

Romans 8:19-23

Part 2

Romans 8:19-23

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

I want to preface this lesson by saying that the Bible declares things that are sometimes hard for us to understand or fathom, because it declares details about things we can't see, things which don't correspond to our natural life as humans on this earth. It declares things about the spiritual reality of creation, and it declares things about the spiritual beings which God created.

If I have one goal with this lesson, it's to try to identify what *the creature* actually *is* according to scripture. I have done my best to pull from the entire body of evidence we have to do just that. And while it may be hard to understand, we just have to keep in mind that everything we actually know about the cosmos at large, beyond what we can perceive, has been taught to us.

Whether it's been in the secular classroom, or by the Bible—what we learn declares things about the reality of the universe that exists beyond our ability to perceive. And so with that I just ask for everyone to keep an open mind. I don't pretend to understand everything about the subject matter at hand, and in fact I don't think it's possible for us to. But with that being said, let's turn our attention back to our passage.

What we are seeing in Romans chapter 8 is that Paul is actually distinguishing a specific aspect of creation from *the whole of creation itself*, a specific aspect of creation which scripture is here designating as *the creature*. Certainly there are or could be other ways to designate this; the word *creature* itself is not the only way one could choose to designate what is being spoken of

here. But the word *creature* itself *is* a perfectly fitting word. The word creature in modern times often conjures up the idea of some sort of animal, but the word can and has also been used in a more general sense. The first two definitions of the Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language makes sure to distinguish the more general definition of *creature* from the more specific use that we're more accustomed to today:

1. That which is created; every being besides the Creator, or every thing not self-existent. The sun, moon and stars; the earth, animals, plants, light, darkness, air, water, etc., are the creatures of God.
2. In a restricted sense, an animal of any kind; a living being; a beast. In a more restricted sense, man. Thus we say, he was in trouble and no creature was present to aid him.

And so, any created thing is technically a *creature*. That *-ure* suffix of *creature* serves exactly the same purpose as the suffix *-ion*, as used in *creation*. Both suffixes create *nouns* that describe the action, process, or result of a *verb*.

In this case, the verb would be *create*, and the nouns are the things which *result* from that action. Thus *creation* and *creature* both share the same root word, and both share suffixes that serve the same function, and are therefore essentially the same exact words. So why would the translators of our English Bible choose to render it in two different ways?

The words *creature* and *creator* in our English bible here are both translated from the same exact Greek word *ktisis*. And so, detractors might argue that they should both be translated simply as *creation*, as all of the modern bibles do. But the context actually points to there being *two* things at work here, not *one*. That word *also* in verse 21 *is* in fact rooted in the underlying Greek text; the *whole creation groaning together* in verse 22 is also present in the underlying Greek text; and the *ourselves also* of verse 23 *is* found in the underlying Greek text as well. And so this is not simply an argument that rests upon a translation, it's an argument that is based in the very grammar and context of the passage itself.

And so what is implied here is that there is more at work than simply *the whole creation*. There are actually three things in view: there is a particular aspect of creation (the creature), there is the whole creation, and then there is ourselves also.

And we know that *the creature* is not *us* because the *creature* is waiting *for us*, just as the text says.

Thus, *ktisis* in Greek is rendered as both *creature* and *creation* to reflect that there are two different things in view in regards to creation: the whole creation, and a particular aspect of that

creation. And in this way the King James Bible is actually *more specific, more precise*, than the Greek text.

So what the scripture does is give it this designation to help us understand that *the creature* is a particular aspect of creation, as it is drawn in contrast to *the whole creation*. Understanding this is the first step in truly understanding what's sitting in this passage, but this can only be properly demonstrated by taking verses 19 through 23 together.

Verse 21 tells us that “the creature itself also” shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and I mentioned in the last lesson that that word *itself* is not arbitrary, but is calling our attention to the fact that the creature is a particular and distinct thing. *Its own self*, specifically, shall *also* be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and scripture says *also* because *we already know* that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain *together* until now (v22). Paul tells us that we already know this.

