

The Mystery of Man and the Earth



INTRODUCTION

The Earth groans, the rocks worship, Ezekiel prophesies to the mountains and valleys. What do these Scripture passages mean? Does the earth literally groan? Does it really respond to the prophetic utterances of God's servants? Can any part of creation besides human beings worship God? Can the ground we walk on—the ground itself—be blessed or become defiled? Does the earth have a purpose other than providing us with food and scenery?

- Is the earth groaning just God using a literary device to illustrate a point? I don't think so. Here's why: When I look at the totality of Scripture, I see reoccurring passages where it's clear the earth is responding to something. I'm not talking about the earth responding to a planted seed by producing a plant. I'm talking about the earth choosing whether to yield a harvest or not depending upon the righteousness of the person planting the seed.
- The earth responds. The earth waits. The earth yields. Wouldn't that seem to indicate the earth has a choice? If it has a choice, wouldn't you then say it has some form of freewill or at least a consciousness? Perhaps it is not a human-like consciousness, but maybe a parallel awareness? How's that possible?
- Here's a clue: we're created from the dust of the ground. The breath of God created the earth, and then God took some of that earth, formed man, breathed again, and Adam came to life.

MAN AND THE EARTH - ROMANS 8

- "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." Romans 8:19-22.
 - Paul uses literary devices like personification—they add value and context.
 - God talks about earth as if it's a person in Scripture because He wants us to change how we view the earth and our role on it. God's original intent for us and the earth was put on hold when Adam and Eve sinned. But just as everything changed for us through Christ, everything changed for the earth as well.

- ◇ The earth is waiting for us to bring it the good news. It's waiting for us to free it from bondage.
- Restoring the earth to its original purpose.
 - Man's original relationship with the earth.
 - ◇ Genesis 1: God gave man authority over the earth and told him to subdue it. As man subdued the earth, its purpose was fulfilled.
 - ◇ We're not sure how long Adam and Eve spent subduing the earth; but we know it ended the moment they sinned.
 - ◇ One reason God attributes human characteristics to the earth is that it reminds us of the relationship we once had. When Jesus died on the cross, the provision was made to restore man and earth back to their original relationship.
 - Why don't we see radical changes around us? Why doesn't every believer have an orchard in their backyard and a garden full of vegetables? Why do tornadoes and hurricanes decimate the homes of Christians and non-Christians alike?
 - ◇ Sin. The earth will respond to the righteous. However, at the same time, it's also responding to the unrighteous. Part of the futility the earth experiences today is due to the tug-of-war between righteousness and unrighteousness.
- Here's an illustration: Have you ever been raking leaves on a windy day and watch as every rake towards the pile loses half its leaves to the wind? You go to retrieve those leaves and you notice more leaves flying off another pile that you thought you already corralled. Imagine 6000 years of that—order and then chaos, order and then chaos. Now you know how the earth feels. Futility. Futility produces frustration—not only in us, but the earth as well. —“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope.” Romans 8:20.
- So actually, to really make this analogy of raking leaves accurate, it would be like this same thing happening, only it was your dad who forced you to rake leaves on a windy day. You can't come inside until the job is finished, but the wind won't stop. Yet, there is hope. If you can get all the leaves into one neat pile, you get to go to the movies with your friends.
 - The earth has been subjected to futility since the day God pushed the pause button on man's authority over it. Jesus returned that authority to man 2000 years ago, but very little has changed. It makes sense why the earth is frustrated.
 - There are righteous men and women on the earth right now that have the authority to restore order to the chaos that the earth has become.

- "Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:21. God has given creation hope that it will be freed from the bondage of corruption and decay. The earth is waiting for the same liberty and glory we received through Jesus!
- "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." Rom 8:21
- Paul, the writer of Romans 2000 years ago, said that the whole of creation was in the pains of childbirth until now. What happens now? Apparently, the earth is supposed to get what it was waiting and hoping for. How is that supposed to happen? Go back to verse 19: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."
- When "the revealing of the sons of God" happens, creation will be set free from bondage and decay and will then experience the same kind of freedom and glory that we experienced when we became children of God.

THE TIME-LINE

- Hasn't God already told us that we are His sons and daughters? Why then is creation still in bondage? What is it waiting for? What if it's waiting for us to reveal ourselves as a son or daughter of God to it?
- When you look more closely, you'll see God is doing the same thing now as He did in the Garden of Eden. As in the Garden, Jesus did all the heavy lifting, and when that was over, He said: "I've done My part. It's your turn."
- I believe we have a responsibility to reveal ourselves as a son or daughter of God. Jesus did His part, it's time for us to do ours.
- The earth was created with a purpose to fulfill. It's not fulfilling that purpose; otherwise it wouldn't still be longing to fulfill it. The earth is still waiting for you and I to subdue it. And now, because of Jesus, we have the authority to carry that out.
 - That's why Paul the writer of Romans says that creation groans—all of creation— animals as well. Their purpose was put on hold. What was that purpose? In short, to become like it is in heaven. Earth isn't like heaven right now; but it was supposed to be. And on some level, the Earth knows it.
- The earth is waiting on you to reveal to it that you are a son or daughter of God.

