

## Christ in Creation

*Murray 2010*

By Dr. David P. Murray

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Genesis 1:26  
**Preached on:** Sunday, September 19, 2010

**Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids**  
950 Ball Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**Website:** [www.frcgr.org](http://www.frcgr.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/frcgr](http://www.sermonaudio.com/frcgr)

Let us return to Colossians 1 and we'll read verse 16. Colossians 1:16, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." This, of course, is speaking of Jesus Christ and I'd like to focus especially on the last part of that verse 16, "all things were created by him, and for him."

When we want to find out what a book is all about, probably the best way to do that is to ask the author. There may be many different theories about what a book is about but only the original author really knows what his real purpose, his ultimate purpose was, and so if we want to find out what the Old Testament is all about, then we ask the Author of it, we ask the Lord, of course, who is behind the human penmen, and when we do so, we find an answer for us very clear and repeated. For example in Luke 24:27, Jesus speaking to the men on the road to Emmaus begins at Moses and all the prophets, expounds to these men in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. He goes back to Moses. In other words, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and all the prophets and he says it's all about me. Later on in that chapter as well, he again says to the disciples gathered together, "These are the words," verse 44, "which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Speaking to the Pharisees he said, "Read the Scriptures because they testify of me." So when we ask the Author of Scripture what is the Bible and especially what's the Old Testament all about, he gives us a very clear answer. He says, "It's about me." It's all about the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when we turn to the Old Testament, that's the question we want to have in our minds: what does this tell me about Jesus Christ? And of course, there's quite general agreement today, at least in the evangelical church, about the Old Testament testifying to Christ but there is disagreement about how it does so. Some people say, "Well, the Old Testament prepares the way for Christ," and it does. It certainly does. Other says, "Well, the Old Testament predicts Christ," and it does that too. Others say, "Well, the Old Testament pictures Christ," and it certainly does that. We have many pictures of Christ in the Old Testament. But we have something more than just preparation, we have something more than prediction, and we have something more than pictures, we have presence. We have

the presence of Christ in the Old Testament and we're told that even going right back to the first chapter, to Genesis 1.

You see, some people, you might illustrate it like this, see the Old Testament like steppingstones and they say, "Well, if we keep on these steppingstones and walk along them throughout the Old Testament, eventually we get to Christ in the New Testament. He's the end of redemptive history. He's the end of the steppingstones of the Old Testament." But what the Bible tells us is that Jesus is on the very first steppingstone himself. He's not the last chapter in redemptive history, though he's that, he's also the first chapter and he's the first subject.

How do we know that? Well, we read our verse here. "All things were created by him and for him." Or we can turn to John 1:1 which takes us right back to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John 1:1 puts it like this, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," the Word being Christ. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." Also in Hebrews 1:3, Christ is described as "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person." But he's also described as the one by whom God made the world.

So we find Genesis 1, the creation was all about Christ because it was performed by Christ. All things, as Paul says here in Colossians 1:16, "all things were created by him and for him." One theologian put it like this: when we begin to study the subject of creation in the Bible, we ought to start with the first chapter of the Gospel of John and some other passages of the New Testament and not with the first chapter of Genesis 1. That's what we're doing tonight, we're starting with a new and looking at the old with the benefit of the New Testament light.

We'd like to look, then, this evening at Christ in creation and that immediately makes you think, "I don't understand how that can be because surely in Genesis 1 we have a perfect world. It doesn't need a Savior. It doesn't need a Redeemer. There's no sin so why would we need Christ?" And when we go to Genesis 1 and 2, we don't find a prediction of Christ, arguably we don't find a type of Christ, so how can we say that Christ is there? And even if you notice when we read the Apostles Creed together, it attributes creation to the Father, salvation to the Son and life in the church to the Spirit. That would seem to also put a question mark over the Son's involvement in creation.

I'd like to give you two helps to seeing Christ in creation; to understanding how he can be there even in a perfect sinless world. The first is this: we've got to remember that Genesis was addressed to a sinful people. Moses being the author, writing it for Israel who had come out of Egypt, redeemed by God, he wrote Genesis to a sinful people who had been redeemed and the whole purpose of Genesis is to teach this redeemed people about their Redeemer. Yes, Genesis 1 is about a pre-fall world but it's written to those in a fallen world, in a sinful world. In other words, we've got to see a creation against the background of redemption. We've got to remember it was written to those who had been

redeemed, in other words, creation itself is part of redemption history. It's part of the story of redemption.

