

The New Creation, Part 2: Coming to Life

A Sermon by Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

4 October 2026

Children's Talk: Before and After

Today we are going to talk about the days of Creation. I have here some items that might help us remember all the things the Lord created in the six days of creation:

1. Light, dividing day from night
2. Waters, divided into those below (the seas) and those above (the clouds and the sky)
3. Land and the plants that grow on it
4. Sun, moon, and stars, to rule during the day and night
5. Sea creatures in the sea and birds in the air
6. Land animals and people

The Lord made everything that exists, from the smallest piece of grass to the largest animals, from tiny fish to massive elephants and whales. He made the entire universe.

But today I want to talk about the before and after. Before I have a black cloth, afterwards a shining white one. Let's read what came before creation:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)

There was nothing, and darkness, before creation; or at least that's what it seemed like; but even then God already existed. We start out that way too; but even when God seems far away, He is already close.

Then at the end of creation, on the seventh day, God doesn't make anything new, but He does something:

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3)

God rested on the seventh day, because there wasn't anything more to make: He had finished His creation. That can happen for us too: a lot of life feels like work, work, work: school work, homework, work on ourselves, work for other people. And the Lord does do a lot of work with us! But in the end, we do have rest, and can remember that it is the Lord who does all the work.

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This week we unpack the second half of the series we began two weeks ago, focused on the seven days of creation. As we did in that service, there will be times for reflection. There is also a handout you can take that covers all seven days along with further questions to reflect on. Last time we looked at how this story is not a literal explanation of how the universe was made; instead it is a spiritually symbolic description of how the Lord makes us into new people. The first four sections we looked at covered the fact that:

- We start out with a tendency towards selfishness (darkness), yet the Lord is present even then;
- We begin the process by just examining ourselves and reflecting on what we find (light);
- We then start to acknowledge what is right or wrong, good or evil, and begin to recognise that we have a higher self and a lower self (waters above and below);
- And then we can start to do things that are good and express ideas that are true (plants).

Today we will cover days four to seven.

There is a parallel between the first set of days and the next set, and it might even start to seem like a repetition:

- Day one saw the creation of light, day four sees the creation of the source of the light, the sun and the moon and stars;

- Day two saw the separation of the waters into those above and below, day five describes the creation of the creatures that live in the waters above and below, that is, sea creatures and birds;
- Day three saw the creation of land and living plants, day six describes the creation of living animals and people, who live on the land and make use of the plants.

There is a spiritual significance in these parallels. We could easily end up thinking that days one to three represent a full cycle of spiritual life: Do some self-reflection, identify what is right or wrong, then do good things. The problem is that this is only a description of a change in external behaviour, and says little about intentions and motivations. The Lord does not want us to just think and behave well; He wants us to have a sincere conviction in the truth and to practice charity from a genuinely loving heart. Days one to three are crucial, as they lay the groundwork for what follows, but the point is what comes next: real, deep, internal, spiritual change and rebirth.

4. Day 4: Sun, Moon, and Stars

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day. (Genesis 1:14-19)

From a naturalistic point of view this is backwards: light was created on day one, and now here on day four the Lord creates the source of the light, the sun. And yet it does match how we experience things. The vast majority of the time we know it is day not because we see the sun, but because we see by the light of the sun. From a spiritual point of view this is exactly how we experience the Lord: we go through life being fuelled by His love and making use of His wisdom long before we

recognize Him as the origin of these things. We act as if our good deeds reflect our own worth and our wise insights are a reflection of our genius or superiority.

This is in fact how the Lord wants us to start: we are like children who are proud for winning a game, not knowing the adult held back somewhat to give us space to practice, or who are proud of our skill at piano, not realizing that the praise we got from our parents does not translate to real artistic talent yet. Their innocent pride is good for them, as it will encourage them to keep working and growing. Likewise, we start off thinking that the good we do is our own accomplishment and the truth we understand is a reflection of our own intellect; but to advance we also have to realize that neither of those are our doing after all (*Secrets of Heaven* §39).

The creation of the sun and moon represents this step, when we realize that faith and charity are not about us after all, but are about the Lord. We see the source, rather than mistaking our own selves for the source. This is a crucial turning point, after which our faith and charity can come alive for the first time. The Teachings of the New Church point out that this is the reason that only inanimate things were created prior to day four, while all the animate things (sea creatures, birds, animals, and people) were created after day four:

Now that he is made alive by love and faith, and believes that the Lord works all the good that he does and all the truth that he speaks, he is compared first to the “creeping things of the water” and to the “Birds which fly above the earth” and also to “beasts” which are all animate things, and are called “living souls.” (*Secrets of Heaven* §39)

The next two sections will look at how we add the Lord’s life, His wisdom and love, to the true things we know and the good things we do.

