

SERIES OVERVIEW



Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan.

All rights reserved worldwide.

overview

The Scriptures—and *especially the Psalms*—repeatedly and emphatically declare the wonders and beauty of God’s creation. The Earth is the Lord’s! (Psalm 24) The heavens declare the glory of God! (Psalm 19) How many are your works, Lord! (Psalm 104) Creating humankind in his image, God entrusted us to wisely steward his rule, yet our relationship with God’s world is distorted and damaged. In this three-part series we explore the goodness of God’s creation and our rule, the problem and impact of sin, and how we are to live in anticipation of New Creation. Caring for God’s creation is not a responsibility for some, but a calling for every Christian.

As John Stott, puts it:




“Scripture tells us that “the earth is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24:1) and also that “the earth he has given to man” (Psalm 115:16). These assertions complement rather than contradict each other. The earth belongs to God by creation and to us by delegation. This does not mean that he has handed it over to us in such a way as to relinquish his own rights over it, but rather that he has given us the responsibility to preserve and develop the Earth on his behalf.”¹

We are neither to *worship* creation nor *exploit* it, but to serve God’s purposes in cooperation with and dependence on him.


Outline

Week 1	<i>God’s Creation & Our Rule</i>	Genesis 1:1-31 (cf. Gen 2:15-25; Ps 8)
Week 2	<i>Fallen Creation & Our Part</i>	Genesis 3:1-19 (cf. Romans 8:18-25)
Week 3	<i>New Creation & Our Future</i>	Revelation 21:1-5 (cf. Isaiah 65:17-25)

General Resources

- Read (book): “Is God Green” by Lionel Windsor. 
- Read (book): “Creation Care” by Douglas Moo & Jonathan Moo. 
- Read (book): “Creation Care” by John Stott. 

¹ See John Stott “Care for Creation” for A Rocha Canada.

- *Read (book—suitable for reading age of Year 10 and up):* “A Christian’s Guide to Planet Earth: why it matters & how to care for it” by Betsy Painter. 
- *Read (book—suitable for reading age of 8-12 and up):* “All Of Creation: Understanding God’s Planet and How We Can Help” by Betsy Painter
- *Read (book—for children):* “God’s Very Colourful Creation” by Tim Thornborough and Jennifer Davison.
- *Read (book—for children):* “Creation (Big Theology for Little Hearts Series)” by Devon and Jessica Provencher.
- *Read (article):* “Care for Creation” by John Stott (for A Rocha Canada): https://arocha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/article_careforcreation-john-stott.pdf

St Bart’s Resources (including for families)

For the series overview, weekly sermons, small group material, and weekly children’s curriculum, visit: www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/creation

Companion Resources

In addition to this *series overview*, please also refer to the *series resource guide* for practical resources to grow as disciples in our care for creation.



Series Overview:

The *series overview* provides an outline of the sermon series. In addition to an overarching outline, each week highlights the Bible passage in focus, a brief reflection, some questions, and a short prayer.

To access these resources, visit: www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/creation

ADAM LOWE

St Bart's Toowoomba, September 2025



Summaries by Adam Lowe (AL)



Available to borrow from the St Bart's Church Library (stbarts.com.au/library)



Series Resources

This collection of *series resources* has been specially designed in conjunction with our VISION 2025 'Environmental Stewards' Working Group. It will help us to enjoy, learn about, and care for God's creation.

how to use this series overview

For each week in the series, a Bible reading, “the big idea”, some reflection questions, and a prayer is provided.

- **PRAY**

Begin with prayer, for example:

Gracious God, please enlighten our minds, enliven our hearts, and shape our wills according to your life-giving Word. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

- **READ from the Bible**

Read the part of the Bible that we are focusing on for that week. Some key verses (from that reading) are also printed — you might even like to memorise these!

- **REFLECT**

Read the ‘big idea’ and use the questions to reflect on the Bible passage. This will help prepare for the sermon and the following week’s small group questions (provided on the St Bart’s website).

- **PRAY**

Each day a prayer is provided that you may like to use. Of course, you need not to be limited to this prayer.

