

Astronomy and the Decree

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. 1 Cor 15:41

The earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fulness, the world and those who dwell therein. Ps 24:1

The heavens *are* yours, the earth also *is* yours; the world and all its fullness, you have founded them. Ps 89:11

The creation of the universe

God made everything in the cosmos for a reason. Since there is no sin mentioned as appearing anywhere but on Earth, all the various parts of the universe are working as God made them to work. While the vast depths of distant galaxies are a mystery to us, the details of the solar system are reasonably well known.

The varieties of planets all have a specific function, from gas giants¹ like Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune to smaller rocky planets like Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars. In fact one planet is so small that it is now better described as a planetoid (minor planet), or a large asteroid (Pluto). Why should some planets be so huge that their mass is twice as large as all the other planets put together (Jupiter)? [Neptune, Uranus and Saturn are also very large]. Why does Jupiter have its own energy source, emitting more energy than it receives from the Sun? Why do some planets have several satellites (moons) but others have none?² Why does Titan (a moon of Saturn) have its own atmosphere? Why do some of Jupiter's moons orbit the planet in the wrong direction? Why do some planets have rings, like Saturn and Uranus?

Well, we are not going to get answers to most of these questions until the glory; current scientific hypotheses are merely speculative. Whatever the purpose of the nine planets, we can be sure that they are doing their job perfectly according to God's creative word; unlike the Earth.

Amazingly, it seems that the chief purpose of the planets is not to serve their own purpose, but to serve man. Most of the planets reflect the light of the sun and can be seen by the naked eye at certain times. Venus can be seen in Britain to be the brightest object in the sky after the moon and the sun. Mars shines with a reddish light, others with a bluish light.

As well as the planets, the stars appear to have a purpose in shining for the benefit of man. In fact, a case can be made to show that the stellar constellations making up the Zodiac were originally nothing to do with astrology but with demonstrating the chief elements of the Gospel as a witness to unbelievers.³ However, that is not our purpose here, you can

¹ While it is mostly composed of gas, it has a rocky inner core.

² Jupiter has four large ones and several small ones. Saturn has 18. Neptune has two large ones and six smaller ones. Uranus has several. Mars has two. Earth has one. Pluto has one.

³ The zodiac is a belt of the heavens within about 8° either side of the ecliptic (the path of the sun), incorporating the positions of the sun, moon, and most planets. It is divided into twelve equal divisions or signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces). Note the subjects of a Virgin, a lion (kingship), a scorpion (the devil and demons), a ram (sacrifice), the scales of judgment etc. Job 38:32 refers to these constellations ('Mazzaroth' KJV). Modern constellations do not represent equal divisions of the zodiac, and the ecliptic now passes through a thirteenth (Ophiuchus –

find books on that subject.⁴ The point is that the observable planets and stars were created to serve man and to point to God's glory.

God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth. Gen 1:17

Their purpose was not to do with something distant in the universe but to give light to the earth.

And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. Deut 4:19

Stellar objects are given to man.

So, the universe is perfect, doing its job according to God's word, and stellar objects have a purpose for mankind. But there is one exception.

The anomaly in the universe

There is an anomaly in the universe. The earth is an anomaly in the universe that God created. The whole of the cosmos does what God commands it to do. There is no imperfection anywhere in the universe except on earth. Only on earth do we see sin and rebellion to God, both in men on the earth and the evil angels that were put in bondage around the earth.

This anomaly is referred to in the Lord's prayer where Jesus asks his disciples to pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is a statement that God's will is done in heaven where angels obey God's every simple thought and command, but is not done on earth as a result of the rebellion of demons, the fall of Adam, and the sin of all men. Thus The Lord's prayer refers to the decree of God whereby God will change the situation on the Earth from one of rebellion and iniquity to one of harmony, righteousness and holiness. The decree of God will resolve this anomaly in the universe where the earth stands out from the rest of the planets in not obeying God's will.

The great change

The purpose of God's decree is to turn the earth from being a blot in the universe, a place full of sin and degradation, a place of pain and suffering, a place of darkness and self-centredness, to be changed to a place of righteousness. The earth will no longer a place of darkness in the universe; in the plan of God it becomes the very centre of the universe. It becomes the place where heaven and earth are united, where God and man are in harmony. Under God's decree the earth is turned from being the blackest place in the universe to being the brightest place.

The purpose of God is seen in changing what man ruins and bringing glory and holiness in its place. God turns darkness into light, evil into good, and discord into harmony. How great is the grace of God that he turns the earth from being the bleakest, darkest place in the universe into being the very centre of his home and operations.

This change not only affects men and not only removes the problem of the devil and his rebellious angels, who will be cast into the lake of fire with all workers of iniquity, but it also changes nature itself. Sin did not only ruin man but sin had a huge effect on nature itself. The role of animals changed; nature was brought into bondage longing for the

serpent bearer). Also, owing to precession, the signs of the zodiac now roughly correspond to the constellations that bear the names of the *preceding* signs.

⁴ Notably by Seiss and Bullinger. Detailed exposition of this has often led to pure speculation and fantasy.

restoration it would know at the revealing of the Son of God. Paul explains this in Romans chapter 8.