This is how E. J. Young puts it, "The Bible always places the creation in the light of the central act of redemption, Christ Jesus. When we examine the first chapter of Genesis in the light of other parts of Scripture, it becomes clear that the intention is not to give a survey of the process of creation but to let us see the creative activity of God in the light of his saving acts." So we've got to look at creation against the background of redemption and ask what is it teaching us about redemption and the Redeemer.

The second help I'd like to give to help us to see Christ in creation is this: the church fathers spoke of God making the world with two hands and the two hands were the Son and the Spirit. That's how we can understand that way that God speaks of creation being the Father's work and the Son's work and the Spirit's work. God the Father made the world using the two hands of the Son and the Spirit. In other words, the Son of God was not just the Mediator of the new creation but of the original creation as well. The Son of God is the way by which God made the world. He, as it were, stands between the Creator, the Father, and the creation, again, as the one who mediates the Father's creative power into this world.

That's how we should understand this, "all things were created by him," but also, "for him," and that's what we'd like to especially focus on this evening. He made things. They were made by him. But he made things for him. That was the reason for the creation. They were made for him, for the Redeemer, and for his great work of redemption.

I'd like to show you a number of ways this evening in which we can see that the creation reveals the Redeemer and the great work of redemption. First of all, think of the arrangement of redemption, the plan of redemption. Before there was a creation, there was a plan of redemption. In other words, the plan of redemption came before the creation came. We're told that in a number of ways in the New Testament. For example in Revelation 13:8, Christ is described as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Again in 1 Peter 1:20, he's described as being foreordained a Savior before the foundation of the world. So before there was a creation, before there was a world, before there was one atom, there was a plan of redemption. There was an arrangement made between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit to redeem a people, to save a people, and this is why the world was made. It was made by him and it was made for him. It had this great purpose to fulfill this great plan of redemption of sinners. We go back before the first word in Genesis 1:1, before that great, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," before that, before the beginning there was a plan to save, a plan to redeem, an arrangement of redemption.

Secondly, we see the arena of redemption, the stage, as it were. We've got this plan of redemption predating Genesis 1 and now the question is, "Well, where will we do it?" And the answer is Genesis 1 to 2. Let's make the stage on which this great act, this great plan, this great drama of salvation can be played out. That's the whole purpose of this

great creation. The Redeemer is making the arena, he's making the stadium, he's making the stage of redemption.

Jonathan Edwards put it like this, "There were things done at the creation of the world in order to further that redemptive work, for the world itself seems to have been created in order to have that redemptive work." And he goes on to show how this world is so beautifully fitted and suited to be the perfect arena for this great work of redemption.

Why did God make this whole place? What's his purpose? It's to make a stage to put on this incredible display of redeeming grace and mercy. That's the reason for every single thing you see in this world: every tree, every field, every flower, every animal, every bird, every fish. The whole thing is about redemption. How can I make a stage, make the props, paint the backdrop in such a way that will display this redemption in all its glory and to the greatest possible applause? "All things were made by him and for him."

The arrangement of redemption, the arena of redemption, but thirdly, the aim of redemption. What was redemption aiming at? What was the Redeemer's great end point in doing this? Well, Christ made his world in a way that would help the understanding of his great work of salvation.

I'll give you two examples. Notice how it says he made man in the image of God. Why? Is that just an aside unrelated to anything else? No, because notice how Christ himself is described when he comes in the flesh, he's described as the image of the invisible God in Hebrews 1. And then notice how sinful men and women are described when Christ takes them and begins to save them and renew them. We're told twice by Paul that they are being renewed in the image of God. How do we understand Christ being the image of God or men and women being remade in the image of God? We understand it by going back to Genesis 1 and finding out what it means to be made in the image of God in a perfect way, in a perfect world. In other words, that first image of God teaches us about the ultimate image of God, the Son of God, and about how he remakes the image of God.