Week 1

God's Creation & Our Rule

Genesis 1:1-31 (cf. Gen 2:15-25; Ps 8)

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

READ GENESIS 1:1-31 (AND 2:15-25)

REFLECT. In the beginning, God made everything (out of nothing no less!), declared it very good, and set it apart to declare his glory. Whilst part of the created order (and therefore subject to God), humans were uniquely *made* in God's image and *entrusted* with special responsibility to 'rule' in cooperation with God (cf. Genesis 1:28). Some people take 'rule' to mean that humans have free reign to dominate and exploit the earth however we please or determine, but the meaning of the word *rule* is richer. To rule (in this context) means that we are to exercise a *delegated* authority over creation and act responsibly in service of God's purposes and will. We are ultimately responsible and subject to God (the Creator of all!). However, we are also to express *rule* exclusively in dependence on him and in accordance with his ways. That's part of why it is good for us to delight and enjoy the beauty of creation. Not to worship creation, but to be directed back to the Creator in praise. When we submit to Jesus, he restores our rightful place as his image bearers who seek to rule the world under him.

As rulers *subordinate to God* and *cooperating with his agenda*, our role is to both *work* and *take care* of creation (Genesis 2:15), not abuse it. That means our role is less like a park ranger (i.e., with a completely 'hands-off' approach) or an unrestrained developer (i.e., seeking to extract every imaginable resource from the earth for our own use without consideration of the impact), and more like a gardener who tends, shapes, cultivates, and nurtures on behalf of the owner and for the flourishing of all. As we seek a comprehensive peace (i.e., 'shalom') it is inclusive of the totality creation.

Or as Lionel Windsor puts it:

*The Bible teaches that the world is good, because it's God's creation. So our response to creation should not be to despise it, but to give thanks to God for it.*²

We do that in our appreciation of what God has made, by being directed back to the Lord in praise, and taking seriously our role as image bearers of the one who created everything and entrusted us to steward it for him.

- What in creation most fills you with awe?
- What does God say about his creation? How should this affect our approach to the world?
- How does the *beauty of creation* help you to *delight in the goodness of God*?
- Whose image are we made in? What role do we have in God's world?
- What does it mean to rule? What does it not mean?
- What is the link between 'subdue' and our role to bring order out of chaos?
- How can our working and taking care of creation affect our 'neighbour'?
- What is one way that you can *delight more in the goodness* of God's creation?
- What is one way in which you can grow in faithful stewardship of God's world in cooperation with him and his purposes?

PRAY

Almighty Lord, how beautiful is the work of your hands! How wonderful is your creation! Thank you that you have made us in your image and entrusted us to steward your world. Please help us to enjoy the beauty of your creation, be directed to you in praise, and wisely rule in dependence on you and in service of your purposes. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

² See Lionel Windsor "Is God Green?", p.8.

Week 2

Fallen Creation & Our Part

Genesis 3:1-19 (cf. Romans 8:18-25)

So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.’” Genesis 3:14

READ GENESIS 3:1-19 (AND ROMANS 8:18-25)

REFLECT. As sin entered the world (i.e., the fall) and fractured our relationship with God, it also damaged our relationship with one another and also with creation itself. The evidence of that damage is plain to see and it is also evident that we are all part of the problem.³ The letter to the Romans reminds us that not only *that all have sinned* (3:23), but also that *the whole of creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth* because of the effects of sin subjected to it (8:18-22). The same creation that declares God’s glory (according to the Psalmists) also longs to be released from its bondage to decay (according to Paul). The result of our sin means that we have *rejected* our image bearing of God and *neglected* our God-given role (to care, protect, and use creation according to God’s purposes) damaging the earth in the process. Our rejection of God’s rule brought catastrophic consequences not only to ourselves, but also for that which we were entrusted. The earth experiences the ‘curse’ of sin (cf. Genesis 3), which continues to be evident through *greed, selfishness, and a failure to rule wisely*.

But there is hope! God sent his Son to not only redeem humankind but the entirety of his creation. Or as Douglas and Jonathan Moo put it:

³ John Stott, in some of his work on creation care, identified four critical trends that still hold true today and for which we should be mindful: accelerating world population growth, depletion of the earth’s resources, excessive waste disposal, and climate change. See “The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of our Calling” by John Stott.