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Rm 8:19-22

This shows that every aspect of nature on earth, from animals to seasons, to climate and to earth's topography, has been subjected to 'futility'; to a purposelessness, perverseness and hopelessness devoid of truth. It did not choose this but was subjected to it by man's sin, which disrupted the earth itself. It is now in 'the bondage of corruption' or decay.

In the beginning there was no second law of thermodynamics, which states that everything decays.⁵ The tendency to decay in the world came as a result of sin; it is sin which brings forth death and destruction.

The changes in the world's ecosphere were noted after the fall of man and even more after the flood, the result of judgment on the continual sin of man. Originally man and animals only ate vegetation (Gen 2:16) but after the fall man and many animals became carnivores. There was no death (required by carnivores) until the appearance of sin, '**through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread**' (Rm 5:12). This is only changed in the new creation after the Day of Judgment when carnivores return to being herbivores (Isa 11:7).

The changes to the earth's ecosystem are more apparent after the flood. Before the flood there was no mention of rain and the earth probably had little seasonal change with atmospheric and climate conditions very different to today. These systems enabled animals and insects to grow very large, something which cannot happen today due to the different atmospheric pressure.⁶ After the flood we have the introduction of very variable seasons and the different climate conditions in various parts of the world (Gen 8:21-22). The destruction of the flood also led to great changes in topography, causing mountain building, new geographical features and continental changes. Great changes in temperature were also initiated and would have created the first ice-age in some places.

The point is that the sin of man resulted in massive changes in the earth subjecting it to futility and destruction; '**the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water**' (2 Pt 3:6). Nothing now works as it should and this damage has only been worsened since the industrial and technological revolutions, as made apparent in the devastation of rain forests for instance.

However, creation is also to be 'delivered from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty'. There will be a future change in the earth whereby all the effects of man's sin will be burned up in a moment and the earth restored to its initial created beauty and harmony:

⁵ This is a simplified statement of the law which says that heat always flows from a body at a high temperature to one at a lower temperature, and it is impossible for heat from a cool body to flow of its own accord into a hot body. Another, equivalent, formulation of the second law is that the entropy of a closed system can only increase. This 'heat death' [energy loss, 'entropy'] will occur unless an energy source is involved to reverse it. All matter is becoming more disordered, i.e., as the inventor of the concept (in 1854), Rudolf Clausius, said, 'the entropy of the universe tends to a maximum'.

⁶ Hence the dying out of dinosaurs and other large species.

The heavens and ... are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ... all these things will be dissolved ... the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Pt 3:7-13

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ... Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Rev 21:1, 5

After the coming of the Lord, the world is changed and restored to its former nobility. Every touch of sin will be dissolved and purified by fire.

The upholding of the universe

But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word. 2 Pt 3:7

Scientists, despite their technological advances, are still at pains to explain how the universe holds together, how it consists, why it doesn't fall apart, how the various bodies relate to each other without chaos. All sorts of theories are proposed to explain this, each one leading to further intractable problems, such as Dark Matter, Dark Energy, Dark Flow, Inflation, Anti-Matter, parallel universes and so forth.

They will never come to a final conclusion on this matter since it is Christ himself, the word of God, holding the universe together. It exists in him.

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Col 1:15-17

The word 'consist' means, to place together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together; to set one with another; to put together by way of composition or combination, to put together, unite parts into one whole; to be composed of, consist. All things in the universe are banded together in Christ. It is the Lord who preserves the universe and the universe only consists in him.

This is a reflection of the body of Christ. The saints all consist in him, they are banded together in him, their life source is in him, they relate to each other in him. Individual saints only have new life because they are found in Christ. Together, the church is the body of Christ and the manifestation of him. In the same way so is the universe. The glory of the universe is a manifestation of the glory of Christ. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the invisible force holding the cosmos together is Christ and not some new human theory.

The Day of Christ – the focal point of the universe

When the Lord returns we have something new happen in all history – the Second Person of the Trinity comes to the earth in the flesh, in material form, in all the glory of the Godhead. The Son of God, comes to earth in all the glory of the sovereign monarch of creation. This has never happened before.

In the past we have seen the Second Person come to earth as a man, but he laid his glory aside and veiled it by his flesh (Phil 2:7; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 10:20). The glory of his divine nature was hidden by his flesh, and his glory laid aside, because the divine glory would have instantly killed every sinful person seeing it.

We also have the theophanies and appearances of God as an angel in the Old Testament, where again the glory of God was hidden under a different form to protect the people conversing with God. God did not come in all his glory in these cases.

However, at the Second Coming nothing is held back; the Lord returns in his full glory and ends the creation as it stands now in order to bring in a new one.

It is at this time, the central point of creation, that everything changes for earth. At this point the decree of God in salvation is fulfilled. Not only are the saints changed in the twinkling of an eye to be like Christ in bodily form, but creation itself ends its subjection to futility and is restored to perfection and holiness. At this point the earth ceases to be the black spot in the universe, the place of darkness and sin, and once more becomes the central point in all the cosmos; the place where God dwells in material form with his perfected people.

