

Creation Care: A Biblical Mandate

Introduction

This is a joint statement from Scripture Union International, United Bible Societies, British and Foreign Bible Society, in partnership with and facilitated by A Rocha International.

We have a shared heart for the Bible and how the Christian Scriptures declare the goodness of God's creation and the unique role given to humanity to care for it. We acknowledge the need for lament and repentance about the current state of creation and any role we may have played, however big or small, in humanity's failure to serve and protect all that has been entrusted to us.

It is our hope and prayer that this short statement will serve in seeing Scripture Union movements, as they serve children and young people especially, and Bible Societies play their part in helping the church to care and protect our common home, God's good creation.

We acknowledge much work has been done on the biblical basis for creation care and encourage others to read these longer, supporting statements alongside this one:

- Lausanne / World Evangelical Alliance Creation Care Network (LWCCN): [*Good News for All the Earth: The Korean Invitation to Respond to the Gospel*](#)
- A Rocha Worldwide Family: [*A Rocha Commitment to Creation Care*](#)
- Roman Catholic Church: [*Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis On Care for our Common Home*](#)

Overarching text: Colossians 1:15–20

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

1. God and Creation

Key text: Genesis 1

Other texts: Genesis 1:31; Psalm 24; Colossians 1

Before anything was made, God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – existed in perfect, loving relationship. God freely chose to create and spoke the world into being (Genesis 1). When God looked at all he had made, he declared it ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31).

The whole of creation belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). He delights in it, and so should we. To delight in creation means rejoicing in its beauty and diversity, and taking responsibility for caring for the world God has placed in our hands.

2. Humanity and Creation

Key text: Genesis 1:26

Other texts: Genesis 1:26,27; Genesis 2:7–15; Psalm 8

Human beings are part of creation. We are formed from the dust of the earth, yet we are made in the image and likeness of God. God has given humanity a unique role within creation: to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

In the Old Testament, kings were often called shepherds of their people. This picture helps us to understand our responsibility. We are not to dominate or exploit, but to serve. Our God-given calling, as those made in the image of God, is to be servant-stewards who love and care for God’s world, nurturing and protecting it, to help it flourish.

3. Sin and Creation

Key text: Romans 8:20–22

Other texts: Genesis 3:17–21; Romans 3:23

Human beings have not lived up to the responsibility that God gave us (Romans 3:23). We lament that we have failed to relate justly and care lovingly for the creation entrusted to us by God. Because of sin, creation has been ‘subjected to frustration’ (Romans 8:20). No part of creation is untouched by the effects of human rebellion against God. All creation suffers and longs for healing. This reveals the need for a Saviour who redeems not only people but the whole created order.

Humanity’s selfish choices and sinful behaviours damage God’s creation. This damage provokes us to repent and lament for our contribution, big or small, to the current state of God’s creation, and we make a fresh commitment to serve and protect it.

4. Covenant and Creation

Key text: Genesis 9:1–17

Other texts: Exodus 23:10–12; Jeremiah 29:4–7

God does not abandon his creation. In the story of the flood, God saved not only Noah and his family, but also the animals. God then made a covenant with all living creatures that he will never again destroy the earth by flood (Genesis 9:11–17).

God's relationship with his people is closely tied to the land. His laws guide every part of life, including care for the rest of creation. The Sabbath laws require the land and animals to rest (Exodus 23:10–12). Even when God's people are exiled for their disobedience, they are told to settle, plant gardens and seek the peace and prosperity of the city in which they live (Jeremiah 29:4–7).

Through God's covenants and laws, the people of God are intended to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6), not only through how they relate to God and their neighbours, but also in their treatment of the animals and land in their care.

The Old Testament prophets cried out for justice (Isaiah 61:8; Amos 5:24) and looked forward to the time when God would come to judge, save and bring reconciliation of all things, healing relationships with God, between neighbours and with all of creation (Hosea 2:16–23).

5. Christ and Creation

Key text: John 1:1–14

Other texts: John 3:16; Psalm 24; Romans 8:19,21; Philippians 2

John's Gospel begins by showing Jesus as the eternal Word, through whom all things were made. The Creator becomes part of creation as he takes on flesh. Jesus lived within the world he made, and, in his teaching and miracles, we see his deep connection to creation and his authority over it (Mark 4:35–41; John 2:1–12; Matthew 6:26–30; Luke 8:4–15).

Jesus came as a servant King. He showed what true dominion looks like – care, protection and self-giving love, even to the point of laying down his life. His death and resurrection dealt with more than just human sin; it also began God's work of reconciling 'all things' to himself (Colossians 1:19,20). Jesus' physical resurrection and bodily ascension are signs of God's new creation breaking into the world.

Jesus is Lord over all things, and the good news of his coming kingdom speaks of and calls us to the restoration for the whole of creation.

6. Future Hope for Creation

Key text: Revelation 21:5

Other texts: Romans 8:21; 2 Peter 3; Revelation 21,22; 1 Corinthians 15; Isaiah 65:17–25

The physical resurrection of Jesus is the ‘first fruits’ and guarantee of the future God has promised (1 Corinthians 15). Christ will return to renew all things (Revelation 21:5), to finally put an end to evil and death and to bring the fullness of his kingdom on earth. The Bible begins in a garden and ends with a Garden City – creation restored, fulfilled and at peace.

Scripture speaks of judgement and hope. There is both continuity and discontinuity between this world and the world to come (2 Peter 3, Malachi 3:2–4). God’s final work of renewing this creation into a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13). This fits with his character as the Creator who loves the world and with the Old Testament visions of peace after judgement (Isaiah 65:17–25).

We affirm that creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and will share in the freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21). Our sure hope in Christ is that all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5).

7. The Church’s Calling to Creation

Key text: Mark 12:30,31

Other texts: Romans 8:19; 1 Corinthians 3:10–15; Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Corinthians 12

The risen Christ is Lord of all creation and the head of his body, the church. God’s Spirit, present and at work within creation, has been sent to empower the church as the body of Christ in the world (Ephesians 1:22). Creation is waiting for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19). This means the church is called to act as Christ’s hands and feet in the world.

As image-bearers, God sends us in the power of the Spirit to embody and witness to the coming kingdom of justice, peace and restored relationships. Children, young people and adults are all promised this same Spirit and are given the same calling towards caring for the world. Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets in his commands to love God and neighbour (Mark 12:30,31). As disciples of Jesus and members of the body of Christ, we nurture and protect creation because it belongs to God, who made it and loves it. As our common home, creation sustains the life of all our neighbours, thus the care and protection of creation is intrinsic to our loving of neighbour, near and far.

We have been entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), grounded in Christ’s work of reconciling all things to God (Colossians 1:20). As the church lives this out, we bear witness to the hope of God’s new creation and look forward to the return of Jesus and the day when all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5).