

# CREATOR

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## THE CASE FOR CHRIST'S WISDOM

### Decomposers v. An Unbelieving World First Day of Testimony

*It is He who made the earth by His power,  
Who established the world by His wisdom.  
Jeremiah 10:12*

**Editor's Note:** The following is a fictitious court case where evidence was presented and testimony heard to demonstrate the wisdom of Christ Jesus reflected in the nature of *decomposition*. Moldy foods and the remains of dead animals are disgusting to most people, but the question before the court today is whether or not we see our wise Lord's hand moving in these rotting things? Today's courtroom judge—normally very strict and intolerant of procedures out of the ordinary—is granting unusual latitude for witnesses in a case involving the character of his precious Creator.

**Judge:** "We have before us the case of *Decomposers v. An Unbelieving World*. Will the counsel for the plaintiff please approach the bench."

*(A large, black beetle with red spots flies to*

*the front of the courtroom and lands clumsily on the judge's desk. The beetle is followed by a hoard of bizarre-looking creatures. Startled, the judge pushes back his chair with a jolt.)*

**Judge:** "Who or what are you, and what are all these bugs doing on my desk?!"

**Beetle:** "I'm a hister beetle, Your Honor. Please be patient with our enthusiasm—we are just a few of the many decomposers the Lord God has created, and we have so much to tell you. At this time, I would like to present to the court Exhibit A."

*(The bailiff hands the judge a moldy orange. The judge appears a bit repulsed. He's thinking to himself, "I've received fruit baskets before, but this is ridiculous!")*



Exhibit A

**Judge:** “I presided over a similar case back in 1994. At that time, I became convinced that Christ’s *beauty* was revealed in the lowliest of animals. But now you want me to believe that God’s wisdom radiates from moldy things?! And how is it that the world doesn’t believe in decomposition?”

**Beetle:** “It’s not that the world doesn’t believe in decomposition, Your Honor. It’s that most people don’t see the hand of Jesus working in the process of decay.<sup>1</sup> The decomposition of leaves and fallen trees and dead animals, and the orange in front of you, is a very, very complex thing. God’s wisdom and power are absolutely necessary for decay to occur. You see, Judge, the mystery of Christ’s character—including His forgiving heart—is embedded in things that rot. Because He created the universe,<sup>2</sup> He’s in charge of everything in it, which means He’s in charge of decomposition as well.”

*(As Beetle is talking, a common garden spider starts crawling up the side of the judge’s desk, unnoticed. Upon reaching the summit of the desk, the spider stops to rest on the back of the judge’s bronzed and somewhat wrinkled hand. The judge appears quite nervous.)*

**Beetle:** “Jesus uses an amazing number of different creatures to bring about decomposition in nature. In obedience to our Lord, literally billions and trillions of us work together to accomplish what needs to be done. We form a humongous assembly line . . . or rather, a *dis-assembly line*, if you will.” *(The adventurous garden spider crawls off the justice’s left hand. The judge seems relieved, until he realizes that several other critters are now clinging to his black robe.)*

**Judge:** “Wha . . . what needs to be accomplished?”

**Beetle:** “Well, Your Honor, we decomposers

take dead plants and animals and turn them into *nutrients* that can be used by other living things. When one organism becomes food for another organism, and that creature, in turn, becomes food for yet



A hister beetle

another of God’s creatures, and so on—the whole group of organisms feeding off of one another is known as a food web.<sup>3</sup> And decomposition is a very special food web fashioned by our Creator.”

**Judge:** “Where does decomposition take place?”

**Beetle:** “Just about everywhere, Your Honor—in the soil of forests and jungles, in meadows, in lakes, in the sea, and even in your refrigerator.”

**Judge:** “In my refrigerator?”

**Beetle:** “You know . . . all those leftovers you tucked away in the back of your fridge. Check them out some time. That plastic container that once contained edible Hamburger Helper—it’s long since turned into an unrecognizable, amorphous mass that you humans find revolting. By the way, this also shows that decomposition can occur in winter, though not as quickly as in summer.”

*(The judge’s face turns slightly red with embarrassment, because he knows Beetle is right. The judge is a bachelor, and his busy court schedule doesn’t allow him time to*

<sup>1</sup> Read John 5:17.  
<sup>2</sup> Colossians 1:16-17

<sup>3</sup> See **CREATOR** Volume 19 Number 2.

clean his refrigerator as often as he'd like. He's perplexed at how the beetle knew he had aging leftovers though.)

