

Effects of the Fall on the Physical Creation: A Biblical Analysis

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Abstract

In the metanarrative of Scripture, the entrance of sin into creation at the Fall is a pivotal event with cosmic implications. Thus, in seeking to interpret the natural world through the lens of Scripture, a correct understanding of the Fall and its effects on the physical creation is essential. Here we compile a review of the scriptural passages which describe these effects, with the goal of providing a concise and rigorous definition of the same. The relevant descriptive scriptural passages are assembled in four categories. Firstly, descriptive of creation in its original, pre-Fall state, highlighting the distinctions between that state and its present state. Secondly, descriptive of the Fall and subsequent Curse, focusing on the third chapter of Genesis. Thirdly, descriptive of creation in its present, post-Fall state, both in the Old and New Testaments. Fourthly, descriptive of the coming restoration of creation, understanding that creation will be restored to something akin to its original state. A definition of the effects of the Fall on the physical creation should include human death, predation (if not all animal death) at least in terrestrial and avian animals, physiological and behavioral changes in both plants and living creatures, and of the entire created order corruption.

Keywords: Fall, curse, death, predation, Genesis.

Introduction

Our understanding of the effects of the Fall is of obvious importance in the dialogue between old-earth and young-earth creationists, especially concerning the problem of natural evil (Stambaugh 2008, 373; Wise 2017). However, this discussion is also critical to the development of scientific frameworks within young-earth creationism, as it affects every major field of scientific inquiry. In biology, the problem of natural evil is especially acute (Wood 2013; e.g. Ingle 2015; Wilson 2004); in geology, we wonder to what extent catastrophe and geologic processes may have been active, before and after the Fall (Coulson 2018, 384), and how “very good” was expressed geologically (Wilson and Locke 2018, 6–7); astronomical phenomena related to stellar aging are variously interpreted in relation to the Fall (Burgess 2002, 26–28; Lisle 2009); even the laws of physics have been argued to have undergone modification at this event (discussed in Faulkner 2013; Hill 2001).

This discussion must take into account the biblical description of the Curse as given in Genesis 3:14–19, as well as other scriptural allusions to the effects of sin and its effects on the created order. While a central component here is the issue of death and its entry into the world, most creationists (old-earth or young-earth) understand the Curse to carry broader implications (e.g., Keller 2008, 170). In some cases, arguments that a specific natural phenomenon is particular to the post-Fall world, versus part of the created order, are rather subjective (Faulkner 2013). In contrast, one (old-earth creationist) author has recently argued that the Fall had no direct effects at all on the non-human creation (Garvey 2019).

Our purpose in this study then is twofold: to demonstrate and affirm the biblical teaching that the physical, non-human creation was indeed affected by the Fall of mankind, and to develop a description that clearly and concisely identifies those effects that are directly stated in Scripture.

Definitions

In this analysis we will be using two terms that deserve defining: the Curse, and the Fall:

The Curse refers to the trifold decrees from God in Genesis 3:14–19, establishing specific punishments in response to the act of Adam’s rebellion in the garden of Eden.

The Fall (more completely, “The Fall of Man”) is used according to the definition found in *Easton’s Dictionary of the Bible*: “The revolt of our first parents from God, and the consequent sin and misery in which they and all their posterity were involved.” The term is broader than the Curse, encompassing both the act of Adam’s rebellion and God’s ensuing judgment in the form of the Curse.

Methods

Our approach in this analysis will be to survey the scriptural data that are relevant to describing the effects of the Fall, and then to generate a description of those effects that is consistent with and warranted by that data.

The steps in our approach will be as follows:

1. Define general **categories of scriptural data**. We have identified four categories as especially relevant to the topic at hand, which are described below:

- A. *The Pre-Fall World*: Descriptions of features and phenomena of the creation as it functioned prior to the Fall.
- B. *The Instatement of the Curse*: Alterations in the original creation, pronounced by God as judgment for Adam's sin.
- C. *Effects of the Fall*: Biblical data regarding the effects of the Fall upon the natural world, from both the Old and New Testaments.
- D. *Future Restoration*: The Bible indicates that there will be a future redemption of the creation, which will reflect its original condition. Eschatological passages referring to this future redemption will be examined for further clues regarding the state of the world before the Fall.

2. Identify **passages of Scripture** that speak, directly or implicitly, to the above categories. A text may appear in multiple categories.

3. Identify one or more particular **consequences** of the Fall that can be understood, either directly or as an immediate inference, from each passage.

4. Based on the collective consequences drawn from this study, we will create a **definition** of the effects of the Fall on the physical creation.

As stated above, we have limited our analysis to those consequences of the Fall that can be derived either from direct statements in the text, or those that can be established by immediate inference. We have intentionally avoided including passages that may cast light on our topic through more indirect lines of reasoning (for example, Deuteronomy 28:15–46, which speaks of aspects of creation being used by God as means of judgment or cursing; also Psalm 104:10–32, which extols various aspects of creation, but in a post-Fall setting). Our reasoning is thus: it is necessary to first establish the consequences of the Fall that are directly stated in the text, before we can correctly interpret the biblical data that “post-dates” the Fall, with regard to the characteristics of the initial (pre-Fall) creation. The clear must be properly understood before the unclear can be properly interpreted.

The selection criteria for each of these categories is necessarily varied. The criteria for each category, together with the texts selected, are summarized below.

1. *The Pre-Fall World*: Primarily descriptive passages from the creation account referencing the newly created world and the Garden of Eden. Secondly, references to Eden found elsewhere in Scripture. Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 14–15, 16–18, 21–22, 25, 28–30, 31; Genesis 2:8–15; Genesis 3:8–9; Genesis 13:10; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:34–35; Joel 2:3
2. *The Instatement of the Curse*: The trifold decrees of God's response to Adam's sin, and the ensuing expulsion of mankind from Eden. Genesis 3:14–19, 22–24
3. *Effects of the Fall*: From the Old Testament: Passages describing conditions on earth during the antediluvian era, offering a contrast between the original created state and the creation immediately following the Fall. From the New Testament: Passages referencing the effects of the Fall upon the physical creation. Genesis 6:11–12; Romans 5:12, 18; 8:18–23; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 26
4. *Future Restoration*: Eschatological passages describing the fate and future conditions of earth. Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:17, 25; Acts 3:21; Romans 8:18–23; Colossians 1:15–20; 2 Peter 3:10–13; Revelation 21:1–5; Revelation 22:3

Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

Limitations

Obviously, some interpretational bias will be unavoidable in this process, both in the selection of texts and the particular observations made from them. However, a sincere effort has been made not to bring any particular creation model or assumption to any of these texts, and to be as thorough as possible in examining relevant aspects of each passage to the topic at hand. The authors' hope is that this analysis might provide a resource for future creationist research and the building of biblically based models, by allowing the Scripture to “speak for itself” to the best of our ability.¹

