

HIS

Nature

Behold, I am making all things new.
REVELATION 21:5

A DEEP MYSTERY

Ten years ago, our nation was faced with the horrific task of cleaning up debris from attacks on the World Trade Center, wreckage amounting to hundreds of thousands of tons. From beginning to end, the removal of twisted steel and concrete took eight months. The work was incredibly dangerous and exhausting.

Now consider this—the earth faces an even greater task of recycling debris from millions of plants and animals that die every day. The “terrorist” causing this unimaginable wreckage is not a foreign enemy, but one very close to us . . . our sin. It was sin that ushered death into the world, and God created decomposition to deal with its consequences—thus mysteriously proclaiming his glory!

All over the globe, the decomposition of plants and dead creatures is a very complex thing. Like a



humongous factory in reverse, tiny critters (called decomposers) must work together to bring about decay. There are more bacteria in a teaspoon of dirt than there are people on Earth! Every handful of soil contains an extensive disassembly line of microorganisms.

Decomposers turn dead plants or animals into nutrients needed by living things. Decomposition takes place just about everywhere in the world—on forests floors, in meadows, at the bottom of lakes, even in the back of your refrigerator.

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Beetles, earthworms, sow bugs, millipedes, slugs, and snails—to name just a few—act as a demolition team. Similar to workmen who bring down an old building with dynamite, wrecking ball, and cranes, these tiny workers “roll in” and dismantle the bodies of dead plants and animals. They faithfully chew up fallen trees and the remains of squirrels, eventually changing them into fine particles of organic material.

Next, soil bacteria use powerful chemicals to reduce the remains of dead organisms and animal waste. Molds also consume tough plant material, such as wood and bark—things bacteria cannot digest. Jesus especially blessed Earth with a very unique decomposer called Actinomycetes (pronounced ak-tih-no-my-SEE-teez), a microorganism that is half bacteria and half fungus. Like a ravenous teenager, it devours the uneaten leftovers from other decomposers.

All this may seem chaotic to us, but decomposition is actually very orderly—reflecting the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nutrients are liberated at just the right rate and in just the right amounts to keep the soil healthy. If too much nitrogen is suddenly released, for instance, large quantities of poisonous ammonia may be produced by the decomposers.

If our merciful Lord had not created decomposers, the entire world would soon be covered hundreds of feet deep in the dead bodies of countless people, animals, and plants . . . and uneaten casseroles! Not a pleasant thought. Earth could not survive long under such conditions.

The destruction of the World Trade Center stands as a testimony to evil. Yet the carnage sin daily causes—seen in the death of plants and animals and people here on Earth (Hosea 4:3)—is greater still. But our incredibly wise and loving God knew beforehand that our sins would have these far-reaching consequences. For this reason, he sewed tiny, mysterious creatures into the fabric of the world’s surface.

Decomposition is also a reminder of our Lord’s sacrifice on a cross. Jesus, our Creator, brings forth life from death. It is through his death and resurrection that sin’s power in our lives has been dismantled and we are given rebirth. What a mysterious and merciful God we serve!

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In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

I PETER 1:3-4