Then think of how Adam was made at creation a prophet, a priest and a king. And what do we behold when Christ comes into the world? He's also portrayed as a prophet and a priest and as a king. And also, lo and behold, how do we find sinful men and women being described when they have been saved? He has made us kings and priests unto God. He has made us prophets and messengers and witnesses of his truth. In other words, he made Adam a prophet, a priest and a king in a perfect world so that we might understand Christ better and so we might understand what it means to be a Christian better. So we find out the great aim of redemption, the image of God, restored a prophet, a priest and a king to God, by going back to Genesis 1 and 2 and the perfect world and finding the original models that Christ based everything else on in his work of redemption.

So we find the aim of redemption in the creation, "all things were made by him, and for him." But we also find Christ in creation when we look at the accessories of redemption, the visual aids that Christ used to teach about himself and his redemption. What do we see when Christ comes into the world? He starts picking up created things and teaching

with them: sheep, oxen, birds, lilies, roses, water, wine, grapes, grain, stones, sun, moon, stars, rivers, trees, seeds, earth, leaven. It's like he goes through the whole creation, all the things he made, "all things were made by him, and for him," and he picks them up to use them in his service to teach, to communicate, to illustrate. Is it just coincidence? Oh, lo and behold, sheep just happen to really illustrate what it means to be a sinner or a sheep following the Savior. Or what a piece of good luck, this piece of leaven helps us to understand how sin spreads in a person. No, there is no coincidence. There is no good fortune or good luck. It's deliberate. It's intentional. When he made these things, he made them for himself for his great work of redemption. He made these to be his, as it were, his accessories, his visual aids, the things you would bring to his help in communicating who he is and what he came to do.

You might even think, what were his thoughts as he made the trees knowing that one day the Creator would be nailed to the creation? As he created the iron that would one day be driven into his flesh? As he created the reeds with which his head would be smashed with to drive in the crown of thorns? "All things were made by him, and for him." The accessories of redemption.

Think also of the assistants of redemption. We're not told in Genesis when the angels were made. It doesn't actually mention them. They weren't there before Genesis 1:1 but they were there by the end of Genesis 1. We don't know where they came in but they came in. And why were they made? Well, again, we're told in Hebrews they are made as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. In other words, when Christ made the angels, he made them for himself that he might send them forth as his assistants to come down to this world and to minister to, to serve those who would be the heirs of salvation. He didn't need them. The Father didn't need them. The Spirit didn't need them. He didn't make them for himself in that sense, he made them for us to be his assistants in the great work of bringing souls into the kingdom and to preserving souls in the kingdom. "All things were made by him, and for him."

But we also think of the advance of redemption or the way redemption progresses. A lot has been made and it's interesting when you look at the way the creation was ordered, day 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and you can see a logical progression in it. He didn't make the fish before he made the sea, for example. He didn't put man on the earth until there was an earth and it was well-furnished for him to live in. You can see, "Hm, that makes sense. That makes sense. That makes sense." You can see there's a logic and an order to it but God could have done all that at once. He didn't need six days. He didn't need six seconds. He didn't need to do it in a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and so on, he could have just one word, whole world.

So he didn't need to do it this way for physical reasons. He didn't need to make this progress because he was forced into it by logic, by physical laws and rules, so why did he do it? Why did he do it this way and not another way? Again, because he saw it would serve a spiritual purpose. It wasn't a physical reason, it was a spiritual reason because we find that Christ and his apostles pick up the order or the way that creation advanced to illustrate how salvation, how redemption advances and progresses.

Let me quickly show you that, refer you to a couple of verses. Genesis 1:2, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here we've got the Spirit of God at the very beginning of the creation. Life is beginning to flow from heaven to earth. This is the beginning of life and Jesus picks up this kind of language in John 6:63 and he says it is the spirit who gives life when he's speaking of salvation. Interesting.

But it goes on. Then we have, "God said, Let there be light," verse 3. Paul picks this up 2 Corinthians 4:6, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has commanded his light to shine into your heart to show you the face of the glory of Christ. In other words, Paul is saying, "Just as then, so now. Just as it happened then physically, so it happens spiritually." And you notice the order here: the Spirit begins the work in the soul and when the Spirit comes and gives life, there is also light beginning to dawn in the darkness of the soul.