The Pre-Fall World

The biblical account of the world prior to the Fall is relatively brief and omits many details. As a result, there are numerous hypothetical scenarios that simply may not be answered from the text. Nevertheless, Genesis 1–2 contains a number of

¹ This analysis is necessarily limited in scope, and there are related considerations that deserve a detailed study of their own, and which are not addressed in this analysis. In particular we would like to draw attention to the following topics:

1. The Character of God and a “Very Good” Creation: The initial created state is described as being “very good” from the perspective of God. An understanding of the meaning of “very good” should be developed from a study of God's interaction with, and declarations regarding, the physical creation, across the total corpus of Scripture.
2. The Levitical Sacrificial System: Animal death was a key element of the Israelite religious system. Perhaps the use of animal death in the context of atonement and reconciliation might indicate a connection between man's sin and the death of animals, in addition to humans (Wise 2002, 161–162).
3. A Biblical Definition of Natural Evil: Natural evil is generally accepted by young-earth creationists as being the result of the Fall; however a biblical definition of this term has not been compiled to the knowledge of the authors.

statements regarding the state of creation at the beginning and provides basis for some inferences as to the operation of that “very good” world.

The Creation Week

With the exception of Day 2, each day of the Creation Week is concluded with a statement that God “saw” that what He had made was good.

- Light (Genesis 1:4)
- Land and seas (Genesis 1:10)
- Vegetation (Genesis 1:12)
- Stars and celestial bodies (Genesis 1:16–18)
- Marine animals (Genesis 1:21)
- Flying animals (Genesis 1:21)
- Terrestrial animals (Genesis 1:25)

As God reviews the completed creation upon the sixth day, He emphatically declares the entirety of His works as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). This would implicitly include such things as “the expanse” (Genesis 1:6–8) and mankind (Genesis 1:26–27), which are not specifically called out as “good” in the creation account.

The meaning of “good” in the context of God’s initial creation is not without controversy among young-earth creationists (Anderson 2013). The Hebrew adjective *tob* is a very broad word that includes the ideas of moral goodness (Genesis 2:17; Psalm 37:27), fruitfulness (Genesis 41:22), abundance (Judges 8:32), as well as pleasing in an aesthetic sense (Esther 1:11). In the context of Genesis 1:31, all of the above meanings would seem appropriate in God’s assessment of His own handiwork.

However, it seems unwarranted to interpret the goodness of the original creation as requiring a form of rigid or mathematical perfection as some have argued (e.g. Williams 1966, 23–24; Wilson and Locke 2018). This sense does not come from any biblical usage of *tob*, while there are in fact other, unrelated Hebrew words that might correspond more closely with our abstract concept of “perfection” (which itself may borrow more from Greek idealism than Scripture [Faulkner 2014, 15; Vlach n.d.]), such as *tāmīym* (sometimes translated “blameless”; e.g. Genesis 6:9; 17:1; Psalm 18:30). But this is not the term that God used in Genesis 1.

Thus, it may be reasonable to assume that there was room for variety in form and precision even in the “very good” creation, and that not every structure or creature was exactly “perfect” according to our contemporary understanding (Wise 2014). Ultimately, any standard of perfection that is not rooted in Scripture is vulnerable to the charge of subjectivity (Garvey 2019, xviii) as what strikes

one observer as “perfect” may not comport with the evaluation of another observer (Faulkner 2013, 406). Instead, we should affirm that the original “very good” creation was perfect in accordance with God’s own good character (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18), and perfect in regard to fulfilling each entity’s God-designed function—i.e., that everything worked as God had designed it to work. To determine exactly what this “very good” state would have looked like will require a holistic approach using both the data of Scripture (to determine exactly what are the “effects of sin” as pertaining to the natural world) and science (to identify the ways in which specific biological and ecological systems were affected by those effects). It is, in fact, this very question that is the impetus of this present study. It is only with a robust and thoroughly biblical definition of the effects of the Fall that we can hope to “look back” into the pre-Fall world and objectively identify the contrasts and continuities between that world and our own.

The World at Creation

As the Genesis narrative shifts from the Creation Week to focus on the newly made earth, we can draw several more clues as to conditions and operation of the world immediately upon creation.

Genesis 1:21–22

So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind... And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28

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.”

From these passages we can affirm that reproductive activity was present from the very start of creation, and that God’s intention was for the original population of animals and of humans to reproduce and establish themselves across the earth. It is worthwhile to note that there is no requirement to understand this command as an open-ended mandate to reproduce (and, in the absence of death, ultimately lead to overpopulation of the planet). In fact, the command “fill the earth” seems to imply that, at some future point, the earth would have been

² It is interesting to compare Genesis 1:28 with God’s statement regarding the animal kingdom following the Flood in Genesis 8:17, which uses the same phrasing of “be fruitful and multiply”, but omits the phrase “fill the earth”. Perhaps this omission is indicative of post-Fall animal mortality and the fact that the earth will not be “filled” as originally intended in Genesis. As a counterpoint, however, it should be noted that the phrase “fill the earth” is used in reference to mankind in Genesis 9:1.

“filled”, and reproduction on earth would come to an end (Gurney 2004, 74; Wise 2002, 163–164).²

In addition to reproduction, mankind is also given a dual mandate to “subdue [the earth], and to “have dominion” over the animal kingdom. The Hebrew verb *kabash* (“subdue”) is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to refer to conquering or enslaving an enemy people, as well as to invasion (Numbers 32:22; Joshua 18:1). However, the context of this passage does not present the earth as an active adversary of mankind, but rather as an undeveloped yet fruitful environment intended for human flourishing. In this context, we submit that this term speaks to an act of effort on the part of Adam to put the earth “to work” for the benefit of mankind, not in an exploitive sense but in a productive one, as noted by the editors of the New English Translation Bible:

None of these nuances adequately meets the demands of this context, for humankind is not viewed as having an adversarial relationship with the world. The general meaning of the verb appears to be ‘to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.’

The verb *radah* (“have dominion”) is often a royal term in the Old Testament, used both of human kings (1 Kings 4:24) and of God (Psalm 110:2). This seems to reflect the status of man as bearing the “image of God” within the created order, as mentioned only two verses prior. The context of these statements (the creation and commissioning of mankind) also indicates that it is the role and status of man that is in view, rather than a characteristic of the creation.

It is not our purpose to thoroughly exegete and define either the meaning of these Hebrew words or the broader theology regarding the “dominion mandate”, as these have been discussed and debated in detail elsewhere (e.g., Isaacs 2013 and discussion). For our purposes, it is sufficient to establish that man was given a divinely defined role over, and relationship to, the animal kingdom and indeed, the entire creation.

Genesis 1:29–30

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. 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.