And how do we know this? How do we already know about the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together?

Well, we have already discussed the issue of being *joint-heirs with Christ*, and we deduced from the doctrine we've already received in Romans that, since Israel has been declared guilty along with the gentiles, as we learned back from Romans chapters 2 and 3, their kingdom promises in relation to *the earth* must currently be in abeyance, meaning that whatever God is offering us in being *joint-heirs with Christ* cannot relate to the earth.

Israel's dominion in the earth is tied to the fulfillment of their covenant promises, something which cannot be accomplished as long as they are in an “under sin” status, and which will only be accomplished when they receive an “in-Christ” status in the New Covenant at Christ's return. The fact that God is now offering the Jews and gentiles *the exact same thing* tells us that God is not operating according to their covenant promises, which gave them special privilege. Whatever is being offered *cannot* relate to the earth, because dominion over that sphere of creation was promised to the *redeemed, born-again, in-Christ* nation of Israel.

There are only two spheres of creation that God created—*heaven and earth*—and so what we must be appointed to who are saved today, whether fallen Jew or fallen gentile, are the heavenly places. We then went through various Old Testament passages to demonstrate that portions of the heavenly government are actually in rebellion against God.

We also discussed God's response to this rebellion, how on day two of creation, God created a firmament between the highest heaven where His throne is, and the earth, resulting in a separation of the natural creation from His manifest light and glory. That is why for every thing that God creates in Genesis chapter one it says, “And God saw that it was good,” except for *the darkness*, which was actually already there, the firmament on day two, and mankind. For

mankind it says that *God blessed them*. Of course, at the end of day 6, when everything is finished, God looks at the whole of His creation and sees that it was very good. But there are two aspects of that creation that, individually, stand out. *The darkness*, which, as I said, is never said to be created in the six days, but was on the face of the deep in verse 2, and the firmament, which God creates on day 2. Scripture does not describe God seeing either of these aspects of creation and seeing that they were good. And there is a reason for that. The darkness and the firmament are things that relate to Satan's rebellion in the heavens.

Thus, creation, though it is functioning as it should *here and now*, it is not functioning as it will in eternity, when everything is said and done.

But you see how when you follow the doctrine through, and make the appropriate deductions, based upon previous revelation, you are led to understand things that pertain to the following verses? This doctrine is meant to be worked through systematically and viewed in light of all previous revelation. From verse 17 we deduced that being *joint-heirs with Christ* implied something in relation to Christ's authority in the heavens.

In verse 18 we learned about *the sufferings of this present time* that we experience down here on the earth itself. And so it should be no surprise when we get to verse 19 and onward that what's in view is something in relation to *both*.

And so, you see within this passage in Romans 8 a way to distinguish between one aspect of creation and the entire thing. But you do not get that in other bibles. What they do is make *the creature* and *the whole creation* the same thing, so that you lose the specificity of what this passage is actually talking about, and thus you lose the specificity of our hope and calling, because it is *the creature specifically* which is waiting for our manifestation. And this is exactly what Romans 8:19 says:

Romans 8:19

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The *earnest expectation of the creature* waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. It does not just say expectation, but *earnest* expectation. That word *earnest* implies something *sincere*, something *serious*, something with *gravity*. The fact that there is an *expectation* implies *personhood*, it implies that the creature is something more than the inanimate, material object of space and the things which materially occupy it.

In order to help us understand and identify what the creature *is*, I want us to compare a passage from Romans chapter 1, and compare it with a passage from Deuteronomy chapter 4.

Romans 1:21-25

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Now, what Paul is alluding to no doubt is the history of mankind in general, but he is actually specifically referencing a passage of scripture here. Paul is alluding to Moses' warning to the Israelites in Deuteronomy chapter 4:

Deuteronomy 4:15-19

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

By comparing these two passages, we actually see that the end of the process of man's devolution into idolatry was to then lift up his eyes to heaven. Romans 1 doesn't use the word heaven, but what it does is *pull from* and *allude to* Deuteronomy chapter 4, so that we should already know *exactly* what he means when he goes on to describe mankind as having worshipped and served *the creature* rather than the Creator.

