

Lesson 4 | September 26, 2021

Sin Mars Creation

Study Text

Genesis 3:17–19; Isaiah 24:5; Hosea 4:1–3; Romans 8:18–25; Colossians 1:15–20; 2 Peter 3:10–13

Central Truth

Human sinfulness defiles God's creation, but He will make it new again.

Key Verse: Reference

Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (KJV).

Through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will recognize that we live in a creation that has come under bondage from the consequences of the Fall.
- Students will develop an appreciation of God's mercy for His creation, which is subject to decay yet is given hope for redemption from sin.
- Students will live as people of hope who conduct themselves as those who have been redeemed.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: The creation completed by God was found to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). The first humans, Adam and Eve, were given responsibility to care for that “very good” creation. At the same time, humans were given free will to make a choice of obeying God or not obeying Him. Adam and Eve made a wrong choice, choosing rebellion over obedience, and that choice affected all of God's creation. **We all make life-changing decisions.**

Opening Activity—The Effects of Aging

Ask. What things can you think of that deteriorate with age? Examples may include our bodies, buildings, erosion of rocks and hills, etc.

Say: The natural forces of deterioration are a part of our world. We can probably think of many examples where the material world ages and deteriorates. Something similar, but all-encompassing, happened to our universe after the Fall when Adam sinned.

Creation itself was impacted in some way. This lesson explores what the Bible says about creation from this perspective, focusing especially on Romans 8. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews issued a sobering statement that should give us pause to ponder what we are doing with our lives. **“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27, KJV). It should sober us to remember that when sin came into the world, it brought the destructive forces of death. These forces affected all of creation, both living and non-living. Read the key verse in Colossians 1:20 to see God’s response to this problem of death and destruction.

[Col 1:20 KJV] 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven.

Part 1—Creation Defiled by Our Sin

Sin Impacts All Humanity

Hosea 4:1–3

[Hos 4:1-3 KJV] 1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because [there is] no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. 2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Say: When sin entered the world, its consequences fell upon all of humanity. As sinful human beings, incapable of living righteously on our own, **our best efforts at pleasing God fall far short of the standard required to exist in the presence of our holy God.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Human sinfulness defiles God’s creation. The concept of “defilement” is defined through the teachings of the Old Testament, specifically its instructions regarding temple worship. Something or someone who was “defiled” was not fit or qualified to serve or worship in the temple because the temple was holy. **Thus, those who were defiled had to cleanse themselves according to the instructions written in the Law if they were to be allowed again to serve or worship in the temple** (see Leviticus 11–15).

The apostle Paul made it clear that God’s judgment falls upon sinful humanity because **“everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard”**

(Romans 3:23, NLT). In the Old Testament the prophet Hosea was sent to pronounce judgment against the people of Israel (Hosea 1:4–5) because of their sin and rebellion against God. It is noteworthy that Hosea moved from denouncing the inhabitants of the land, i.e., the Israelites (4:1), for their numerous sins to a focus on the land itself, which was in mourning and languishing (4:3). It is something of a mystery as to what is fully meant by saying that the land had to suffer for the sins of people. It may be that God's people and their inheritance were inseparable from the covenant He made with them—a covenant that involved not only the people and nation, but also the land. When Israel saw devastation upon the land of Promise, they would know they were out of favor with God, because it is He who established the covenant (see Genesis 12:1–3; 15:4–6,18).

Discuss

? How widespread is sin in this world? Can anyone be regarded as righteous in the sight of God on the basis of their own goodness?

? When did Paul say sin entered the world? What also entered God's creation at the same time? Read Romans 5:12.

Resource Packet Item 1: What's Holy?

Distribute the work sheet and divide your class into small groups, assigning one Scripture passage to each group. Give them two to three minutes to read the passage and answer the questions, then ask at least one group for each passage to share their findings.

Sin's Impact Includes Physical Creation

Genesis 3:17–19; Isaiah 24:5

[Gen 3:17-19 KJV] 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.