While some proponents of old-earth creationism have argued otherwise (Garvey 2019, 30–34; Kidner 1967; Snoke 2006, 64–68), the most straightforward

interpretation of this passage seems to be that God originally intended for mankind and animals to have vegetarian diets (Matthews 1996, notes on Genesis 1:29–30; Stambaugh 1991). Keil and Delitzsch summarize this interpretation:

From this it follows, that, according to the creative will of God, men were not to slaughter animals for food, nor were animals to prey upon one another; consequently, that the fact which now prevails universally in nature and the order of the world, the violent and often painful destruction of life, is not a primary law of nature, nor a divine institution founded in the creation itself, but entered the world along with death at the fall of man, and became a necessity of nature through the curse of sin (Keil and Delitzsch 1857, 65).

The fact that this herbivorous diet was universal across the terrestrial animal kingdom is emphasized by the enumeration of categories of animals to which plants were to be food.³ As marine animals are not mentioned, their diet cannot be strictly determined from the text (Berndt 2003).

Mankind’s vegetarian diet (at least with Noah and his family) apparently survived the Fall itself, as it is not until Genesis 9:3 that God specifically allowed the consumption of animals by man. No such indication is provided by the text as to when animals deviated from their original diet, though various authors have agreed that this most likely happened at the Fall or sometime afterwards as a result (Mortenson 2012; Stambaugh 1991).

The references to the dietary input of man and animal indicate that intake and digestion of food were present from the initial creation (Faulkner 2013, 405). This would appear to require that the Second Law of Thermodynamics was in effect, which can also be said of the energy flow from the sun to the earth, in fulfilling the function of giving light upon the earth (Faulkner 2017, 117). The extent to which the Second Law was in effect before the Fall has been disputed by some creationists (Anderson 2013; Jones 2016; Morris 1963, 58; Williams 1969, 144). However, there is no clear biblical evidence that at any point since the creation the physical mechanisms of energy production and consumption were altered to their present operation. So far as the biblical text is concerned, man and animal ate their food before and after the Fall in the same manner, though the kind of food and manners of obtaining it were affected by the Curse of Genesis 3. This would suggest that the laws of thermodynamics were in fact part of the original creation, and yet without the inevitable destructivity

³ An objection to this viewpoint is that the eating of plants necessitates the “death” of those plants, and that therefore the death of prey animals prior to the Fall is consistent with Genesis. This argument has been answered numerous times (for example, see: Stambaugh 1992). It should be noted that the text under consideration makes no mention of “death” as a factor and specifies very clearly that plants were intended to be the food source for (at minimum) all terrestrial and avian animals, as well as man. See also Kennard 2008.

that we experience today. To what degree the Second Law was in effect, or whether an additional mechanism was in place to replenish what was lost to entropy, appears undeterminable from the biblical text alone.⁴

The Garden in Eden

The Garden in Eden, according to the creation account, was intended as an initial habitat for mankind. Some old-earth proponents have portrayed the Garden as a sort of “haven” from a world that was otherwise just as hazardous as the world of today (Garvey 2019, 52–58; Snoke 2006, 54–55). However, as we will see, there is nothing in the description of the Garden to suggest that it was fundamentally different from the rest of the “very good” creation, other than in being specially arranged to accommodate and occupy the first humans and to test their obedience. In fact, the major natural features of the Garden (trees, water, and mineral deposits) all fall into categories that were created during the previous five days of the Creation Week.

Genesis 2:8–15

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

The Garden was made as a habitat for man, the primary purpose of which was to provide an occupation for man (“tend and keep it”), rather than as a place of refuge from the “outside”. It is clear that the Garden was also designed to provide for man’s need of food, and the appointment of a gardener implies a level of agricultural development as well as fertility. The Garden seems to have been designed to appeal to man’s aesthetic senses as well, with trees

selected both to provide food and to be “pleasant to the sight” for man.

As stated above, the Garden clearly provided for mankind’s need for food, water, and a worthy occupation. But there is no indication that the garden was itself fundamentally different from the “outside”, other than in making these provisions for mankind close at hand for the first human beings. The only exception of course would be the placing of the two trees—of Knowledge and of Life—exclusively within the Garden.

The Garden of Eden is only referenced in passing outside of Genesis 2–4, and while these passages provide little additional information on the character or features of the Garden, they do emphasize that a defining characteristic of the Garden was its *fertility*, being well watered and fruitful.⁵

Genesis 13:10

And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

Ezekiel 36:34–35

The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.”

Joel 2:3

The land is like the Garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Surely nothing shall escape them.

Notice that in the last two passages, the key feature of the Garden is that of being tilled (and by implication, fruitful), and that it is contrasted against “desolate” or “wasted” land under judgment at the time of Ezekiel and Joel. Again we find nothing to suggest that the Garden was remembered as a “haven” or place of refuge, but rather as a place of fertility and provision.

Isaiah 51:3

For the LORD will comfort Zion,
He will comfort all her waste places;
He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;

⁴ It has been suggested (Lisle 2009) that there was a “restorative counterpart” to the Second Law to prevent net decay of the universe, and that this process was withdrawn at the time of the Fall. If so, this could be considered as a change in physical law at the Curse; however, this is speculative and not directly derived from the biblical text.

⁵ It is not within the scope of our study to address the subject of the place names in Genesis 2, and their correspondence to modern (or early post-Flood) locations. Discussion on this can be found in Snelling 2009, 269, and Kulikovskiy 2009, 190.

Joy and gladness will be found in it,
Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

While thematically similar to the previous passages, this one is notable in that the entire geographic region of “Eden” (as opposed to merely the Garden within it; see Genesis 2:8) is portrayed as the antithesis of “waste places” (Kulikovsky 2009, 187).

Immanence of God to the Creation

After describing the events of Creation Week, the scriptural account continues almost immediately to the events leading up to the Fall. There is very little biblical data on God’s interactions with Adam and the creation during that time. However, many interpreters have inferred that there was such interaction (Jamieson 1871, notes on Genesis 3:6–9, Matthews 1996, notes on Genesis 3:8), based upon the confrontation immediately following Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:8–9

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

From this encounter we can infer that God was present and accessible to man before the Fall, within the Garden of Eden. We can only speculate as to what the nature of these interactions and conversations might have been, but it seems reasonable to conclude that God intended to remain immanent to the creation until the time of the Fall.

God’s particular presence with man in Eden is also emphasized by the Tree of Life, a point we will return to later.

The Instatement of the Curse

The account of the Fall of man and the Curse are both detailed in Genesis 3. We will deal with this passage independently, while other biblical references to this event will be reviewed in the subsequent sections.

