



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

The Cosmic Temple: From Eden to Eternity

Bible Reading: PSALM 148:1-5, 7, 9-13

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

[Join our citKids Connect discussion at 11am](#)

¹ Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights. ² Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly armies. ³ Praise him, sun & moon; praise him, all you shining stars. ⁴ Praise him, highest heavens... ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD... ⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, all sea monsters & ocean depths... ⁹ mountains & all hills, fruit trees & all cedars, ¹⁰ wild animals & all cattle, creatures that crawl & flying birds, ¹¹ kings of the earth & all peoples, princes & all judges of the earth, ¹² young men as well as young women, old & young together. ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD..." (PS. 148)

SUMMARY:

The church is God's Temple today, where He dwells and is worshipped. The church as Temple fits in the Bible's overall narrative arc. Eden was the initial cosmic temple for God to dwell among his creation; Revelation ends with the ultimate Temple. Creation as God's cosmic Temple implies that, not only humans, but also, all God's creatures were made to worship God. Psalm 148 reflects this theme; Revelation also portrays all creation united in songs of praise to God and the Lamb (Rev. 5:13). If the whole creation—animals, birds, fish, etc.—worships God, so should we. This realization ought to affect our appreciation of nature and our care for God's creation.

Creation Called to Worship—Psalm 148

- "The...entire created order...[is] a cosmic Temple...in which all creation (human & non-human) are called to worship their Creator...Psalm 148...calls...heavenly & earthly creatures to praise their Creator." –Richard Middleton

- “Psalm 148 invites *praise from the totality of creation...Every creature & everything* is invited to praise God...Ps. 148 is a logical choice for the 1st Sunday after Christmas.” –Clinton McCann
- Apply: ‘If creation sings in worship, so will I.’ Let’s join the worship. God appreciates ‘nature’ & its praise; so should we.

Bible’s Meta-narrative—God’s Temple: From Eden to Eternity

- Genesis’ “opening chapters...[describe] *God’s blueprint for the earth. God intends that the world should become His dwelling place...*This blueprint is...brought to completion [as]...the New Jerusalem...in Rev. 21-22... Movement from... Eden to the New Jerusalem underlies all...Scripture...The biblical meta-narrative affirms that... God’s dwelling place, shared with humanity...should fill the whole earth.” –Desmond Alexander
- The Church is today’s temple (Eph. 2:19-22) at the ‘midpoint’ of the ‘narrative arc’ from Eden to Eternity

New Heaven & Earth—God’s Ultimate Garden-Temple-City (Rev. 21:1-3, 10, 22)

- “I saw a new heaven & a new earth...² I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...³...I heard a loud voice from the throne: ‘Look, *God’s dwelling [Tabernacle] is with humanity*, and he will live with them...’ He... showed me the holy city, Jerusalem...I did not see a temple in it, because the *Lord God the Almighty & the Lamb are its temple*...He showed me the river of the water of life...[&] the tree of life...” (Rev. 21:1-3, 10, 22; 22:1-2)
- “The *new creation is...an escalated Eden*...the Garden-Temple [has] expanded over the whole earth.” –G. K. Beale

Eden—God’s Initial Garden-Temple

A. Eden—the Holy of Holies of God’s Cosmic Temple for God’s Worship

- “The Garden of Eden is not simply...green space...It is *sacred space* [since] *God is dwelling there* (In Ezek. 28:13 Eden [is] the ‘garden of God’)...In the Bible the cosmos [is] viewed as a Temple...a place for *God’s presence*...The cosmic Temple is *theo-centric* [God-centered].” –John Walton

B. Genesis’ God-centered World View

- “Contrary to popular opinion, the *climactic moment ...is not the creation of humanity*...[but when] God...’rested’ (Gen.2:2-3). ...The *ultimate purpose...of the created world is as a resting place for God, [i.e.,] a temple*.” –Mark Stephens

Creation—God’s Temple where all Creatures Worship (Psalm 148)