[Isa 24:5 KJV] 5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

Say: Even the earth itself was defiled by the sin of Adam and Eve. The creation that God had described as “very good” was no longer the perfect surroundings for humanity. As Genesis 3:17–19 describes, God included the ground in the curse He pronounced when He confronted them about their sin. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God’s judgment of sin is not restricted to the moral or spiritual effects upon humanity. Rather the physical creation itself shares in the devastation. Isaiah again spoke to this in his denouncing of Israel: “The earth mourns and dries up, and the land wastes away and withers. Even the greatest people on earth waste away. The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted God’s instructions, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant” (Isaiah 24:4–5, NLT). While we sometimes are rightly concerned about the physical pollution of the earth, Isaiah here was concerned about something far more enduring: its moral pollution, which has come about through the grave sinfulness of the people. Scholars note that Isaiah may well have been referring to the covenant with Noah here, which of course involved the earth itself (see Genesis 9:16 and note the similar wording). The very face of the land is defiled, which speaks to a lack of regard for the value God has placed on the land, evidenced through this covenant.

We might better understand this as we look at Genesis, noting the curse that was brought through the sin of Adam (Genesis 3:17–19). **The ground itself would bear the effects of the fall of humanity: “The ground is cursed because of you” (verse 17, NLT). This statement stands in sad contrast to God’s earlier declaration that the physical world He created was good. In that good creation, God had described for them a life where provision was easily obtained. But as a result of sin, cultivation of the ground for food would require toil; humanity could no longer be sustained easily from the produce of the ground (Genesis 3:17). Indeed, the ground would bring forth thistles to choke the crops growing from that toil. And instead of provision coming with ease, now the ground would absorb the sweat of humanity’s brow as people strive to receive the basics for life. Commentators note that verses 18–19 provide an important parallel. Verse 18 describes the reversal of the state of the land because of the Fall—the land would no longer be as it was intended to be. Then, verse 19 describes a reversal in the human condition: While we were originally created from the dust and given the breath of life, now we would die and return to that dust. Truly, the Fall was catastrophic, as it impacted all of creation in a profound way.**

Discuss

? In what ways might you observe that the Fall has impacted all creation?

? How can Genesis 3 help you have a better perspective on life in this world, as well as the hope we have for everlasting life in the new creation?

Part 2—Creation Suffers and Travails

Creation's Painful Present

Romans 8:18–21

[Rom 8:18-21 KJV] 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected [the same] in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Say: The world, as it currently exists, is not even close to its original state in creation, described in the first two chapters of Genesis. **Satan has been allowed to run rampant throughout humanity, and even those who serve God face struggles, heartache, and a continual battle against temptation and sin. In Romans 8, Paul described the suffering of the earth and contrasted it with the hope we have for the future.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Romans 8:18 begins a favorite passage for many believers, **as it looks forward to a time when God's people will no longer have to endure the consequences that sin wrought upon the physical world. Indeed, when sin entered the world, it resulted not only in death but suffering, not merely for humans but for all creation.** Paul used the literary technique of "personification" to make a very important point: Even creation "longs for" deliverance from this corruption of sin. Note the verbs Paul used. Creation "is waiting eagerly" (verse 19, NLT). Creation has been "groaning as in the pains of childbirth" (verse 22, NLT; note that the reference to childbirth speaks to an anticipation of renewal and transformation). **Furthermore, creation was "subjected to God's curse" and will have "glorious freedom from death and decay," (verses 20–21, nlt).** Paul was describing a creation that was languishing under the painful conditions of sin's consequences. **Thus, creation is on a path of decay and eventual destruction, as will be studied in Lesson 6.** Note how easily Paul moved from sin's impact on physical creation to the conditions that exist for humanity because of the Fall: suffering under God's judgment of sin. **Paul noted that "believers groan" (verse 23), despite the fact that we have the Holy Spirit active in our lives. Adding to our pain is the fact that these conditions seem permanent to us in our present state. They are ongoing, "right up to the present time" (verse 22, NLT). We must keep in mind that these conditions have appeared as a result of the bondage from which we, along with all creation, long to be delivered (verses 21–23), but from which we cannot escape.**

Discuss

? If someone only has this world in its present condition as a source of hope and promise, how might that impact their lives? Read Ecclesiastes 1:2–9, noting how this passage can help answer the question.