To the serpent

Genesis 3:14–15

So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly

you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

The initial statement of the Curse is delivered directly to the serpent, for its role in the deception of Eve. While it is agreed by most interpreters that Satan himself is the target of the curse (e.g, Gray 1915, 16), there are elements that clearly apply to the physical creature itself, as Matthew Henry comments:

The sentence passed upon the tempter may be considered as lighting upon the serpent, the brute-creature which Satan made use of which was, as the rest, made for the service of man, but was now abused to his hurt. (Henry 1706, notes on Genesis 3:14–15)

In the opening clauses of verse 14, the serpent is declared to be “cursed more than all cattle” and “more than every beast of the field.” The phrase “more than... all” renders the Hebrew preposition *min* (“from”, “among”, “above”, etc), joined with the noun *kôl* (“all”, “every”). While it is possible to understand this phrase to mean “apart from all” or “separate from all” other creatures (Faulkner 2016, 226–227; Young 1964, 97), *min-kôl* can also be used in a comparative sense (“above all”, or “more than all”), as seen in Genesis 37:3–4 (Israel loved Joseph “more than” his brothers) and Numbers 12:3 (“Moses was very meek, above all... men”). This comparative rendering would suggest that both the serpent and “all cattle” have been cursed, but the serpent to an even greater degree (Baldwin 2007; Kulikovsky 2009, 215). This is the sense used by numerous English translations (including the NET, NKJV, NASB, HCSB, NIV and others), which renders the phrase “above all” or “more than.” This would also be consistent with the usage of the preposition in Genesis 3:1 (“Now the serpent was *more* cunning *than* any beast...”), where the comparative sense is more consistent both with Scripture and experience.⁶

Therefore, by implication, this passage indicates that *all* cattle and beasts of the earth were placed under the curse, but to a lesser degree than the serpent.⁷

The first physical effect of the serpent’s curse is given at the end of verse 14: “on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life”. While it is probably reading too much into the text to say that the serpent was a legged creature prior to the curse, it is apparent that the animal was demoted to

⁶ Some interpreters have argued that Genesis 3:1 is also using a separative sense; however, it seems absurd to argue that the Bible regards the serpent as the only “cunning” animal in all of creation. (As an example, Proverbs 30:24–28 describes the ant, rock badgers, locusts, and spider as “exceeding wise.” While this is not the same Hebrew word used to describe the serpent in Genesis 3:1, it is still ascribing a level of “cleverness” to animals other than the serpent and seems incongruous with a view that serpents alone are “cunning” in a biblical sense.)

⁷ We are indebted to Dr. Terry Mortenson for his helpful discussion of this passage via personal communication.

a “lower” status within creation, and given a new set of physical behaviors compared to its original created role. Modern snakes of course are characterized by “going on the belly”, and the “tasting” sense of many snakes could well be described as “eating dust” (Wieland 1988). In Micah 7:17, the phrase “lick[ing] the dust like a serpent” is used as an analogy to humbled Gentile nations, underscoring this behavior as a physical distinctive of the animal, and not merely a metaphor.

While specific changes in the physical form of the serpent is not determinable from this text, it seems apparent that at least some measure of physiological and behavioral change was decreed upon the animal as a result of its role in the temptation and Fall of man (Hodge 2010a).

The final message delivered to the serpent is that of its relationship with the “image of God”—from this point on, there would be “enmity between you and the woman” and the woman’s seed. Biblical interpreters are in agreement that the ultimate meaning of this portion of the curse is a foreshadowing of the coming “Seed” who would defeat Satan and his plans, and effect the redemption of the fallen human race (Constable 2011, notes on Genesis 3:14–15). However, this ultimate meaning does not exclude the obvious short-term application of “enmity” between serpents and mankind: namely, attacks against the lower extremities of humans, and overwhelming force delivered by humans to the heads of serpents (Henry 1706, notes on Genesis 3:14–15)! Thus, this passage marks the first biblical reference to conflict between mankind and the animal kingdom, and directly links it with the Fall.

To the woman Genesis 3:16

To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

It is widely agreed that the “sorrow and conception” spoken of in the passage are “linked” in a grammatical construction known as a hendiadys (Constable 2011, notes on Genesis 3:16), where the two nouns are linked to describe a single, more complex term. The Hebrew noun *hêrôn* (“conception”) appears to refer to the entire process of pregnancy to childbirth (and perhaps even beyond), as described by the editors of the New English Translation:

“Conception”...must be figurative here since there is no pain in conception; it is a synecdoche [a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa], representing the entire process of childbirth and child rearing from the very start.

From the statement “I will greatly multiply...”,

we can directly infer that “sorrow and conception” was already present, but in a lesser form, in the original creation. To what degree this “sorrow” (also translated “toil” or “labor”, c.f. Genesis 5:29) was manifested prior to the Curse is unclear, and likely unknowable as there is no biblical evidence that Eve ever experienced the process of childbirth prior to the Fall. Nonetheless, we can affirm that, in contrast the curse as given to the serpent and to man (where God introduces novel elements, e.g. “on your belly you shall go” and “thorns and thistles [the ground] shall bring forth”), to the woman God here decrees an *increase* of an already present reality: an intensifying (evidently to an high degree, “greatly”) of the labor pains (see following discussion) of childbirth.

The following clause introduces, at least in most English translations, the first instance of the word “pain” in the Bible, again linked to childbearing. This translation has led to some confusion however, as the Hebrew noun *‘eseh* is in fact taken from the same root (*‘ashab*) as the noun *‘ishâhôn* (tr. “sorrow”) in the preceding line. The suffix *-ôn* is described by the Hebrew Aramiac Lexicon of the Old Testament (Kohler and Baumgartner 2001, entry on “(b)âshâbon”) as “indicat[ing] the duration of the condition,” and contextually there seems to be no reason not to understand both words as referring to the same concept of pain in childbirth. It should be noted that the meaning of *‘eseh* (“pain”) is not limited to physical sensations, but can include emotional pain as well (c.f. Proverbs 10:22), and is often linked with the idea of laboring (e.g., Proverbs 14:23; Psalm 127:2).

Contra some young-earth interpreters (e.g. Hodge 2010b), the multiplication of “sorrow” (*‘ishâhôn*) and “pain” (*‘eseh*) spoken of in this verse seem to indicate that both were (at least potentially) experienced even in the original creation, though to a much lesser extent than today. The expression “greatly multiply” (*harbâ ‘arbe*—where both words are forms of the root *râbâ*) is used only two other times in the Old Testament, and in both cases it speaks of the “multiplication” of offspring from an extant child (Genesis 16:10; 22:17). That some form of pain reception was present in the original creation should not be dismissed as incongruous with the “very good” state of creation prior to the Fall. While pain today is correctly understood as a negative experience, our ability to perceive pain and discomfort is closely linked to the entire human sensory system, including our perception of hunger, or thirst (as well as the pleasure of relieving those “painful” feelings) (Lightner 2016). Further analysis of both the biblical data as well as the biological and neurological aspects of pain reception may help to better distinguish between the kind and degree of pain that may have been experienced prior to the Fall, and that which we experience in the present.