“Our God is not a God who discards what he has made, who is defeated by sin and evil. Our God is a redeeming God, a God who is determined to reclaim his fallen world, setting it free from its enslavement to corruption and bringing it to a final state of glory.”⁴

In light of our failure in rejecting God, his rule, and our role, responding to the Gospel involves three things. First, repenting for our sin—along with the damage that it causes. Second, genuinely seeking to live differently in response to the Good News that Jesus is Lord—taking up our place as restored image bearers. Third, living in response to and anticipation of the one who has redeemed us and who will renew the entirety of creation. God will not discard his world, but radically renew it! As those who have been made new in Christ, we are to: put off the old self, put on the new self, and live in anticipation of what we—and all of creation—will one day be.

- What is sin? How is every person part of the problem?
- How does sin fracture our relationship with God, one another, and the world? How does sin continue to have a damaging effect on creation?
- Are there any ways that you have failed in the stewarding of God’s creation? Take some time to repent.
- In light of the responsibilities that God has entrusted to us and the presence of our sin, how should we respond?

PRAY

Gracious Father, please forgive us for the ways in which we reject your rule, fail to reflect your image, and do not faithfully express the responsibilities that you have entrusted to us. Please help us to live in response to the one who has redeemed the world and will renew all of creation. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

⁴ See Moo and Moo “Creation Care”, p.147.

Week 3

New Creation & Our Future

Revelation 21:1-5 (cf. Isaiah 65:17-25)

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” Revelation 21:1-2

READ REVELATION 21:1-5 (AND ISAIAH 65:17-25)

REFLECT. Whilst we have *rejected* God's rule and *neglected* our role as God's image bearers, Jesus entered into creation in order to redeem it. God becoming human is both a resounding 'yes!' to the value of his world and an emphatic warning about the seriousness of our state. Without intervention from the Creator, humanity and creation would be lost. But God did not abandon his creation nor leave us to suffer the full consequences of our sin. Jesus came into the world in order to redeem it through his death and resurrection. *It's through Jesus' death* that we can be confident that we have been set free from the power and penalty of sin. *It's through Jesus' resurrection* that we can rejoice that a whole new era—free from the power of death and decay—has been broken. Jesus' resurrection not only points to the resurrection which awaits all who trust in him, but also the renewal of all things which will be made complete when he returns.

In Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21 we see a glimpse of both the *longing for that future* and the *realisation of it*. As Isaiah relays the word of the Lord, God's people are given a glorious vision and hope for a future in which we will enjoy what God has created, and delight in relationship with him and as a people. There will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more death. We will no longer labour in vain nor live in disharmony with one another or the world. There is a continuity with the present world (e.g., it is physical) and a discontinuity (its beauty will be like nothing we have experienced). Or as Paul quotes (in 1 Corinthians 2:9), “What no eye has seen, what no ear has

heard, and what no human mind has conceived—the things God has prepared for those who love him.”

That's the future that we can have confidence in when we put our trust in Jesus. We can look forward to a time when *our bodies* and *our world* will no longer be subject to the effects and curse of sin. But we're not there yet. We live *between* Jesus' saving death and resurrection *and* his return when he will come to judge the world. And how we live now matters. Not in order to save ourselves. Nor even in the hope that we can save the world. But we are to live in realisation of who we now are in Christ (as restored image bearers of God and as new creations, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), in response to the Lordship of Jesus over all things (cf. Colossians 1), in love for our neighbour, and in anticipation of the future which Jesus will bring. Christians are called to live in continuity with *who Christ is*, *who he has made us*, and *the future to which we now belong*.

Or as Lionel Windsor put it:

*We can't save the world — that's Jesus' job. But you can make a difference, because you can live as an heir of this world, rescued from death, renewed in God's image, ruling under God.*⁵

Our place and our role in God's world matters because it matters to him. He gave his life for it, restores us to our rightful place, and will return to bring all things to completion. This is the reality we live both in and for.

- What does Jesus' resurrection show us about the value of God's creation?
- If God will renew the world, why does caring for the world matter now?
- What will New Creation be like? What is one practical way that you can live in anticipation of that future as you actively care for God's world?
- Have you looked at practical ways to care for creation in our series resource guide? See stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/creation

PRAY

Loving Father and redeemer of all, we praise you that through Jesus' death and resurrection that you have made a way for salvation. As we follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour, please help us to reflect the restored image that we have in you and live in anticipation of the future which is yet to come. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

⁵ See Lionel Windsor "Is God Green?" p.46.