SO HOW DOES THIS WORK PRACTICALLY?

- Here's how it works with me: I spiritually take authority over every place I dwell: my home, my office, my car; the airplane seat that I paid a fee to ride in. I don't think it's silly. It's not trite or superstitious. It's Biblical. I don't even do this as some sort of symbolic, prophetic act—although I do believe there's a place for prophetic acts. Anything I own, I want cleansed through the blood of Jesus. Anything I'm temporarily renting, like a hotel room, I want it set apart—for at least the time I'm in it—for righteousness.
- Here's what I'm declaring by doing this: "Listen up earth! Just in case there's any confusion—I am a son of God. Creation, your wait is over, consider this son of God revealed! Now, be subdued and align with the Kingdom of God!"
- I want to encourage you right now to begin exercising your authority over the earth. Again, it's not silly. It's not superstitious. It's Biblical. In your home, in your business, at your children's school—announce to creation that a son or daughter of God is present. Then watch as the spiritual atmosphere shifts. The earth will begin responding to your righteousness. You will help it reach its purpose, and in so doing, it will help you reach your purpose.

THE CREATION ACCOUNT IN GENESIS

- We tend to separate ourselves from creation. We think there's us, then everything else. On one hand, we are very different than an oak tree, or a lake, or a fox. But we are similar in this respect: we were all created by the same breath of God.
- As I mentioned earlier, God did all the heavy lifting during the six days of creation. On that sixth day, He passed the torch to us in Genesis 1:28-30:
28 Then God blessed them, and God 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." 29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.
 - The key phrase there is subdue the earth. The Hebrew word for subdue used here is kabash. In this context it means: to take forceful control over, or enslave, that which is inferior, wild or untamed.
 - ◇ It's a very interesting word choice because it implies that the earth outside of the garden was potentially dangerous. Kabash doesn't mean prune, or water, or speak softly to; it means use the authority you have to take full control over.
 - ◇ God gave the privilege and power of subduing the earth to Adam and Eve on one condition: don't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

- Unfortunately they did that very thing. The authority to subdue the earth was revoked; it happened instantly. Adam and Eve were forced out of the garden and sent into the wild, unsubdued earth; a wild earth that no longer responded to them.
- Just as they had now become slaves to sin, they also became slaves to the earth. They now had to serve the Earth to receive the benefits of its fruit. Fruit that was once fruit on demand, now became the fruit of their labor.
- I believe we have an amazing opportunity to regain the type of relationship we had with the earth before sin. It won't be exactly the same because we're still part of a fallen world. But we can reveal ourselves to creation as a son and daughter of God and set it free from its bondage.
- Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross, and through salvation and a repentant lifestyle we are righteous before him. Because of this, the earth will respond to our righteousness – if we let it.

EXAMPLES

When we moved to New Hampshire, we moved into a house that had very little grass. There were no birds on the property; no animals scurrying about. It was actually quite strange. Here we were in the middle of the most wooded state in the United States, and our land—although still beautiful—seemed lifeless. We cut down two dozen dead trees in the first two years. Historically, every place my wife and family have lived, the Lord has impressed upon me a basic principle—turn your land into the Garden of Eden. So that is what I wanted to do at my home in New Hampshire. I could've spent a small fortune in landscaping to do this, but what I actually did was speak to the land. From the first day I took ownership, I walked the four corners of the property line consecrating it with oil and speaking the blessings of God over it. I said, "Land, we are the new owners. We have purchased you, therefore, you have the right to live, and so I command you to live." I said that because at that moment the land wasn't living. So we commanded the land to live. We spoke to the rest of creation in the area and commanded it to come, dwell on our land, and use the land as God had created it to be used. Over time, that's exactly what happened—falcons, turkeys, chipmunks, ground-hogs, deer, fox, and squirrel—all returned to our property. When we first arrived, we had none of this. But after announcing our presence and blessing the land, creation responded to us being there. We announced who we were and commanded the land to fulfill its purpose.

- I believe we have a right to command the earth, especially when we own it. We have paid a price in the natural and Jesus has paid a price in the spirit.
- There is also a secondary principle at play—and this is much more a spiritual principle than a natural one. The earth feels sin, and it has to be healed from it.