The final clause of verse 16 has been the subject of much discussion and debate, in particular as to the meaning of the words “desire” (*tešûqâ*), and “rule” (*mâšal*). Some interpreters have argued that this clause is not part of the Curse at all, but rather a descriptive statement that Eve would continue to experience desire and longing for her husband, and that the marriage institution (and mankind’s mandate to reproduce) would persist despite the Fall (Busenitz 1986). Contrariwise, it has been argued, based on the striking parallel to God’s warning to Cain in Genesis 4:7, that “desire” in this context carries the idea of a desire that is *contrary* to her husband, and speaks of the beginning of marital struggle in maintaining the created order within the marriage relationship (Foh 1975; Smith 2012).

We agree with the latter viewpoint, for multiple reasons. The parallel wording in Genesis 4:7, while it must be taken with caution due to the difference in context, nonetheless is clearly intentional and even suggests that God was calling Cain’s attention back to His statement from Genesis 3:16. Additionally, while it has been argued that, were this a proclamation of marital disharmony, it should primarily concern the man (Busenitz 1986, 207), the biblical account clearly links the creation of woman with the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:23–24), and thus the deleterious effects of sin upon this relationship are also addressed to the woman (similarly, as the creation of man was synonymous with the beginning of human life (Genesis 2:7), it is man who is addressed with the reality of death, though it would obviously affect both sexes equally).⁸

For the purposes of this analysis, we can include marital disharmony, and thus, disharmony among human beings, as a direct result of the Fall.⁹

To the Man

Genesis 3:17–19

Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out

of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

The scope of the Curse broadens dramatically in God’s statements to Adam. The opening decree, “cursed is the ground,” is particularly significant, as it expands the scope of the judgment beyond the animal kingdom and man to include the very ground on which man and animal were dependent for food and habitat. While man’s original task upon creation was to tend and keep the garden, now his work would be made more difficult, whilst also becoming less productive. The introduction of “thorns and thistles” appears to be a direct consequence of this curse of the ground, and thus marks the second major description of a change to the natural world as a result of the curse (the first instance being the curse upon the serpent and the other animals in verses 14–15).

The statement “for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” is a clear allusion to the creation of man in Genesis 2:7, and indicates to Adam that his death, while inevitable, would not be immediate but rather the culmination of a process in which his body would revert to the dust from which he was formed. The clause is, at a minimum, a clear description of physical death, of which Adam was warned in Genesis 2:17. An effort could be made to interpret this phrase in Genesis 3:19 as referring to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, or the decay of physical entities. However, it is doubtful that such an interpretation is supported by the context. For the purposes of this analysis, we will take the position that it is the physical death of Adam, and mankind by extension (c.f. 1 Cor. 15:22), that is being decreed.

Expulsion from Garden

Genesis 3:22–24

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

The reason given for the expulsion from Eden is to cut off man’s access to the Tree of Life, indicating that this tree remained in the Garden, and would

⁸ It should also be noted that the structure of the Curse and the statements made to both the man and the women seem remarkably concordant to their respective roles within the creation: the woman, as the “mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20), would now experience increased pain in childbirth; as the “helper” to the man, she would now experience frustration and an inclination to usurp his headship. While the man, tasked originally with “tending the garden” in an idyllic and fruitful setting, would now find his work as arduous as it is necessary to maintain his life; though created from dust as a “living being”, he would now inevitably descend back into the “dust” in death.

⁹ While in the opinion of the authors, this point can be legitimately derived from Genesis 3:16 as a primary reference, it can also be derived from the account of Cain and Abel’s rivalry (Genesis 4:1–8), as well as the descent of mankind into violence (Genesis 6:11). Thus, it is not necessary to maintain a particular interpretation of Genesis 3:16 to draw this conclusion.

have, if accessible, enabled man to circumvent the consequences of the Curse.

This apparent dependence on the Tree of Life to stave off death has led some interpreters (including some young-earth creationists) to conclude that the eating from the fruit of this tree was necessary even *prior* to the Fall, in order for life to persist (e.g., Kulikovsky 2009, 193). Logically, this means that a failure to eat from the Tree of Life would have resulted in death, even without taking from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge.

However, there are several problems with this view. While both trees are mentioned as being “planted” in the Garden, and the Tree of Life would implicitly be included among “every tree” from which Adam and Eve could have eaten, God only gave instructions to *not* eat from the Tree of Knowledge, for to do so would result in death. It would seem to be of at least equal (if not greater) importance for Adam and Eve to know they must also eat from the Tree of Life, and that the failure to do so would also result in death (Beall 2018).

Additionally, both trees were features of the Garden of Eden, which would only have been a small portion of the entire earth that mankind was commissioned to subdue (Genesis 1:28). A dependence on the fruit of a single tree would seem to run counter to this commission, as those who migrated throughout the earth in obedience to God’s command would be less able to obtain the fruit that kept them alive.

Finally, there are theological problems if human death—which elsewhere in Scripture is clearly named as a result of sin (Romans 6:23)—would actually result from a simple failure to eat from a particular tree, which God had not commanded man to do.

An alternative (and, we would argue, more satisfactory) view is that the Tree of Life was a manifestation of God’s life-giving presence on earth, and especially in the Garden, but that it was not “required eating” to preserve life in the absence of sin. The Bible is abundantly clear that God is life (e.g., Psalm 36:9; John 1:4; Acts 17:28), and the Tree of Life (as seen in Genesis 2 and Revelation 22:2) can be seen as the “standard” of divine life. As John Calvin argues:

[God] gave the tree of life its name not because it could confer on man that life with which he had been previously endued, but in order that it might be a symbol and memorial of the life he had received from God....In that tree there was a visible testimony to the declaration, that ‘in God we are, and live, and move.’ (Calvin 1554, notes on Genesis 2:9).

Based on Genesis 3:22–24, it is evident that it was (at least theoretically) possible for fallen man to stave off the consequences of sin by availing himself of this tree’s fruit, which necessitated God’s actions to physically separate mankind from the Tree of Life. Just as mankind had been separated from God’s

presence spiritually (Genesis 3:8; cf. Isaiah 59:2), he must also be separated from the manifestation of God’s presence in the Tree of Life, until the time that God Himself chose to bridge that divide with the coming of Jesus.

