

PART THREE:
PRESERVING ALL TO SAVE THE MANY

CHAPTER 5: NEED FOR A COSMOLOGICAL SALVATION²³

The Bible teaches that Jesus was an active participant with the Father in the creation of the universe²⁴ and that Christ presently holds the universe together (John 1:1-5; Col. 1:16-17). It also teaches that the eschatological (end time) works of Christ will involve the entire universe, not just the realm of humanity (Rev. 21). Thus the work of Christ involves the Creation of the present universe, the sustenance of the present universe, its judgement and creation of a new universe. Salvation from beginning to end is tightly linked to the entire universe, not just to the realm of humanity, and especially not just to the realm of the spiritually redeemed of humanity.

In Colossians, Paul links all the aspects of the works of Christ (creation, sustainer, ruler, etc.) together and brings to light that his atonement had cosmic²⁵ implication.

"For all things were created in Him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and all things have subsisted in Him. And He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the Beginning, the First-born out of the dead, that He be preeminent in all things; because all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and through Him making peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself; through Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens" (Col. 1:16-20 LITV).

Bible scholars have recognized the cosmic nature of the atonement, but seldom attempt to explain them,

Just as the material universe was in some mysterious manner affected by the fall of man (Rom. 8:19–23, R. V.), so also is it affected by the death of Jesus Christ, which is intended to neutralize the effect of sin upon the creation²⁶. There is a cosmic effect in the atonement. The Christ of Paul is larger than the second²⁷ Adam—the Head of a new humanity; He is also the center of a universe which revolves around Him, and is in some mysterious way reconciled by His death. Just how this takes place we may not be able definitely to explain."²⁸

²³ The phrase "cosmological salvation" will be used from this point on to refer to the physical salvation of the earth.

²⁴ When speaking of the universe the Old Testament usually employs the phrase "heaven and earth" (Gen. 1:1). The New Testament continues to use this phrase. At times cosmos is used to imply the same meaning.

²⁵ Though sometimes interchangeable, the term "cosmic" will be used in regards to the universe, whereas "cosmos" refers to either the earth, or the theater of mankind.

²⁶ Turn to our discussion in Rom. 5 and John 1:27 for further evaluation of Christ's "neutralizing effect of sin upon the creation".

²⁷ The New Testament never refers to Christ as the second Adam. It does call him the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45).

²⁸ Evans, W., & Coder, S. M. (1998, c1974). *The great doctrines of the Bible*. Includes index. (Enl. ed. /). Chicago: Moody Press

It is without question that our Colossians Passage teaches that Christ's atonement had implications for the entire universe. Though this is acknowledge and discussed briefly, our primary focus is on the cosmological (this planet's) implications.

The need for salvation of the physical earth is evident in the first chapters of the Bible. Genesis 1 and 2 presents man as the climax and sovereign head of creation. Genesis 1:26-28 states:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He create him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

The emphasis of the image of God in man is dominion or sovereignty. Man’s sovereignty over the physical creation was an image of God’s sovereignty over the universe.²⁹ This sovereignty is demonstrated in Genesis 2:19 when Adam gives names to the animals of creation signifying his headship over creation.³⁰ In Genesis 1 and 2 God is depicted as creating a sinless world, with a sinless man, ruling with sinless sovereignty. To save man and not save his dominion is to take from man the very thing that makes him in the image of God. For God to preserve man’s “image” he must preserve man’s dominion.

In Genesis 3 sin enters the world through man. As a consequence, his world, and his ability to rule is defiled. Depravity sinks its teeth into man. God does not remove man’s dominion. He does however, cause conditions that make his dominion more difficult. No longer will man be immortal, no longer will the earth submit in providing sustenance, no longer will man have ease in submitting creation to his needs and control. The curse was upon the creation and man. For man to be delivered from the curse, the creation must also be delivered.

God cursed creation because of man’s rebellion towards Him. As man rebelled against God’s sovereignty, so creation has rebelled against man’s sovereignty. Instead of the ground cooperating in the provision of sustenance for immortality, it produces thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18). The ground which produces what he consumes turns on him and consumes him (Gen. 3:19).³¹ Even the woman that was given as his helper in subduing creation refuses to submit towards his authority.³² She continues to be his partner to “multiply, fill and subdue the earth”, but

²⁹ It was this very image that Satan attached. Man was already “Like” God because of dominion. Yet Satan tempted with, “God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be *like God*, knowing good and evil.” By taking the fruit man traded images. He shattered the mirror of dominion and held up a new mirror of knowledge of good and evil. The old mirror is not destroyed but is so marred that the image of man’s crown is hidden by the cracks. Spiritual regeneration restores the imagery (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2).

³⁰ Naming of another is a symbol of authority in the ancient near east. A Biblical example is the renaming of Daniel and his friends by the Babylonians in the first chapter of Daniel.

³¹ Man’s sinless care of the garden was repaid by the earth with free and abundant produce. Sin brought debt. He is no longer viewed as a caretaker but as a taker. He pays back to the earth what he takes with his own flesh.

³² In Genesis 3:16b God tells the wife “your desire shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you.” The Hebrew construction of this passage is identical to the construction of Genesis 4:7. In the later passage Cain is warned by God that sin “desires to be over Cain, but he must rule over sin”. Genesis 3:16 is a warning to the woman that she will desire dominion over her husband, but he will have dominion over her. This is consistent with the immediate context.

the pain of childbirth and loss of trust makes her less submissive to his leadership. In time, even the creatures of the earth flee from man's headship.³³

The entire cosmos is in rebellion to headship. Man is in rebellion to God and creation is in rebellion to man. Both man and his dominion need God's deliverance. Creation must be delivered if man's image of God is to be preserved. Creation is waiting for deliverance:

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Rom. 8:18-22).

The deliverance of creation is bound up in the deliverance of man. When man is delivered creation is also delivered. The Son of God has been revealed and the provision for deliverance has been made. Though the sons of God have been spiritually and in part physically delivered, not all the sons of God have been revealed. Deliverance will be completed with the liberation of creation and the purification of man's dominion. Corruption will no longer have its grasp on man and so it will release its grasp on creation.

The pain and suffering of conception would not increase sexual desire toward the man, but create a sense of bitterness toward him because he caused her pain.

³³ The relationship between man and beast gradually deteriorates. Before the flood the creatures of the earth appear to respond to man's headship with a degree of submission. The effects of the flood brought fear of man by the creatures. Instead of responding favorably to man, they recognize that they are food for man and stay away in fear.