? Why do you think that the writer of Ecclesiastes, in 1:2, described the condition of this present world as “vanity” (KJV) or “completely meaningless” (NLT)?

Creation Waits in Hope

Romans 8:22–25

[Rom 8:22-25 KJV] 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only [they], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, [to wit], the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, [then] do we with patience wait for [it].

Say: When it seems like our world is in chaos, and sin seems more prevalent than ever before, we can have hope. We are waiting for the second coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the restoration of all things. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Christians have good news: God’s redemption in and through Christ will involve the whole of His creation. In Romans 8:22–25, Paul informed believers that incomparable glory awaits all of God’s people who find themselves in the midst of painful suffering. God’s people are destined to reveal that glory (see verses 18–19), when they experience “glorious freedom from death and decay” (see verse 21, NLT). Paul was undoubtedly referring to the resurrection of believers at Christ’s second coming, a promise repeated throughout his Epistles and also affirmed in places like 1 John 3:1–2. Even now the believer has a “foretaste of future glory” through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (verse 23, NLT). While we groan under painful sufferings, we do so amid great hope (verses 24–25), knowing that an appointed day of deliverance is coming which will result in the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8 also relates that creation itself anxiously awaits this transformation because it too will experience a redemption or release from the bondage brought about by sin. At present, creation exists within a realm of futility as it continues on its irreversible course of decay. But Paul has reminded us that this condition was brought about by God himself, who subjected it “with eager hope” (verse 20, NLT). This indicates that the fulfillment of salvation for humanity at the end of time is linked to the destiny of creation. Both humanity and physical creation will share in

the glorious liberty and release from the conditions brought about by the curse of sin upon what God has created.

Discuss

? Give an example of a time when your hope for the future has helped with pain or loss.?

Resource Packet Item 2: Present Sufferings; Future Hope

Distribute the work sheet and allow time for students to respond to the questions individually or in groups. Discuss their responses as a class.

Part 3—A New World Is Coming Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of All Things

Colossians 1:15 – 18

[Col 1:15-18 KJV] 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence.

Say: As Christians, our most common concept of Jesus is very personal, as our Savior and best Friend. Yet, we must not lose sight of Him as the exalted Creator and Lord of all the earth as well. Because He is eternally existent, thus existing before all things, He is also above all things. It is important for us to remember His highly exalted place above all creation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

That person that gets on your last nerve. He/She was created by Him and for Him.

Beyond the glorious prospect of freedom from sin's bondage, creation shares the hope of a new creation. Every Christian is a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV), leaving behind the old things belonging to what Paul elsewhere called "this evil world in which we live" (Galatians 1:4, NLT). This new beginning for creation is brought about by Christ, "the firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15, KJV). The Greek term translated "firstborn" likely has a twofold meaning: Jesus existed before time began, and Jesus has exalted status over His creation. This, in turn, emphasizes the point that Jesus is not among His creation. He is, in fact, the Creator of everything (verse 16); therefore, He "is supreme over all creation" (NLT).

The exaltation of Christ is very much the focus of this passage. Jesus is, after all, the “visible image of the invisible God” (verse 15, NLT). In other words, when a person sees Christ, he or she sees God. Moreover, everything in creation owes its existence to Him. All things in heaven and earth were created through Him and for Him (verse 16). The terms Paul chose in verse 16 make clear that the extent of Christ’s creation is universal—nothing exists that does not exist by Him. He is also the One who sustains all that He creates (verse 17). He holds it all together. Christ does not create His creation only to abandon it, but sustains and maintains what He creates.

