

1. This is the first assertion that Lucifer proffered to the angelic community. For him to proclaim that he would “ascend into heaven” indicates that these assertions were developed and presented somewhere in the universe.
2. Therefore, Lucifer’s original sin occurred in the universe and in the environment of space and time. Up to that point the universe was in a condition of status quo perfection.
3. However, we know from the fall of man that sin destroys perfection and results in not only the fall of the sinner from continued relationship with God, but also results in divine judgment upon the very environment in which the sinner functions.

Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam, Jesus Christ said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, [**Genesis 2:17a**] ‘You shall not eat of it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

v. 18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you and you shall eat the plants of the field;

v. 19 by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

51. The divine curse upon the material creation is Paul’s subject in Romans 8:19-22. Some valuable principles are found in this passage and will assist us in interpreting Genesis 1:2. We will note the corrected translation of each of these four verses and follow each with a few principles that are pertinent to our study.

Romans 8:19 The confident expectation of the material universe stands in eager anticipation for the revealing of the sons of God. [EXT]

1. The perfection of the universe prior to the creation of Adam fell when Adam sinned.
2. Since the fall of Adam, the universe itself has been under a curse waiting to be restored once more following the Second Advent of Christ.
3. This anticipated restoration to perfection is the millennial reign of Christ.
4. Between the fall of Adam and the Second Advent of Christ the world is designed to kill us.



5. The reason for the fallen creation's "eager anticipation" of the Second Advent is the subject of:

Romans 8:20 For the creation was subordinated [at the fall] to futility [loss of predetermined function] against its own will but because of Him Who has subordinated it in the time of confidence [confident expectation of the Second Advent].

1. The original creation was perfect and so was the restoration. When Adam sinned, it resulted in not only the human race falling under a curse but also the creation itself.
2. In the perfect environment of Eden, the earth was so ordered that its ecosystem efficiently provided year-round sustenance for our original parents even though the mandate to Adam required him to maintain it:

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

3. Thus, the Lord restored the earth to provide man with his sustenance with minimal effort. Once man fell and the earth was cursed along with mankind, its benevolent provision entered into decay and it ceased to perform at its pristine efficiency.
4. Prior to the fall, the earth was a perfectly functioning machine but following the fall it entered, metaphorically, into frustration, meaning that it could no longer provide sustenance at the same level of efficiency as before and this condition will continue until the Second Advent of Christ.

Romans 8:21 Therefore the material universe itself shall be set free from slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

1. Adam's fall caused the universe to fall. This resulted in the earth entering into a state of corruption and decay that did not exist before.
2. Note the English words "corruption" in the King James and New American Standard and "decay" in the New International Version. These two words translate the Greek noun $\phi\theta\omicron\rho\acute{\alpha}$ *phthorá* and it will be an important part of our study later on.
3. This verse indicates that the universe, which was thrown into decay and corruption by the fall of mankind, will be restored to perfection when believers of every completed dispensation achieve ultimate sanctification at the Second Advent.

4. All believers become a new creation at salvation and this will be manifested for all when Old Testament saints are resurrected at the Second Advent.
5. The environment for these glorified believers must be complementary to their universal perfection therefore the universe will be liberated from its curse as well.
6. The next verse however brings us back to the present reality of corruption and decay in both the universe and the human race.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the entire universe groans [**συστενάζω** (*sustenázō*)] along with us and suffers the pains of childbirth [**συνωδίνω** (*sunōdínō*): a personification—creation is depicted as enduring labor pains & suffering between the curse in Genesis 3:17b and the Millennium] together with us until now.

1. The universe has been placed in a status of undeserved suffering. It was designed to provide perfect logistics for perfect people but when Adam fell then the universe also fell.
2. The verb “groans” is the present active indicative of **συστενάζω** (*sustenázō*). It is a hapax legomenon taken by Paul from the Classical Greek and its best definition is “to lament.”
3. This definition is corroborated by Liddell and Scott in *A Greek-English Lexicon* and by Kittel and Friedrich in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.
4. “Lament” is defined by *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.): “to mourn aloud; to express sorrow, mourning, or regret; to cry out in grief.” This demonstrable aspect of lament is described in some dictionaries as “sighing.”
5. Both nature and mankind look back to the fall and the corruption and decay it initiated and lament the sin that caused it all. This is expressed metaphorically as “groaning” or sighing.”
6. The present tense of *sustenázō* is static and indicates that the creation and mankind perpetually lament the fall until the Second Advent.
7. Both nature and man look forward to the liberation accompanying the Second Advent when the sufferings of this time are over.
8. The present sufferings are compared to that of a pregnancy. The word that is translated, “suffers the pains of childbirth,” is yet another hapax legomenon, the present active indicative of the verb **συνωδίνω**, *sunōdínō* (noted above in Romans 8:22).