A. All Creatures made & called to Worship (Ps. 150:6; 145:21b cf. Ps. 65:12-13; 69:34; 96:9-13; 98:4-9)

- “Let everything that breathes praise the LORD...” (Ps. 150:6)
- “Let every living thing bless His holy name forever & ever.” (Ps. 145:21b)
- “God instilled *within creation the desire to worship Him*...*All creation is capable to worship the Lord*” –Steven Brooks
- “Worship...*is not specific to humans*...*Humans are defined not by our worship...worship is what defines creation* (all creatures are called to worship).” –Richard Middleton
- Apply: The Cosmos is still God’s Temple for worship of God. We may be in ‘lockdown,’ but we’re not under ‘house-arrest.’ Get out into ‘nature’ (woods, park, river, etc.) appreciate God’s creation & His creatures & their worship (e.g. bird-songs)
- “God will speak to us through creation if we...listen. If you feel...your time in front of books or listening to sermons has become stagnant, grab a coat...& step outside into a ‘school’ that never closes...You’ll see God more clearly.” –Gary Thomas
- “If I believe in God’s Son...all creatures will appear 100 times more beautiful to me than before...I’ll properly appreciate the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, apples, pears, as I reflect that he is Lord over & the center of all things.” –Martin Luther
- Apply: Help your children/grandkids appreciate ‘nature.’ A real ‘mouse’ (or ‘bug’) is not related to a computer!

B. Not Pantheism—We don’t worship Nature, that’s pantheism. We (& all creatures) worship the God of Nature.

C. Humans & Animals *not* fundamentally different in Constitution—both have ‘souls’ & ‘spirits’ (Eccl. 3:19-21)

- “Who knows whether the *spirit of man* goes upward & the *spirit of the beast* goes down into the earth?” (Eccl. 3:19, 21)
- Jesus asked: “How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep...” (Mt. 12:12) “*Humans, according to Jesus are not set on a different ontological plane from animals. The difference is one of degree rather than kind.*”—Joshua Moritz

D. Humans’ Unique Role/Status/Office—God’s Image-Bearers (Gen. 1:26-28)

- “Humans are created in the divine image...[this] points *more to our purpose than to the nature of our being.*”—S. Grenz

E. Human Distinctives—

- Humans *not* the sole possessors of a ‘spirit,’ *not* the only creatures capable of worshiping God
- But *humans* are ‘God’s image’ (a role/function/office, not a component) (Gen. 1:26-28)
- God incarnated as a *human* (not any other creature) “God sent forth his Son, *born of woman...*” (Gal. 4:4)
- God’s revelation (Scripture) & gospel for *humans* (not other creatures)
- Yet: The cosmic temple is for creation’s worship of God. God values all creatures & their worship of Him (so should we).
- Yet: Humans—God’s image-bearers—are responsible for creation—do we help creatures praise or make them groan (Ro. 8)?
- “Consider how our cavalier treatment of God’s good creation, our careless...liv[ing]...& our diminishment of the abundance & diversity of life [species’ extinction] have...made us unfaithful stewards [&] hindered our witness...” —Douglas Moo

Creation’s Eternal Worship (Rev. 4:6-8; 5:13-14)

- “Four living creatures...were around the throne...⁷ The 1st living creature was like a lion; the 2nd...was like an ox; the 3rd ... had a face like a man; & the 4th...was like a flying eagle.⁸ Each of the 4 living creatures had 6 wings...Day & night they never stop, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, & who is to come’.” (Rev. 4:6-8)
- “I heard *every creature* in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, & *everything* in them say, ‘Blessing & honor & glory & power be to the One seated on the throne, & to the Lamb, forever & ever!’¹⁴ The 4 living creatures said, ‘Amen’.” (Rev. 5:13-14)
- “Rev. 4 portrays the 4 living creatures as the central worshippers...heavenly representatives of the...creatures of earth, [who] unceasingly give...God the praise...all creation owes Him...Rev. 5 describes all creatures worshipping God.”—Richard Bauckham
- “Rev. 5:13 is...a proleptic vision [a preview] of the worship offered in the New Jerusalem.”—Simon Woodman
- Apply: Our eternal destination is the New Jerusalem (God’s cosmic temple—Rev. 21-22). What will we do there? We join in creation’s worship of God & the Lamb (Rev. 5:13). Today, personally & collectively (as the church) we anticipate & participate in a preview—joining creation’s song. Let’s ‘learn creation’s song’ & practice today!