would be streaming into Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel (Isaiah 2:2). In the NT, Jesus reiterated that the temple was designed to be a place of prayer “for all the nations” (Mark 11:17). After His resurrection Jesus commanded His followers to “go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:18-20).

We see the anticipation that people from every grouping of people on earth will one day dwell together in perfect unity with God.

The Restoration of all Creation. Since the ground was cursed because of Adam and Eve’s sin, the curse needs to be lifted so that creation can fulfill its God-given role of being a place where God can dwell among His people in complete *shalom*/wholeness. That’s the longing we see in both the old and new testaments.

In Isaiah 11, Isaiah anticipates that all of creation will one day at perfect peace; there is no more violence or death. The “wolf will dwell with the lamb,” and the “leopard will lie down with the young goat.” Predators and prey taking a nap together is a picture of all creation experiencing complete *shalom*.

When we come to the NT, we have passages such as Romans 8 in which creation itself is longing to be restored to its original design:

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

Since the fall was the result of the rebellion of humanity, creation must await the full redemption of humanity before its own restoration.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Creation isn’t waiting to be annihilated so that God can start over; creation is waiting to be set free from its slavery to corruption so that it can enjoy the freedom and glory that the children of God will enjoy. C.S. Lewis depicted this transformation in *The Chronicles of Narnia*; all of Narnia (even the weather) reflected whether good or evil had the upper hand. Sometime similar is true in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The imagery of childbirth (as some of you well know) suggests present suffering with the anticipation of eventual joy. That's an apt description of creation anticipating being made new.

The Defeat of Satan. (Genesis 3:15, Matthew 25:41, Romans 16:20, etc.) The fall was the brainchild of Satan, God's adversary who had led a rebellion in the unseen spiritual world before the events described in Genesis 3. After the fall, God announced that even though Satan had won the battle in the Garden, he would lose the war: a descendant of the woman would crush his head (Genesis 3:15). Throughout Scripture we find anticipation of the defeat of Satan and his demons.

The Fulfillment of Creation's Restoration.

This fulfillment is found in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. A few comments about approaching this amazing book. . . The book of Revelation isn't a puzzle to solve. God doesn't expect us to figure out some hidden meaning behind all the symbols and numbers. It's my understanding that the book of Revelation is a very practical and nourishing book for the persecuted church around the world. People who are being imprisoned and tortured don't have time for idle speculation on the end times; they need to know that those who are faithful to the end will be saved. . . those who are last in **this** world will be **first** in the next.

Revelation is written in a genre known as apocalyptic literature. It uses wild, bizarre imagery to enflame our imaginations. Even though apocalyptic imagery isn't meant to be taken in a literalistic way, **it is describing events and beings that are very real.** For example, in Revelation 19:15 Jesus is charging out of heaven on a white horse with a "sharp sword" "coming out of His mouth." That's not a physical description of what Jesus looks like; it's a statement that Jesus can slay His enemies with a word from His mouth. After all, He Himself said, "All authority has been given Me in heaven and on earth." So we read apocalyptic literature looking for the spiritual realities expressed by the imagery.

The Defeat of Satan (Revelation 12, 20) Not surprisingly, the book of Revelation describes **the defeat of Satan and his demons.** For example, Revelation 12 describes a heavenly battle/war between Michael and his angels and the dragon (i.e., Satan) and his fallen angels. Satan and his angels are overpowered, banished from the heavenly realm, and thrown down to the earth where they unleash their wrath upon the followers of Jesus.

In chapter 20 Satan is described as "the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan" (verse 2). In verse 10 we read about the final judgment and punishment of Satan and his accomplices:

10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

When all things are made new, Satan and those loyal to him will be banished from the presence of God and judged.

The Restoration of all Creation. (Revelation 5, 21, 22) In Revelation 5 we have a fascinating scene depicting the heavenly realm that advances the plot of the Bible from our day to the restoration of all things.

1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?"

If you keep reading you find out that this book (or scroll) is God's plan for establishing His kingdom on earth (which will involve defeating His enemies once and for all and then making all things new).

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

John wept and wept because there was no one was found who was worthy to unfold the God's plan. John felt like we often feel - stuck in a time and place that is so broken and painful. . . sometimes it looks like evil is winning and good is getting snuffed out. . . sometimes it looks like Satan is more powerful than God. . . it looks like sickness and death are the last word, not life and health. Have you wept lately, longing for the restoration of all things? If so, listen in wonder:

5 and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." 6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

This passage anticipates the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham: all the families of the earth have been **blessed** through Jesus, **descendant of Abraham**. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission: disciples have been made **of all the nations**. Revelation assures us that this will happen.

Revelation 21 and 22 describe the fulfillment of these things. We don't have time to make many comments. But notice as we read that John is describing a place just like

the Garden of Eden in which God dwells among His people. The main difference is that there is no serpent and no possibility of sin.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

This is the fulfillment of creation's longing in Romans 8. Creation is released from its slavery to corruption after the redemption of the children of God. It's called the New Jerusalem because when all things are made new, God will dwell among His people in the new heaven and new earth just as He did in Jerusalem during the old covenant.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

Just as God dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden, God will dwell among His people in the new heaven and earth.

4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Look over in Revelation 22 as John continues to describe his vision of the new heaven and new earth. In this part of his vision John sees the "tree of life"; that's the tree from which Adam and Eve needed to be protected after they sinned.

1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Earlier in Revelation (2:7) God had promised that those who are faithful to the end will have the right to eat from the tree of life. Here we see the tree of life continually (12 months a year) bearing fruit for all of God's people (12 kinds of fruit for the 12 tribes/apostles) and bringing healing (see Ezekiel 47) for "the nations."

3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

At the restoration of all things, God is dwelling in the midst of His people enjoying face-to-face fellowship with Him. Notice the very last line again: "and they will reign forever

and ever.” Here we have redeemed humanity reigning with God for all eternity. This is the fulfillment of the creation mandate to “rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves over the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

Conclusion. The reality that God will one day make all things new has many implications for our lives: Am I living in a way that’s compatible with “that day”? Am I experiencing God in ways that demonstrate the kingdom of God? Etc. . . . But today we are going to respond with worship. Just as the heavenly hosts responded with, “Worthy is the Lamb,” we are going to respond with worship. We will first worship through a song that reflects many of the things we’ve talked about today. Afterwards, we are going to worship through celebrating the Lord’s Table.