We see in both passages, man's idolatry begins with the graven images of *man*, then begins to devolve into *birds and beasts*, then devolves yet again into *creeping things*, things which creep upon the earth such as snakes or insects. But notice the final step in both passages is for man to turn his eyes *up*, to the *host of heaven*, and worship *them*. We typically read the phrase *the creature* in Romans 1 as if it is simply referring us back to man, and to birds and beasts, and to the creeping things themselves. But when we compare this passage with Deuteronomy 4, we see that Romans 1 is not pointing us back to *man*, or to *beasts*, or to *creeping things*, but is pointing us *forward* to something else altogether.

The final step in man's idolatry, after having made graven images to themselves and to the animal kingdom, was to then begin to look *up* and worship something else: the sun and the moon, the stars, even *the host of heaven*. And so, whatever the creature *is*, it obviously has something to do with the heavenly places—with the sun, the moon, the stars, even the hosts of heaven.

The phrase *host of heaven* is a phrase that is equivalent to the phrase *the creature*, and which is found throughout the Old Testament and once in the New Testament, and can refer to both the physical elements of the second heaven, as well as to the spiritual beings that inhabit them:

Deuteronomy 4:19

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

That word *even* means *even with* or *equal to*, and is equating *the sun, moon and stars* with *the host of heaven*. But what scripture, and what *God*, has in view when He says this through Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 4, goes beyond the physical objects of the sun, moon, and stars themselves. These physical aspects of the universe, such as the sun, moon, and stars, appear to be linked to the dominion of angelic beings, or to "gods."

Deuteronomy 17:2-3

2 *If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant,*

3 *And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded...*

We see that scripture is equating the sun, moon, and stars with “other gods.” Angels are even specifically referred to as *stars* in the Bible:

Revelation 1:20

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Certainly the literal stars are not the angels themselves, but there is an association that the angelic beings have with the stars, as if by way of legal jurisdiction. The angelic beings have *roles*, they have *offices*, and these offices must somehow correspond to the physical universe.

And so, while the phrase *host of heaven* is used in reference to the sun, moon, and stars, it is also used specifically in reference to *spiritual beings*, and these beings are sometimes associated with false gods, or idols:

1 kings 22:19

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

2 kings 21:3

For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

In the first example, we see that the host of heaven is referring to the angelic realm in general, and we know this because in the context, the Lord is speaking to them, asking who will go and persuade Ahab, and a spirit comes forth and proposes to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. And so the host of heaven here is obviously a reference to the angelic, spiritual realm.

In the second example, we see that *the host of heaven* here is specifically associated with *Baal*, a false pagan god.

Consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:

1 Corinthians 10:20

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

And so, the phrase *the creature*, we saw by comparing Deuteronomy 4 and Romans 1, is equivalent to the phrase *the host of heaven*, and *the host of heaven*, though used in some sense to the physical elements of the universe, actually points us to the angelic beings that reside there, and have dominion there. From this we can conclude that *the creature* is actually angelic in nature.

With that being said, scripture does not say in Romans chapter 1 that mankind *served* the images of man, or of the animal kingdom; but scripture does specifically say that mankind not only *worshipped* the creature, but *served* the creature.

How can you serve the sun, moon, and stars? They are, after all, *inanimate*. Servitude implies that you are subjected to a will outside of your own. It is because this phrase, *host of heaven*, involves not only the physical aspects of the universe, but the spiritual entities that exist there, that have jurisdiction there.

If you look for that specific phrase, *the creature*, in the Old Testament, you won't find it. But what you will find is the phrase, *the living creature*. Many times this phrase is used in regards to terrestrial animals here on the earth. But there is one other use that I find interesting and that I think has relevance here.