Effects of the Fall The Antediluvian Era

The biblical descriptions of the antediluvian era in Genesis are key in understanding the immediate consequences of the Fall upon the physical world. Second Peter 3:5–6 implies that the world prior to the Noahic Flood was significantly different from ours, by contrasting “the earth which [is] now” against “the world that then existed”. Furthermore, God’s decree following the Flood in Genesis 9:2–3 indicates that further changes to the relationship between man and animal were put in place following the Deluge: “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea.” It should also be noted that even these post-Flood effects would have been the result of God’s judgment upon sin (in Genesis 3) and should be considered in that context. However, in keeping with the focus of the present study, we will limit our discussion to the direct consequences of the Fall itself.

Genesis 6:11–12

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

God’s expressed regret in the state of creation (Genesis 6:7) gives us a solid basis to infer that the original creation (Genesis 1) would not have been affected by the corruption described in verses 11–12. Violence had filled the earth, as a direct result of the corruption of all flesh which had taken place since the Fall. We can therefore assert that prior to the Fall, violent behaviors of both man and animal (“all flesh”) would not have been present, and that since the Fall some form of corruption had taken hold upon a previously “very good” creation.

Here we must address the claim, recently made by Garvey (2019, 38–40), that the phrase “all flesh” in Genesis 6:12 refers not to *all* living creatures (man and animal), but to mankind exclusively. In defense of this view, Garvey points to the preceding verses of Genesis 6, which describe the wickedness of mankind (but not that of animals). However, this argument fails to take into account the consistent use of the phrase “all flesh” (Hebrew, *kôl bāšâr*) throughout Genesis 6–9, where it unambiguously refers to both mankind and animals. In Genesis 6:17, “all flesh” is equated with creatures “in which is the breath of

life". In 6:19; 7:15–16, the phrase refers specifically to the animals who boarded the ark. In 7:21, "all flesh" is equated with "birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man." Noah is commanded to bring "all flesh" out of the ark in 8:17, and in 9:11–15 the rainbow covenant is established "between [God] and you and every living creature of all flesh." The consistent usage of this phrase throughout the Flood narrative confirms that, contra Garvey, "all flesh" of Genesis 6:12 does indeed refer to all living creatures, and therefore we are on solid biblical ground in affirming that animals were included in the corruption that befell the world following the Fall of man.

The Curse in the New Testament

In addition to the Genesis records of the antediluvian world, the New Testament also gives us valuable insight as to the physical effects of the Fall described in Genesis. In fact, the writings of the Apostle Paul give the clearest declarations of the consequence of sin and the Curse: death.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Romans 5 makes one of the clearest connections between death and sin in the New Testament. Interpreters have differed in the meaning of the phrase "death through sin", and whether its scope includes death of men only (as in the subsequent statement: "death spread to all men") or of death in general. While an argument can be made that the unqualified statement applies more broadly, the context most clearly speaks to the spread of death to mankind in particular. This should not be taken to mean that Paul argues that animal death (for example) is *not* a consequence of sin, however, the plain intent of the passage is to contrast the bringing of physical death by one man, against the bringing of "justification" and life by another Man.

1 Corinthians 15:21–22

For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

This text reiterates the points made in Romans 5:12 and 5:18. Again, while it is certainly possible to interpret "death" to refer to the death of any

creature, this passage in context is most clearly speaking to the death of man (contrasted with the resurrection of man through Jesus Christ). That physical death is in view in these verses, and not only spiritual death, is made clear by the context here, which is the (physical) resurrection of the dead. First Corinthians 15:22 clearly contrasts life (and resurrection) through Christ with death through Adam; certainly there is "spiritual life" in Christ, but that does not discount the physical nature of Christ's death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:14). The necessity of Christ's physical death strongly implies that Adam's physical death is in view (Turpin 2013).

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

In concluding his discourse, Paul again emphasizes death's position as an "enemy", and by implication, an intruder in God's creation, thus not part of His original design. The abstract nature of this statement seems to also leave open the possibility that more than only human death is in view—however, we do not believe the immediate context of this passage necessitates such an interpretation.

Romans 8:18–23

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 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. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

This text suggests an external change to creation from its original state. Careful contextual analysis of this passage indicates that *ktisis* ("creation") refers in this passage to the entirety of the sub-human created order (Smith 2007). This creation is said to be subjected to futility, directly implying that creation at one time existed in a "non-subjected" state. Similarly, the current "bondage of corruption" that now rules creation implies that an external force "bound" and "corrupted" creation at some point, again indicating a drastic change being imposed upon creation. While the text does not explicitly connect this "subjection" with the Fall, the context strongly suggests that God Himself is the external force imposing this subjection, as the same agent that subjects the creation "to

futility” does so “in hope”, with the deliverance of creation clearly in view (v. 21). This link, between the subjection of creation and the hope of redemption, constitutes a strong thematic connection with the Curse and Protevangelium of Genesis 3.

Finally, the creation is said to be “groaning” and “laboring” till the present time, anticipating a future restoration together with the “children of God”. This statement makes an explicit parallel between the destinies of the people of God and the sub-human order created by God: as both groups currently suffer under corrupting effects of sin, both look forward to a future redemption where these effects will be eradicated completely (Godet 1883, 314).

Future Restoration Is There a Restoration

Young-earth creationists frequently make the comparison between the Edenic state and the future condition of the “new heavens and new earth” (NH/NE) (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13). They argue that creation will one day be “restored” to a condition similar to that of the pre-Fall world (Mortenson 2012; Smith 2007, 81; Stambaugh 2008, 383–385). It should be noted that this viewpoint is not at all exclusive to creationists, but has been held by many interpreters and systematic theologians (Ladd 1974, 567; Miller 1996; Oden 1987, 243). In fact, this understanding of the biblical metanarrative of Creation, Fall, and Restoration is deeply rooted in historical Christian interpretation (Zuiddam 2004).

By contrast, old-earth creationists tend to emphasize continuity between the pre- and post-Fall creation, and see the NH/NE as an entirely separate state. In this view, there is no true “restoration” of creation to a prior state, but rather an entirely “new” state without direct comparison to the old (Garvey 2019, 48–50; Irons 2000; Snoke 2006, 52–59).

If a future restoration of creation is in fact spoken of in Scripture, then the descriptions of this restoration would be relevant to our study as an analog to the Edenic world prior to the Fall.

Acts 3:20–21

And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Peter’s sermon in Acts 3 is a key reference to a future “restoration” in the New Testament, and in fact is the only biblical text where the Greek word *apokatastasis* (typically translated as “restoration”) is used. Several commentators have understood this passage to refer to a reversion of creation to the Edenic/pre-Fall state. For example, L. L. Morris

in the *New Bible Dictionary* pointed out that the “restoration of all things” can legitimately be inferred to point to the pre-Fall creation (Morris 1996, entry on Restoration). Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown agree: “‘restitution of all things’—comprehending, probably, the rectification of all the disorders of the fall” (Brown 1871, notes on Acts 3:21). Thayer’s lexicon also interprets this term as referring to a restoration “of the perfect state before the fall” (Thayer 1892, 63).