Love reigns

At the moment the world is full of sin, something that God hates. The world is full of suffering, violence, corruption and evil deeds – something God abhors. Creation itself, the natural order, has fallen from God's created purpose and is in futility (perverseness); God hates this also. However, when Christ returns and when the world is changed and filled with glorified saints, love reigns over the whole universe with no darkness at all. Sin is eradicated and all is blessed and in harmony.

After the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment, God is able to love the world in all its fulness once more. No longer is the earth the black spot in the cosmos, but now is the source of light for the whole universe.

But what about Jn 3:16?

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Jn 3:16-17

Does this verse not teach that God loves the world and all the men on it even now?

No it certainly does not. It is easy to prove that God hates sinful men because his word everywhere says so (e.g. Ps 5:6, 11:5). God's word also states that he hates certain individuals and groups (Rm 9:13; Rev 2:6, 15). If God hated just one person then he cannot love all. Only those in Christ, the elect, are loved (Eph 1:4-5) because Christ is the only thing in this world that is beloved by God.

If the word, 'world' means 'all men' in verse 16, then it also means 'all men' in verse 17 [**'the world through Him might be saved'**] – but this would mean that there is no hell and everyone is saved (the heresy of universalism). We know that the Bible contradicts such an idea, so 'world' here cannot mean 'all men'.

But what about the earth; is this not loved as God's creation?

The earth mourns *and* fades away, the world languishes *and* fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth. Isa 24:4-6

Just as man was God's creation and ruined by sin so that God hated him, so the earth was perverted by sin, subjected to bondage and hated by God in a cosmos that is loved. As the Lord controls man's sin in history and is sovereign over it for his own purpose, so also God

is sovereign over the traumas of nature and controls it for his good pleasure. Repeatedly we are told that God controls the wind, waves, rain, flood, famine and so on.⁷ God is sovereign over the good and the evil things that take place (Isa 45:7; Lam 3:38; Amos 3:6). If this were not true then chaos would reign and we would have not hope; neither could God control history. This is no god. So God controls the processes of the earth, but the natural forces which lead to destruction only occur because the earth was damaged by sin and ruined. There were no hurricanes in Eden.

What John 3:16 teaches is that God created the earth to bring forth his chosen people, the elect. He loved the world that he created for the elect and sent his beloved Son to rescue those people,⁸ those who would believe in him.⁹ The world will be saved through this provision of the Son. All this is true. After the Second Coming the world is saved through fire. God loves the world as he sees it in his plan; however at this point in time the world is far from God's purposes and in the darkness of sin, and God hates this aspect. How could God love the earth that is overrun by his enemy and by sinful men? Even nature itself wants to be free of this situation.

God hates perversity and everything on the earth is perverse, not working according to the divine purpose; thus it is currently hated by God. But because God loves the world as it appears in his divine plan, the world is eventually changed and renewed, along with the elect, and brought into love and purposefulness.

Regarding the world as it is now in sin, it has its own false god (2 Cor 4:4); its own false ruler (Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Eph 2:2); its own demonic worship systems (1 Cor 10:20) and it has hosts of wickedness dominating everything (Eph 6:12). In fact the whole world is under the sway of the devil (1 Jn 5:19), in bondage (Rev 20:2), deceived by Satan (Rev 13:14, 20:8), and he is the real father of the vast majority of the world's population (Jn 8:44). It is inconceivable that God loves all this. If God loved it as it is he would not destroy it completely by fire.

Your wrath has come, ... and should destroy those who destroy the earth. Rev 11:18

True and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication. Rev 19:2

At the Day of Judgment all this wickedness is put into one place of condemnation, the lake of Fire, and removed from God's presence and the universe (Rev 19:20, 20:10, 15, 21:8). The devil, all his demons and all wicked men (the reprobate) will be together placed, for eternity, away from God's presence in this dimension of torment as an everlasting testimony of God's righteous judgment on sin. The removal of all sin and all demonic activity enables God to love the earth and all that is on it once again. At the moment he loves it for the elect and for Christ, he loves the place it has in his purpose, but after the Day of Judgment he loves everything on it; everything on earth is in divine harmony.

Conclusion

The great wonder of the divine decree, of God's eternal plan, is that he allowed for the world to be taken from its original goodness and purity to be ruined by the sin of men and the working of the devil. But the fulness of the decree is that this place of darkness in the cosmos is changed, as a result of the work of Christ, to be the brightest place in creation.

⁷ Gen 8:1; Ex 14:21; Ps 29:10; Ps 104:6-7; Ps 148:8; Job 38:11.

⁸ 'In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 1 Jn 4:9-10

⁹ John tells us elsewhere that only the elect will be drawn to Christ by the Father, Jn 6:44, 65.

The world was made for Christ, through Christ, by Christ and to Christ. His patience and long-suffering is infinite and is expressed at this time in holding back his anger at sin and restraining judgment until the right time. After the Last Day everything changes and the world Christ made will again be his divine possession of glory as a result of the work he did in redemption. Christ both made the world and redeemed it. It is twice his.

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