Lastly, verses 17–18 establish Christ’s sovereignty and lordship over all creation. **His existence before all creation reaffirms that He is not dependent on any part of creation. Quite the opposite, Christ is Lord over all creation, which is dependent on Him for its continued existence. Christ’s lordship extends over His body, the Church, which acknowledges Him as the resurrected Christ and “first in everything,” the preeminent Lord (verse 18, NLT). As such His sovereignty is unparalleled. He has supremacy over everything. There is perhaps no clearer affirmation of Jesus’ deity—and therefore no stronger reminder of the confidence we can have in Him.**

Discuss

? What does it mean to have full confidence in Jesus, and why can that confidence exist without reservation?

? How does Christ’s supremacy over “all things,” including evil spiritual powers and demons give us hope for the future?

Reconciler of All Things

Colossians 1:19–20; 2 Peter 3:10–13

[Col 1:19-20 KJV] 19 For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven.

[2Pe 3:10-13 KJV] 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 [Seeing] then [that] all these things shall be dissolved, what manner [of persons] ought ye to be in [all] holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens

being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Say: This lesson describes a very sad truth: Adam’s sin marred all of creation. However, God had a plan to redeem that creation. His Son, Jesus Christ, came to pay that price of redemption bringing into the world the gift of reconciliation to God, and therefore He gives us hope of a new creation at the end of time. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Colossians 1:19–20 instructs us that Jesus is the reconciler of creation to its Creator. Note that there is a close link between verses 19 and 20. **Just as God is pleased that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, God is pleased that Christ reconciles creation unto himself. That term “reconcile” refers to something turning from an enemy to a friend.** Of course, we normally think of God reconciling lost sinners unto himself, but, **whether they are visible or invisible Paul expands upon this definition to include all of creation, things both in heaven and on earth.** In essence, this refers to how the disorder that has gripped creation since the Fall will be restored to a state of perfect harmony, as God desires.

The apostle Peter also described this culmination of restoration. In 2 Peter 3:10–13, the apostle described “the Day of the Lord.” **In Scripture, the phrase “Day of the Lord” is often associated with judgment and calamity. We ought not be surprised, then, by Peter’s description of a cosmic upheaval and destruction of creation (2 Peter 3:10–11a) followed by the making of “a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (verse 13, KJV).** For us today, this is an important truth—but it is also a very important practical reality, as found in Peter’s question: **“Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live?”** (Verse 11, NLT).

Discuss

? How would you answer Peter’s question in verse 11?

? Why do you think God will destroy this present world “with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”?

Resource Packet Item 3: What About the Environment?

Distribute the case study and divide your class into small groups to respond. Then discuss their answers as a class.

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: The life we live here on earth is marked by death and destruction, a fact that might make us despair if not for Scripture’s clear testimony of hope (Romans 8:20). As

believers, our lives should be marked by hope. No matter how bleak things look today, we know that God has a glorious plan for us, both today and in eternity.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- As you meet people who live under circumstances that reflect a fallen, sin-cursed world, take time to offer them hope through word and deed.
- Treat God's creation in a way that reflects the trust we were given as stewards of creation.
- Look for God's handiwork in the world around you, including scientific discoveries.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Warning of Sin's Consequence.
Genesis 2:15–17

[Gen 2:15-17 KJV] 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Tuesday:

God's Judgment on Wickedness.
Genesis 6:5–13

[Gen 6:5-13 KJV] 5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9 These [are] the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man [and] perfect in his generations, [and] Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. 13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Wednesday:

Sinful Actions Confessed.
Psalm 51:1–10

[Psa 51:1-10 KJV] 1 [[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.]] Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin [is] ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done [this] evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, [and] be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden [part] thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; [that] the bones [which] thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Thursday:

The Plan To Redeem.
John 1:1–12

[Jhn 1:1-12 KJV] 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name [was] John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all [men] through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but [was sent] to bear witness of that Light. 9 [That] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:

Friday:

All People Sin.
Romans 3:10–18

[Rom 3:10-18 KJV] 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips: 14 Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet [are] swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery [are] in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Saturday:

Examples of Sin's Consequences.
Hebrews 6:4–9

[Heb 6:4-9 KJV] 4 For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [him] to an open shame. 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers [is] rejected, and [is] nigh unto cursing; whose end [is] to be burned. 9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.