

A Perspective on Continuity from Creation to New Creation

1) Creation is a process

The ancient Hebrew understanding of creation was functional, not material

It is an account of how God made a functioning creation with a special role for mankind

The Biblical creation account is an ancient cosmology and a 'temple' construction

ANE Temple construction was 7 symbolic days ending with the image of the 'god' coming to 'rest' or 'rule' on the throne. In the case of YHWH, God's 'image' was placed in man, and the commission to 'rule' was given to Adam = mankind.

Ref. John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

The creation account is an account of how creation is ordered with reference to human beings and their role/place in creation. It is not a scientific account of the creation of the universe from the big bang to the present; rather, it is an 'ordering' of heaven and earth, time, cycles, all living things, and man – in relation to God

2) As process, creation has a teleological design and goal

The creation was 'good'; this does not mean static, nor 'perfect'. (A baby is good, but we expect it to grow and progress into maturity. Likewise an acorn, or a garden, or the whole of creation).

God's presence on earth was uniquely 'centred' in the garden of Eden. This was the first temple.

Later temples have a 'holy of holies' representing God's centred presence on earth.

The *commission* given to Adam and Eve was to:

- Tend and keep (or guard & protect) the garden-temple
- Be fruitful and multiply
- Fill the earth and subdue it (to do this they had to go *out* from the garden-temple).
- *Rule over* all the animals, fish, birds (i.e. over God's creation, as his representatives)

Adam and Eve were 'priests' mediating God's presence to creation

Had they 'gone out' in righteousness, the garden of Eden would have expanded into all the world. They would have mediated God's presence wherever they went.

3) God's design/goal from the beginning - to move from creation toward new creation

The goal for creation was to develop/progress/transform into new creation.

This was the purpose of the commission given to Adam & Eve, and remains our commission today.

God endowed creation itself with a certain freedom to participate in its own development. (This is the nature of evolution. All of creation is in a constant state of change). God further gave man the freedom to 'rule over' the creation 'from within', as part of creation. Clearly God wants all of creation to participate with him in the process of development, with a very particular oversight role given to man.

4) This process was temporarily halted

Due to sin, they were 'thrown out' of the garden. Creation is 'frustrated' because it must patiently endure a long period of time waiting for the 'sons of God' to be revealed (Rom 8:15-25), in order for that process to continue toward completion.

Creation is intimately tied to man's sin & suffering, and therefore needs 'redemption', not from sin, but from the results of sin – decay, suffering, exploitation, pollution, etc.

'In Christ' the new creation has 'broken in' to the old once more. In Christ we become 'new creations' (2Cor 5:17). Through Christ 'all things' (i.e. things in heaven and on earth) will be reconciled to God (Col 1:19-20). Yet this is still a process!

5) Human resurrection, creation's restoration; Continuity or discontinuity?

We (humanity) must await our full redemption at the time of resurrection.

Christ has led the way. Continuity of identity, but discontinuity of the nature of the body.

Yet in Christ, the process of sanctification begins even now.

Creation must await its full restoration to new creation until Christ returns. However, through God's redeemed people, that process can – to some extent – begin now.

Creation needs to recover and be restored to its progress toward new creation. This does not necessarily imply a 'new creation' event.

When Christ returns – the discontinuity is judgement and removal of all sin, evil and wickedness.

When Christ returns, is there:

a) continuity in the *process* of creation moving once more toward new creation, through the mediation of humanity as God's original plan?

b) discontinuity in the *event* of God bringing an immediate new creation into existence?

6) The meaning of New Creation, or New Heaven and New Earth

One possibility is that this means an entirely newly created world.

I propose a more biblically faithful possibility is that the 'newness' is found in a new relationship between heaven and earth – joined together as a 'marriage', with the presence of God at the centre. Heaven and earth become united, no longer a barrier of separation.

In this scenario, the *process* of transforming the earth into a 'new creation' where God's presence permeates everywhere, remains our commission and our responsibility. But now to be done under the rule of Christ (Eph 1:22-23)

Yet – we are earthly beings, created from this earth and for this earth.

Nowhere does the bible indicate that our ultimate eternal 'home' is heaven. But eternal life means we are resurrected to a new life – in Christ – on this earth – an earth where sin, evil and suffering no longer have any place.