But then we read in Genesis 1:4, the next verse, "God divided the light from the darkness," and that's what begins to happen in a soul that's been regenerated, a soul that has had the light of heaven enter it, the darkness begins to separate from the light. There begins to be a difference in that person. It's not all darkness now, there is darkness and light. Again, Paul picks this up and he says you're all children of the light. We are not of the night, nor of the darkness.

Then Genesis 1:11, "God said, Let the earth bring forth fruit." Galatians 5, Paul speaks of how the soul that's been saved, that's been brought to life, that has had the divine light brought into it and that has begun to scatter the darkness, fruit begins to grow in that light.

Then we read in verse 14 to 15, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth." And Jesus picks up this language and says, "You are the light of the world." It's that life has come and light has dawned and fruit has begun to be borne and the darkness begins to be scattered within and light begins to grow, so it should shine out from you into this world.

Then Genesis 1:27, God created man in his own image. Paul speaks of putting on the new man who is created after the image of God. This is the result of this great work of redemption. The old man fades away. There's a new creation. All things are become new. The image of God begins to be manifested more and more and more in the sanctified soul.

Then the creation account climaxes with God blessed the man he had made and gave him dominion over all his creation and is this not what happens when the work of God's Spirit continues in the soul? Where there was anarchy and lawlessness and rebellion, there is now order, there is now beauty, there is now submission, there is now rule and there is now order. Where before there was just chaos and brokenness, now there is dominion and control. Christ and the apostles are saying the creation account was given to us to show us how the work of redemption proceeds in the soul. "All things were made by him, and

for him," and he uses this to show us what must happen in us and help us discern where we are spiritually as well.

But then as we saw this morning, we also notice the analogy of redemption. If you read Genesis 1 to 2, you find Adam there, created as we saw this morning, a real historic individual, but with no real sense that he's representing the whole of humanity. It's only really in James 3 when we see the consequences of the fall that we begin to see that Adam's sin had consequences for all of us. We see that he was, indeed, acting as one for the many. And as we saw this morning, Paul in Romans 5 picks up this language and he says one of the reasons that Adam was made like this as a representative of one for the many was to illustrate what Christ would do the one for the many. This historical one for the many was made to illustrate another historical one for the many. "All things were made by him, and for him." In other words, just as Adam was made as one for many and disobeyed to such destruction, so Christ also the second Adam, the last Adam, was brought into this world as one for many to bring salvation to many. We learn what the second Adam came to do by looking at what happened with the first Adam. We find here the analogy of redemption.

But we also find here the advantages of redemption. Why did God make a Sabbath rest? And why did God institute marriage? Why did Christ decide to do everything in six days and then leave one day for rest? And why did he not just make all men or all women, men and women but just have lots of relationships one with another and they can move from one to the other? Why did he make it one man, one woman, one exclusive relationship? Well, again, "all things were made by him, and for him." They were made to show us the advantages of redemption. To show us, he made the Sabbath to show us that redemption brings rest. He made marriage to show us that redemption brings us into a relationship with himself. A married, exclusive bond. Christ and his apostles pick up both these great institutions and say, "Look, we made this. I made this to show you what salvation is all about. It's about resting and it's about relationship. These are the great advantages of my redemption."

But we also find the apex of redemption or the climax of it. We read here in this verse 16, "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." It's saying heaven itself was created, the end of redemption, the apex of it, the ultimate destination of all the redeemed was made by Christ and for Christ and his people in Genesis 1 and 2. Again, this is confirmed to us. Jesus himself describes it as a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. Right at the beginning he's saying, "I'm going to make a kingdom. I'm going to make a place. I'm going to make a habitation. I'm going to make a country. I'm going to make a city." So many different images are used: a garden, a nation. "I'm going to make a heaven that will be the ultimate, the final dwelling place of the redeemed."

