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Conducted by  
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WOULD you please comment on Rom. 8:22,23 as I find this passage a little difficult to understand. Does Paul include animals, plants, fish, etc., when he says, "the whole creation groaneth?"

I would like to thank the questioner for directing our minds to the eighth chapter of the Roman letter. I have always thought that this part of the letter moves along like a Beethoven symphony. The arguments move along sweetly and clearly, thought succeeding thought, until we are led to the crashing crescendo, so majestic that it is almost too much for the mind to bear. But there, my emotions are running away with me. Let us turn to the task at hand.

#### The Context

In our study of the Bible, we must never lose sight of the fact that the things which we read were not written directly to us. It seems fairly evident that when Paul wrote this letter to Rome he had never visited the Christians there (See Rom. 1:11-14). If we read on, though, to

the end of the chapter, we can see that he knew all about the deplorable state to which people had sunk. In view of this, I believe he found it necessary to:

- 1) remind the Roman christians of the high calling to which God had elevated them, and
- 2) Make them understand that even though living in such a Godless society grieved them, the all-pervading love of God was waiting to bring them home to Himself.

It is with these points in mind that we approach our question.

#### The Whole Creation

We need to examine this phrase quite closely because it can mean either,

- 1) every kind of creation that God ever created, or
- 2) one objective part of God's creation.

Creation, in the English language, always signifies the product of the creative act, i.e. the creature. This is also signified by the Greek word *KTISIS*. Hence, in Mark 16:15 we read, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". In the original it reads, "having gone into all the world proclaim the glad tidings to all the creation" (The Englishman's Greek New Testament).

Let us now turn our attention to the phrase, 'the whole'. The word 'whole' is rendered by the Greek word *PAS* and means 'all'. W.E.Vine has it that when 'whole' is used with the article it means the whole of one object.

There is another interesting use of *KTISIS* which is found in Heb. 9:11 when the writer says, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building". The phrase 'not of this building' is rendered in the original 'not of this creation'.

To summarise the foregoing, I think we can say that Jesus did not intend his disciples to preach to animals, trees, fish, reptiles, etc.. Furthermore, the creation that built the earthly tabernacle was the human creation, employing human hands. Therefore, I think we can understand that when Paul refers to the whole creation he means all human creatures.

#### Groaning and Travailing

Now that we have reached this point in our study, the remainder of the teaching becomes clear. Paul tells his readers that the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). At this high pinnacle he dismisses the present sufferings as not worthy of consideration when contrasted with the glory which is to be revealed. He echoes the same thoughts in his second letter to Corinth, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 3:17).

Returning to the Roman letter we now find Paul saying, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now". As we read these words we can appreciate what he means. Sin is rampant in the whole of the human creation, and in its train it brings grief, sorrow and pain. The christian living in the midst of this Godless society, is pained by what he knows of the effects of sin and perhaps by his own contact with it. So much so, in fact, that Paul goes on, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23).

Is there a christian who does not fully appreciate the awful depths of sin. Can there be christians who are not waiting for the redemption of the body so that they can be clothed upon with their glorified bodies? I wonder.

#### Conclusion

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). It is with these words that Paul brings into full orchestration the majestic finale of divine forbearance, protection and love.

Who can fail to be moved by what follows. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (8:35-37). We shall conquer because Christ conquered.

Then the final accolade of complete assurance. "For I am persuaded, that neither death,<sup>1</sup> nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:38,39).

I know that chimpanzees can do many things, but they are not the creation that Paul speaks about. I am aware that the brain of a dolphin is similar in weight to the human brain, but the dolphin could not begin to appreciate the message that was being taught. No, it was written to the human creation, and the human is confronted with the cataclysmic despair of sin on the one hand, and the brilliant conception of life with God on the other.

Why, oh why, will the whole creation continue to groan and travail in pain, with no hope?

Why, oh why, does the church continue to rend itself when there are so many souls to be snatched from sin?