Reflection:

- *Can you think of a time when you did or thought something selfless, but then immediately undermined that selflessness with excess pride in yourself?*
- *Can you think of a time when you felt a love for someone else so great that it must have come from God? Or seen what to do with such clarity that it could not have been you coming up with an answer on your own?*

Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

5. Day 5: Sea Creatures and Birds

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarming things, living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens." So God created great sea creatures and every living soul that creeps, with which the waters swarmed, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." So the evening and the morning were the fifth day. (Genesis 1:20-23)

Fish and birds represent knowledge or truth, from the simple facts we know about the world to the high truths we believe about spiritual things (*Secrets of Heaven* §40). These truths come alive when we acknowledge and see that all truth is from the Lord, and we speak from that faith not for our own sakes, but for the sake of the Lord. When we first learn information, we tend to put it to use for our own sakes. Take for instance the simple truth that the Word has a spiritual sense, and so is not always literally true. For someone who believes this truth, you might use it to win an argument against an unreasonable person who "foolishly" thinks everything in the Word should be taken literally; it may give you a sense of superiority that you have access to a truth that other churches lack; you may apply it to negate a truth of the Word that you find challenging; and you may discard it as soon as it becomes inconvenient to believe. If these attitudes are your reason for believing the truth, and are the primary way you apply the truth, then there is no life from the Lord in it, and it is a dead faith. Intelligence is for the sake of serving people, not correcting them; wisdom from the Lord is a cause for humility and gratitude, not pride.

Reflection:

- *Can you think of a time when you have used the truth to feed your ego or set yourself over other people?*
- *Can you think of a time when one of your beliefs imposed some uncomfortable/inconvenient obligations on you, but you stuck with it anyway?*

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarming things, living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens."

6. Day 6: Animals and People

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living soul according to its kind: the beast, and creeping thing, and wild animal of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And God made the wild animal of the earth according to its kind, and the beast according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over the beast, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that creeps on the earth."
(Genesis 1:24-28)*

There are two parts to the sixth day of creation: first animals, and then people, who are given charge over the animals. Just as birds and fish represented knowledge and truth in our minds, animals represent the affections and desires of our hearts (*Secrets of Heaven* §45). In other words, they represent the things that we feel, that motivate us, that move us to take action. The ultimate goal of spiritual life is for these motivations and loves to be transformed, from being self-centred and selfish to being focused on the Lord and others. If we were born loving to be selfless and to serve other people spiritual life would be incredibly easy. Unfortunately, we are born with a tendency to love things that are superficial and selfish. It is that pull that makes spiritual life so challenging to begin with.

In many ways the whole point of this spiritual process is to master those desires within us that draw us into selfishness. The goal is to get to a point where we can say, "I want to serve only myself, but for the sake of the Lord and others, I will practice charity. I don't want to do things that are hard or painful, but for the sake of the Lord and others, I will make sacrifices and put in real effort." That better self, that actually prioritizes the Lord and others even over what you deeply love, is

represented by mankind, created in the image of God and given dominion over all the other life on earth.

Reflection:

- *Can you think of one of the harder selfish habits you have, one you have struggled to give up? In what way is selfish or materialistic love holding on to that habit?*
- *Can you think of a time that you loved someone so much that it was easy to make a sacrifice for them?*

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over the beast, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

7. Day 7: Rest

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 1:31-2:1-3)

The end of the sixth day, when creation has been completed, and the rest that follows on the seventh day, represents the ultimate goal of our recreation, when a major shift occurs in how we approach and experience spiritual life. The Lord can reshape us such that we love and are committed to doing what is right and good so much that it's no longer a struggle; it no longer feels like hard work: we simply do it, joyfully, regardless of the sacrifices it may require and the challenges that must be endured. This is the work that the Lord is doing as He regenerates us, and He does not cease leading us to this goal, and brings us into heavenly happiness:

He does not rest until love takes the lead; then the combat ceases. When the work has so far advanced that faith is conjoined with love, it is called "very good;" because the Lord then makes the person His likeness. At the end of the sixth day the evil spirits depart, and good spirits take their place, and the man is introduced into heaven, or into the heavenly paradise. (*Secrets of Heaven* §63)

This end state can seem far off and unrealistic; and it may indeed be the case that we only fully feel it in the afterlife. But the Lord's promise is that He can change our hearts, through regeneration, and so give us rest:

Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 12:28-30)

The New Creation

The first chapter of Genesis in the internal sense deals, in general,
with the new creation of man, or of his regeneration.
(*Secrets of Heaven* §4)

Everyone who is called by My name,
I have created him for My glory;
I have formed him, yes, I have made him.
(Isaiah 43:7)

In the Beginning...

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

Reflection:

- Can you think of a time when you have felt that God was totally absent?
- How has it felt to have done something that seems completely unfixable or unforgiveable?

Day 1: Light and Darkness

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Reflection:

- Where in your life could you use deeper reflection?
- What might be getting in the way of doing that reflection?

Day 2: The Waters Divided

God divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse.

Reflection:

- Can you think of any of your choices or behaviours that might be motivated by selfish or worldly concerns?
- Can you think of any of your choices or behaviours that seem to genuinely be motivated by love and care for others?

Day 3: Land and Plants

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth."

Reflection:

- What are the "low hanging fruit" when it comes to doing good things in your life: the simplest, most comfortable changes you could make for the better?

Day 4: The Sun, Moon, and Stars

Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

Reflection:

- Can you think of a time when you did or thought something selfless, but then immediately undermined that selflessness with excess pride in yourself?
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Day 6: Animals and People

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Reflection:

- Can you think of one of the harder selfish habits you have, one you have struggled to give up? In what way is selfish or materialistic love holding on to that habit?
- Can you think of a time that you loved someone so much that it was easy to make a sacrifice for them?

Day 7: God Rested

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

Reflection:

- What struggles do you most wish the Lord would give you the power to completely and totally overcome?
- What kind of love do you one day hope to have as the main motivation in your life?