It is also crucial to note that Peter is not relaying a recent revelation which he has received, but rather an idea that was put forth by the “holy prophets” (surely referring to the prophets of the Old Testament). This statement strengthens the case that the future “restoration of all things” is both linked to the future return of Christ as well as to Old Testament prophecies. Therefore, it is very reasonable to expect to find prophetic statements that speak of a future “restoration”—and as we will see, there is indeed strong evidence that the prophets did look forward to such an event.

The understanding of “restoration” as a kind of reversion to an Edenic state also melds comfortably with Paul’s discussion in Romans 8 of the “bondage of corruption,” a fallen state from which creation will eventually be delivered (MacDonald 1995, 1593–1594, 1711–1712).

Romans 8:21

Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Another reference to this restoration is found in the epistle to the Colossians, where Paul famously establishes Jesus Christ as the Creator of all things. In the same context, the apostle uses the same terminology to assert that the “things in earth, [and] things in heaven” will be “reconcile[d]” as a result of the redemptive work of the cross (Kulikovsky 2009, 270; MacDonald 1995, 1995–1996; Smith 2007, 81).

Colossians 1:15–20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Finally, the restoration view is most consistent with the description of the NH/NE in Revelation 22:3, which implies the removal of the Curse upon the ground and the animals, spoken of in Genesis 3:14-17 (Beale and Carson 2007; Constable 2011, notes on Revelation 22:3; Johnson 1996).

Revelation 22:3

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.

Based on the passages discussed above, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Bible does in fact speak of a restoration of the creation, to a state similar (but not necessarily identical) to that before the Curse. With this established, we can now consider the descriptions of this future restored creation (NH/NE) and make immediate inferences to the effects of the Fall which are to be revoked.

Restoration in the Old Testament

The prophet Isaiah is the primary witness to the idea of a restoration of creation in the Old Testament. His writings include many of the best-known Messianic prophecies, and some of these are connected with the promise of a restored creation. For example, Isaiah 11 (which begins with the famous messianic prophecy of the “rod from the stem of Jesse”) describes the character of the Messiah’s future kingdom with powerfully visual language.

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

This passage is famous for its depiction of a peaceful relationship between predatory animals and prey, as well as between animals and mankind. There is a strong case to be made that, at the fulfillment of this prophecy, all animals will be herbivorous (“the cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together”), in which case there would be a clear connection to the vegetarian diet prescribed in Genesis 1:29–30.

This Edenic comparison is made even more powerful by the description of a child playing—without any danger, apparently—near the habitat of at least two types of venomous snakes (translated as “cobra” and “viper” in the NKJV). Whereas in the fallen creation

there is a divinely decreed enmity between man and the serpent, in this future state, the “seed of man” can interact freely and comfortably with the very creature that was the instrument of his downfall.

Not only is there a drastic change in the relationship between creatures, but additionally there is an eradication of destructive behaviors as a whole—animals and man alike will no longer cause harm to themselves or (by implication) to their environment. It is important to note the global nature of this passage—not only the “holy mountain”, but the entire earth will be transformed by the Messiah’s redeeming presence “as the waters cover the sea”.

Isaiah prophesies explicitly of a future “new heavens and earth” in chapter 65, with clear allusions to his previous descriptions in Isaiah 11.

Isaiah 65:17

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind...

Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

The visual language of chapter 11 is used once again, depicting predatory and prey animals feeding together. In this passage, herbivorous diets for carnivores are explicitly described (“the lion shall eat straw like the bullock”), and again, the serpent is painted as no longer a threat to man or animals.

The usage of the phrase “new heavens and a new earth” leads to a seeming inconsistency with the similar terminology used in Revelation 21; the latter passage links the NH/NE with the complete abolishment of death, whereas both Isaiah 65 and 11 indicate that death and other destructive phenomena, while severely limited, are still present. For example:

Isaiah 11:14

But they shall fly down up the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; Together they shall plunder the people of the East; They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; And the people of Ammon shall obey them.

Isaiah 65:20

No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

This discordance between the “new heavens and new earth” of Revelation and that of Isaiah indicates that these passages are referring to two separate (future) states of creation. Isaiah’s NH/NE refers to an earth ruled by her righteous King and that is rejuvenated and refreshed, but not yet entirely redeemed. Sin (and therefore death) are still possible, but the creation itself is no longer subjected to their effects (and is instead subjected to the Messianic King, with the ensuing blessings described). This “Intermediate State” is sometimes referred to as the Millennial Reign (Revelation 20:4), and in Premillennial eschatology it precedes the “Eternal State” of Revelation 21, at which point the redemption of creation is complete, death and sin are abolished entirely, and God’s immanent presence with His creation and mankind are restored (Faussett 1871, notes on Isaiah 65:20; MacArthur 1997; Vlach 2017, 173).

Eschatological concerns aside, the common thread between these passages is that of a restoration of creation to something that is more like its original “very good” state. The restoration does not take place all at once, yet the Bible’s descriptions of the restored state(s) of creation give us valuable insight as to God’s original intent and design for His creatures, especially through the abolishment of predation and reconciliation between animals and man.

A consideration in our interpretation of Isaiah’s prophecy is the genre of the texts in question, which are widely understood to be symbolic and poetic in portions. This has been used to argue that the texts do not speak at all to changes in animal behavior/physiology (e.g. Snoke 2006, 52), and that the scenarios described are simply allegorical to restored international or interpersonal relationships. It is certainly possible to argue that phrases such as “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” or “the lion shall eat straw” have a metaphorical meaning (e.g. Henry 1706, notes on Isaiah 11:6), as opposed to teaching that animals will literally change their dietary preferences at some point in the future. However, even accepting such an interpretation for the sake of argument, it remains apparent that God regards those “allegorical” scenarios to be ideal, in contrast to the predatory and carnivorous behaviors that are extant today. Otherwise, we are left with the absurdity of God holding up as His ideal the very opposite of what He had created and called “very good” in the beginning. For the Isaiah prophecy to carry any force, we must understand both the harmony in the animal kingdom *and* the lack of carnivory as something “good” in the sight of God, and therefore surely consistent with the “very good” creation of Genesis 1–2.

Restoration in the New Testament

The NH/NE are most clearly described in the final chapters of Revelation, as John concludes his vision and foresees the final vindication of Christ and His people over their foes. Following the judgment scene of Revelation 20:11–15 and the banishment of “Death and Hades,” the prophet’s attention turns to the new creation:

Revelation 21:1–5

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

A number of elements in this breathtaking description are worthy of attention. Whereas the Fall was marked by a stark separation of God and His creation, now God promises to dwell once again in harmony with man. The results of this reunification are profound: “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” The text is plain in its assertion of a complete eradication of sorrow, pain, and of death itself.