In Ezekiel chapter 1, Ezekiel has a very peculiar vision. In this vision, he sees an angelic being which he proceeds to describe:

Ezekiel 1:1-11

3 *The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.*

4 *And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.*

5 *Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.*

6 *And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.*

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

While there is much that can be said about this passage, what I want us to see is that in this vision, there is what is described as a *firmament* over their heads made of crystal. This firmament is the edge of the firmament which God made on day two—it's the "edge of space," in other words, and beyond it is the third heaven where God's throne is:

Ezekiel 1:22-28

22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Ezekiel later identifies these beings as cherubim:

Ezekiel 10:20

This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

And so this vision describes the activity of *cherubim*, of angelic beings, under the firmament of the third heaven. Thus, existing under that firmament, they exist in the second heaven, what we would call "outer space." Some have speculated that these carry the throne of God itself, but was God's throne then carried to the river Chebar? Or was this a vision that was to communicate something to Ezekiel and to us? To demonstrate something? And while there's much I don't understand, it appears that these living creatures are somehow supposed to operate within the second heaven, under that firmament.

It appears that spiritual entity referred to as *the creature* is an angelic host who has not rebelled, but who is stationed in the second heaven all the same, and who has suffered the consequence of the firmament created on day two, in that, whereas his purpose was to convey the life of God into the rest of creation, he is now subjected to the darkness of the firmament, which has been co-opted by Satan's forces. The creature was made subject to the vanity of the firmament and to the corruption of the fallen angels who are working in the second heaven.

The creature here, in a literary sense, is what is called a *collective noun*. Though the phrase is singular, it's not referring to a singular entity, but is identifying a group of entities that are associated with one another. It's referring to the angelic beings that operate within the realm of the second heaven specifically. Within this group of beings, it is clear the majority is composed of an apostate element, a group who has rebelled against God and is trying to accomplish their own purposes. Ezekiel 28:14 calls Satan the anointed *cherub*

But there must also be some who have not rebelled, and who have been taken captive, in a sense, by the satanic forces, and who are waiting for our manifestation as sons of God, because then we will be given charge over those heavenly authorities and will bring the life and character

of God the Father back into creation, so that it functions as God would have it. All the foundations of the earth are out of course because of these unjust gods, ruling in the heavens, Psalm 82 says. But we are going to bring them back into course.

The bondage of corruption for the creature is not physical decay. Do angels die? No. We think of the bondage of corruption here on earth in terms of physical death and decay. But angels don't die. Angels possess spiritual bodies fit for the heavenly places. The things of the heavenly places aren't subject to decay the way that earthly things are—there isn't even any atmosphere, any *oxygen*, for physical bodies to decay. It is an entirely different sphere of creation. And while the physical universe is subject to the law of entropy—sun's and burning out, things are winding down—there is no way for us as created beings to fix that. God upholds all things and sustains all things, and the physical corruption of the creation is going to be restored by Him. But we are going to be in charge of the governmental aspects of creation under Jesus Christ.

The bondage of corruption for the creature is his bondage to the satanic rebellion at work in the second heaven. The creature will be delivered from the bondage of that corruption into what? Into renewed physical life? No, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It's going to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the hands of governmental agencies who reflect the character of God. There must be a correspondence between the bondage of corruption and the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And as we will see, that phrase glorious liberty actually has to do with how we operate.

I know that if you were to read Romans 8 in isolation, it appears that all that is in view is the physical creation being delivered from physical decay, that what's in view is simply the physical processes themselves. But there is more in view than the physical. There is a spiritual element as well.

And so, while there is much more to be said, I think we've identified that the phrase the creature here in Romans 8 has in view something very particular, that it has in view a specific aspect of the angelic realm that is currently

We shall judge angels, that word judge in Greek, *krino*, also carries with it the idea of avenging. We avenge angels. Romans 8 says the creature shall be delivered, delivered into our hands. Judge is the correct word there bc it has the fullest semantic range of what we will be doing