9. Its present tense is customary and indicates that the circumstance of looking toward the deliverance at the Second Advent may be compared to the labor pains associated with childbirth.
10. The customary present also indicates that these pains will continue with increasing intensity until the “delivery” occurs at the Lord’s Second Advent.
11. These two hapax legomena are used by Paul to illustrate the undeserved suffering that has been imposed on the environment by the fall of man.
12. Human volition is the cause of sin and sin is the cause of the suffering of the universe. Nature is designed by God to be the glory of man, therefore when man fell, nature also fell, but it was undeserved.
13. The present corruption and decay will all come to an end when the Lord returns. All believers will be in glory and all nature will be restored to its pristine perfection in the millennial kingdom of Christ.
14. Therefore, the first verse of this paragraph can now be appreciated:

Romans 8:18 For I conclude that the sufferings of the present period of time are not comparable to the glory which is destined to be revealed to us.

1. The sufferings of the present period of time involve the corruption and decay of both the human body and the universe between the fall of Adam and the Second Advent of Christ.
2. The question arises: What form does this corruption and decay take? We get very definite guidance from the Greek word found in:

Romans 8:21 Therefore the material universe itself shall be set free from slavery to corruption [φθορά (*phthorá*)] into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

3. The Greek lexicons and dictionaries give valuable data on this word.

Phthorá (φθορά), being brought into an inferior or worse condition. It is used physically of the condition of creation, Romans 8:21.⁴

φθορά, dissolution, deterioration, corruption in the world of nature ... coming into being and passing away. Slavery to decay [**destruction**], Romans 8:21.⁵

⁴ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 235.

⁵ Walter Bauer, “φθορά,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1055.



φθορά, destruction, ruin, especially by some general visitation. B. passing out of existence, ceasing to be. 3. loss by deterioration.⁶

In Philosophical Usage. The question is that of what abides [the earth] in contrast to that which changes [things that are on the earth]. They have a fixed span which undergoes alteration in the world. The concept of [corruption and decadence] is always defined by what abides and is immutable in the cosmos [the eternal]. The main concern of older Greek philosophy is to know this abiding element in the changing and perishing forms of nature. (p. 95)

Philo. φθορά is something whose cause does not lie in God, “the eternal is not subject to corruptibility.” (pp. 100–101)

Corruptible-Incorruptible. φθορά in Romans 8:21 is the “corruptibility” which must pass away as flesh and blood must also pass away.⁷ (p. 104)

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable [φθορά (*phthorá*): corrupted and decayed] inherit the imperishable [ἀφθαρσία *aphtharsía*: incorrupt and eternal].

4. These definitions, along with our context in Romans 8:19-22, bring us to several conclusions:
 1. The restored earth was once in a status quo of perfection described in Scripture as the garden of Eden.
 2. This perfection was transformed into an ongoing process of corruption and decay with Adam’s original sin.
 3. This new process will be the universe’s status quo until the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.
 4. At the Second Advent all believers of every dispensation will be in the status quo of ultimate sanctification, i.e., a body of incorruption with eternal life.

⁶ Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, “φθορά,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 1930.

⁷ Günther Harder, “φθορά,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 9:95, 100–101, 104.



5. This will enable the Lord to return the earth to its pristine perfection, last enjoyed by our original parents in the garden of Eden prior to the Fall.
5. From these definitions several propositions can be put forward in answer to the question, “What form does this corruption and decay take?”
 1. Since our Lord is perfect, He is not the Creator of anything imperfect, corruptible, or decadent.
 2. Therefore, we conclude that the original creation as well as the restored earth following the Luciferian Rebellion was perfect, incorrupt, and free of decay.
 3. The fact that our original parents had perfect life in perfect bodies indicates that the Edenic system was designed to maintain its perfect environment indefinitely.
 4. The tree of life was available to maintain their physical perfection for as long as they remained in status quo perfection in their spiritual lives.
 5. By the same token, as long as spiritual perfection was maintained by Adam and Ishah, natural perfection was maintained in the universe.
 6. However, as soon as spiritual perfection was lost due to original sin it resulted in the fall of our original parents as well as the fall of their environment.
 7. Adam and Ishah entered into the status quo of spiritual death manifest by the corruption of the sin nature and the decay associated with the aging process of the body leading to physical death.
 8. Simultaneously, the perfect environment entered into the status quo of entropy manifested by its involuntary slavery to corruption and involvement in ever-increasing disorder and decay.
 9. Romans 8:21 instructs us that the universe is in τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς: *tēs douleías tēs phthorás*: “the slavery of corruption and decay.”

The creation is now held in bondage which has its source in φθορᾶς, from which it will be set free at some future time, but now moving toward entropy.

(End JAS3-30. See JAS3-31 for continuation of study at p. 301.)