Of course, it is also clear that there are distinct differences between the new creation and the old, specifically the absence of a “sea” (v.1b), which was certainly present in the original creation. Nevertheless, the depiction of the “goodness” of this new creation is clearly Edenic, with no trace of the death, sorrow, and pain that was decreed upon the original creation after the Fall. The continuity of the Edenic state with this new creation is underscored by the intimate presence of God with man, which harkens back to the (now broken) closeness of God and Adam in the Garden (Genesis 3:8).

Revelation 22:3

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

The context of this verse is strongly Edenic, preceded with reference to the Tree of Life and followed by the immanence of God with his people

(e.g., v.4: “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads”). This is the final biblical reference to the “curse”, and it is notable as the Greek noun *katathema* is only used once in the New Testament. The allusions to Eden serve to link the meaning to the Curse of Genesis 3, enacted as the result of Adam’s sin, and now entirely revoked as sin is finally dealt with at the end of history. This verse and its surrounding context argue strongly against the proposal of Garvey (2019, 28–30) that the Curse of Genesis 3 had already been lifted in Genesis 8:21, leaving no singular “Curse” to be lifted in Revelation 22:3. To the contrary, this verse affirms that the Curse continues in its effects until the problem of sin is entirely eradicated, at which time all the consequences of that Curse are lifted (Revelation 21:4).

2 Peter 3:10–13

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Peter’s eschatological sayings are primarily concerned with the temporality of the present creation and the works of man, in light of the coming “day of the Lord.” Without going into the various interpretations of Peter’s prophecy, we can observe that he concurs with John’s Revelation in expecting a “new heavens and a new earth” to follow, in which righteousness dwells (perhaps an allusion to God’s presence in the new creation).

Romans 8:18–23

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 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. Not only that, but we also have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

In this passage Paul links the present condition—and ultimately the fate—of creation itself with that of the “children of God.” The analogy is a very striking one, especially in light of 1 John 3:2 (“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be...”). As believers, the “children of God” still suffer under the effects of sin and the curse (Romans 7:21–25), yet with the hope that in the future all of these effects will be eradicated (John 3:2—“we shall be like Him”). In the same vein, Paul describes creation itself as looking forward to a future “deliver[ance] from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Paul’s inclusion of creation in the “glorious liberty” is consistent with the Bible’s portrayal of creation, 1) as the dominion of man (Genesis 1:28), 2) having been subjugated to the curse by man’s sin (“cursed is the ground for your sake,” Genesis 3:17), and 3) finally sharing in the future redemption of man with the revocation of the curse (Revelation 21:1; 22:3).

Conclusion

The central question in our analysis can be stated simply: What does the Bible say about the Fall’s effects on the physical creation?

As discussed in our opening paragraphs, understanding the biblical data—and recognizing the constraints and limits of that data—is critical to the development of a biblical model of earth history. It is neither biblical nor logical to categorically label a particular behavior or phenomenon as representing either the original created state or a post-Fall corruption, without first examining the Bible’s own claims about the effects of the Fall.

It should be apparent in the course of our study that Scripture nowhere lays out a detailed description of exactly how the Fall changed the natural world. This is not an unusual phenomenon in creationist biblical research—most creationists readily admit that the Bible does not lay out many of the specifics that interest a scientific mind. Of course this should not be considered a “deficiency” in the biblical account. We understand that Scripture contains exactly *enough* detail for the purpose it was given, and no human-readable book could ever contain exhaustive details about God’s works (c.f. John 21:25).

Nonetheless, we have found that there are some very clear statements throughout Scripture that can provide guidance in determining whether a given characteristic of today’s world should be considered an aspect of God’s original “very good” design, or an aberration from that design and thus a consequence of sin and the Curse. As we conclude our study, we submit the following statements as summarizations of the biblical data herein considered.

A. The Creation Before the Fall

1. Creation was characterized by fruitfulness and harmony between animals, man, and God Himself (Genesis 1:28–31, inferred: Genesis 3:8–9; 13:10; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:34–35; Joel 2:3).
2. The dietary needs of man and animal were met by the giving of plants for food (Genesis 1:29–30).
3. Death (at least of humans) and destructive behaviors were non-existent (inferred: Genesis 1:31; 6:11–12; Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25).
4. Pain was possible, but to a greatly lesser degree than today (inferred: Genesis 3:16).
5. The work of mankind was to tend and rule over the creation and to enjoy God's intimate presence (Genesis 1:28; 2:8–15; inferred: 3:8–9).
6. Animals and man were to reproduce, with the end goal of filling the earth (Genesis 1:22, 28).
7. Physical laws as we know them were in effect, at least to some extent (Genesis 1:14–15, 29–30).
8. God emphatically pronounced this initial state of creation as "very good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 16–18, 21, 25, 31).

B. The Creation After the Fall

1. The Fall of man precipitated the cursing of the ground (Genesis 3:17), and disruption to the original harmony between man, animal, and God (Genesis 3:14–16, 22–24).
2. Pain in childbirth was dramatically increased (Genesis 3:16).
3. Man's needs were now met only by his own onerously hard labor (Genesis 3:17–19).
4. Humans will experience physical death (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22).
5. In contrast to the "very good" initial state, the creation now operates in a state of "futility" (Romans 8:20).
6. By God's decree, physiological and ecological changes began to occur in the creation, including humans, (at least) some animals, and (at least) some plants (Genesis 3:14, 16, 18).
7. Predatory relationships arose among animals, and humans eventually adopted a carnivorous diet (Genesis 6:11–12; 9:2–3).
8. Creation and mankind were alike corrupted by separation from God's presence (Genesis 6:12; Romans 8:21–22)

C. The Creation Restored

1. The creation's pre-fallen state will be restored upon the return of the Creator, Jesus Christ, to the creation, to restore both mankind and the earth itself (Acts 3:20–21; Colossians 1:15–20; Romans 8:18–23; Revelation 21:4; 22:3).
2. Death of (at least) humans will be abolished entirely (1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 21:4).

3. Predatory behavior will be abolished, and harmony will be restored between animals, man, and God Himself (Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25).
4. The new earth will again be characterized by God's intimate presence with mankind, and within His creation, which will persist into eternity (2 Peter 3:10–13; Revelation 21:1–5).

The goal of this study has been to highlight biblical data relevant to the question of the Fall's effects on the physical creation, and to produce a sound and rigorous description of those effects that is based not on subjective reasoning but on firm, biblical premises. There are innumerable questions and hypotheticals that are not directly answered here, and there is abundant room for additional scientific research to better understand the characteristics of animals and their environments before and after the Fall. We hope this compilation will be useful for future creation research, as we develop a robust and biblically based understanding of our world, and grow in our appreciation of our shared hope in the redeeming work of Christ.

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