When my ministry was in New Hampshire we owned a piece of property we called the Pinnacle. It was called the Pinnacle because it was a mountain that was one of the highest points in the area. For at least 100 years it had been a place where the occult met and made sacrifices. The Pinnacle had become defiled, and the first thing we did when we took ownership was to cleanse the land of that defilement. We prayed, we worshiped, we took communion, we did everything we knew to restore God's blessing on that land. Even after we owned the land, the witches in the area tried to continue to hold their ceremonies at the top of that mountain. They would build their altars and we would tear them down and throw them down the mountain. We would put up our crosses and they would turn them upside down or destroy them. This went on for a year until eventually they just stopped coming. When I left New Hampshire, I turned the Pinnacle over to a church I planted, and today, the land is thriving. It's an amazing place of worship and the presence of God is unusually strong there—even today!

- When the righteous take possession of land and begin restoring it to its original purpose, we're not just turning a neutral force into a positive force; we're stopping the plans of the enemy in that geographic area. We're taking land in the natural and we're taking land in the spirit.

EXAMPLES WHERE THE EARTH PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN WHAT GOD WAS DOING

- The earth helped Abraham get to the promised land (explained in Matters of Earth Teaching).
- God used the prophets of the Old Testament to speak and prophesy to the land. Ezekiel 36:6-15 sheds a lot of light on our relationship with the earth:
6 "Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you (the Land of Israel) have borne the shame of the nations." 7 Therefore thus says the Lord God: "I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame. 8 But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. 9 For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. 10 I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11 I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. 12 Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children." 13 'Thus says the Lord God: "Because they say to you, 'You devour men and bereave your nation of children,' 14 therefore you shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore," says the Lord God. 15 "Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore," says the Lord God.'"

- The earth yields, it bears shame, it hears taunts, and bears the reproach of the unrighteous; and by not yielding its fruit – it can cause a nation to stumble. God had Ezekiel encourage the land that He was for them and that He would turn towards them, and the earth would be better than it was in the beginning.
- This prophecy is being fulfilled today in Israel. I've been to Israel dozens of times over the last 30 years and what's most apparent to me is that the earth is yielding itself to the Jewish parts of Israel just as God had Ezekiel command it. Truly, the desert is blossoming like a rose in Israel. The earth is not putting forth its branches and bearing its fruit in the Arab world. Bear in mind, same soil, same weather conditions, same mineral components, but different results. The earth has responded to the prophecy of Ezekiel.
- Here's how the Ezekiel prophecy plays out today in the earth: Those who have cursed God and don't believe in His Son are insulting the earth today just as they did in the days of Ezekiel. Just as in those days, God wants His children to be blessed by the land they dwell in.
- You've been grafted in. You've been made a son or daughter through the spirit of adoption. You can experience it right now; right where you are by announcing your presence as a son or daughter of God.

CONCLUSION

The Earth is longing to help you advance the Kingdom—it's eagerly waiting on you to carry out your role as a Son or daughter of God. It means God loved us so much that He kept creation waiting until our righteousness was restored at the Cross. Just as He watched His Son endure the insults and humiliation of wicked men, He has watched the earth endure the same insults of sin, bloodshed and injustice. The earth is ready to respond—it's ready to enter the battle with you.

You may be saying to yourself, "John Paul, I don't own land. I live in an apartment on the third floor and the closest I get to a garden is when I sweep up the dirt at my front door." Here's what I say to you—all of creation speaks of Him. All of creation will sing His praises. If you don't have mountains and valleys to prophesy to, prophesy to the four walls of your apartment. Tell them to forget the strife that happened before you moved in. Tell them they are set free of the sin they've been forced to witness and the profane words that have been spoken before you took possession. Tell the four walls of your apartment that they are now part of the Kingdom of God. Tell them to take notice that a son or daughter now lives here. Then move to every part of your home inside those four walls and declare the same as you consecrate it by touching the walls, doors, and windows with oil.

You can do the same thing at work; right there at your desk; in your vehicle. Do this over every part of creation you have authority over. You can even bless the public property your tax dollars go to maintain and create. Proclaim these things as you walk around your children's or grand-children's school. All of these actions advance the Kingdom and make your surroundings more like Heaven. You may never see a physical manifestation of that taking place, but you will feel and sense a shift in the spiritual atmosphere in those places.

I've watched it play out in my own life to the point that it's now become second nature. Remember, God has already done all of the heavy lifting: in the Garden, at the Cross, right now in your own home, He's saying: "I've shown you the pattern; I've given you the authority. Now, make it on earth as it is Heaven."