So when we look at all of this, all things made by him, all things made for him, we see the arrangement of redemption; the arena of redemption; the aim of it; we see the accessories and the assistants; we see how creation advanced to show how redemption

advances; we see the analogy of redemption with the first and the last Adam; we see the great advantages of redemption with rest and relationship; and we see the great apex of heaven being created. When we put that all together, what does it tell us? It tells us so much, doesn't it, about the Author of redemption. "All things were made by him, and for him." He did all this for his glory to lift him up in front of all creation, to show what kind of Creator, yes, but also what kind of Redeemer he is. This creation shows us his power. By one word the planets, the galaxies, the universe and everything in them, brought everything into existence that previously had no existence. It was just words. We see his great wisdom when we look at the way the creation has been so designed with such variety and diversity and imagination. We see the beautiful order and regulation. We see even in a fallen world how things fit together so amazingly beautifully. We see his goodness. When we look through Genesis 1 and we see such abundance, such generosity, everything done and given to humanity, it's all telling us about our Creator. It's all telling us about the Redeemer, that he is powerful, that he is wise and that he is good and gracious and kind and merciful. We see in creation Christ lifted up in front of us as the great Redeemer calling needy sinners to himself. He's saying, "Look at my creation and see the arrangements I've made in it for salvation. Look at this world as the stage that I've made for sinners like you to be redeemed on."

Are you fulfilling that role? Here he's made this world, he's put everything just so in it for you. He's given you church and Gospel and preaching and godly parents and Bible and prayer. All these props, all that backdrop, all that stage lighting and it's all set and it's all ready for your redemption and yet are you running off the stage? Are you throwing away the script? Are you saying, "I want nothing whatsoever to do with this arrangement and this arena"? As you go about your daily life and you pick up all the things that God has created in this world, are you seeing how God has made this world and packed so many lessons into even the grass, into the flowers, into the trees, into the clouds, into the sun? How many times he picks it up and he's saying, "I'm preaching to you." You don't need to be in church to hear a sermon. As Psalm 19 tells us, the whole creation is preaching a sermon day after day, night after night, to generations, to nations, to races. Everyone has heard it but is anybody listening to it?

He's got these assistants, these angels that he's made ready to run, to come on errand, to come with words of truth, to come with help in time of need. To minister to those, notice it says not just to those who are heirs of salvation but who will be. In other words, even before a sinner is redeemed, Christ has his eye on that sinner. He's already sending angels into his and her life to protect them and shield them and defend them until he brings salvation to them. He's given so many assistants.

He's saying, "Look, you might not understand theology, it might be a bit complicated, so I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll illustrate redemption in creation. A child can understand Genesis 1 so you can understand how I redeem a soul, how I progress the work of redemption in a soul." Read it and ask for that to happen in your own life. Say, "May the Spirit of God come and hover over me and give life unto my soul. May God come and say, 'Let there be light,' and may he divide the light from the darkness and may light

begin to produce fruit within me and may I begin to shine and may there be order and control brought into my unruly and rebellious life."

He's given us analogies. He's given us things that are week by week in our experience. We see the Sabbath every week. We see marriage, everyday things, and he's saying, "This is what my salvation is all about. Do you want rest? And do you want relationship?"

And do you want to be in the apex of creation? Heaven? Then you need the Author of salvation. You need Christ. No one gets to what he has made in that great heavenly city, heavenly country, without the one who made it. He's the only way. There is no other way.

"All things were made by him, and for him." You were made by him and for him. For him. Are you for him? Are you fulfilling your purpose? Your divinely given purpose in life? Why were you brought to this earth? Why are you here? Here's the answer: for him. That's it. It's not to make a million. It's not to have a successful family, successful career. It's not to raise up children so that they go out in this world and do well. All these things are good and fine. It's not to have lots of pleasure and visit lots of countries. Nothing wrong with that but that's not why we were ultimately made.

We were made for him. For him. And if we do not live for him, if we do not comply with the Maker's plan and instructions, we shouldn't be surprised if we end up on the scrapheap of eternal brokenness. You reject the Creator, you reject the Redeemer, and you reject your only hope of salvation and of wholeness. "All things," including you, including me, "all things were made by him, and for him." Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Lord and our God, may we see Christ in creation that we may also see Christ in redemption. May we know our Maker well. May we acknowledge our Maker. May we live for our Maker. May we fulfill the great end of our being here, for him. In his name we pray. Amen.*