**Beetle:** "Top soil is like a blanket of compost that covers the planet. Decomposers everywhere on Earth take dead things—leaves, sticks, deceased animals and such—and turn them into nutrients so that living things can thrive. But this is no small feat! Right now, there are countless invisible 'cities' of decomposers hard at work in the soil of your garden, Your Honor, as well as in the dirt that covers the earth. We make up one of the most complex ecosystems of all."

**Judge:** "But I thought that dirt was . . . well, dirt . . . you know . . . dead."

**Beetle:** "Oh no, Your Honor! It has been said that there are more bacteria in a teaspoonful of rich soil than there are people on the face of the earth. The insects and critters in your courtroom today represent very important decomposers, indeed, but we perform only a small amount of the work of decomposition. We 'bugs,' for instance, chew up the fallen leaf litter on a forest floor, turning it into fine particles of organic matter. But it is the bacteria and fungi in the soil that do the lion's share of the work."

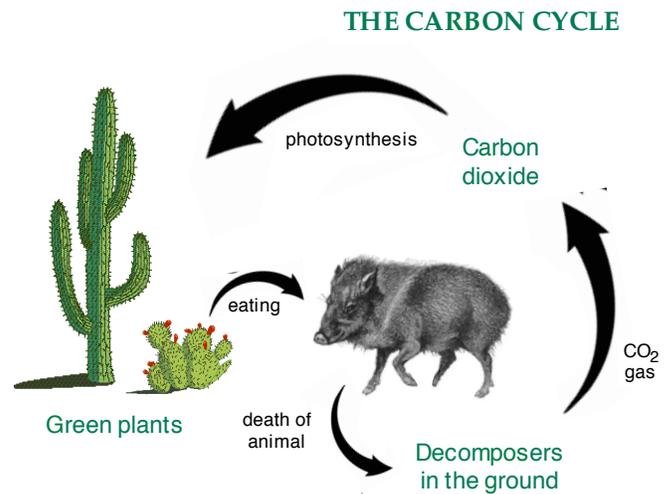
**Judge:** "Organic? I thought 'organic' meant that farmers didn't use pesticides or chemical fertilizers on their crops. Like organic apples."

**Beetle:** "Oh no, Your Honor, that's not the only use of the word 'organic.' Technically speaking, something is organic if it is composed of chemicals *containing carbon atoms*. Jesus created all living things using complex carbon-containing molecules; thus, all life is 'organic.' There is no such thing as a non-organic fruit or vegetable. In that sense, all tomatoes are organic, whether grown with pesticides or not. But this is also why decomposition is so important. Throughout

His creation, God recycles carbon so that it can be used over and over in living organisms. He is the one who 'invented' recycling!

"If the court will permit, I would like to show a diagram to demonstrate what I'm talking about."

**Judge:** "Proceed."



**Beetle:** "Air contains a small amount of carbon in the form of carbon dioxide, the only form of carbon plants can use. Through photosynthesis, green plants combine carbon dioxide with water to make sugar (glucose), which is a relatively 'simple' organic compound because it contains carbon atoms.<sup>4</sup> Animals then eat the plants, and the carbon that was once part of the atmosphere becomes incorporated into the animals. When plants and animals die, the carbon that's within them is released back into the air via decomposition. Thus, carbon moves from the atmosphere and back again in a process called *the carbon cycle*."

"Basically, the same thing happens with nitrogen and phosphorus—there are nitrogen and phosphorus cycles in nature as well. Decomposers are needed in order to release carbon and nitrogen and phosphorus

<sup>4</sup> Read about photosynthesis in the May/June 1993 issue of *CREATOR*.

from dead plants and animals, and animal wastes, so that they can be used again by living things.”

**Judge:** “Just a little while ago you said that fungi and bacteria perform a great deal of the work involved in decomposition.”

**Beetle:** “That’s correct, Your Honor.”

**Judge:** “Well, I thought bacteria cause disease.”

**Beetle:** “Unfortunately, bacteria have gotten a bad reputation. There are a few species that do cause disease, Judge, but the vast majority are harmless—even beneficial—to mankind. If our merciful and wise God had not created, ahead of time, decomposing bacteria and fungi, the whole earth would be covered many feet deep with the dead bodies of countless people, animals, and plants . . . and uneaten Hamburger Helper. Not a very pretty thought! Fungi and bacteria secrete chemicals and enzymes<sup>5</sup> that digest the tissues of dead plants and animals. Scientists call this *extracellular digestion* because it occurs outside the fungus or bacterium.”



**Judge:** “Why don’t fungi and bacteria eat away at *living* things?”

**Beetle:** “Well, Your Honor, sometimes they do; as I just mentioned, a small number of microbes can cause infectious diseases in

plants and animals. But, God is merciful and He gave all organisms immune systems with which to protect themselves.”

**Judge:** “Immune systems?”

**Beetle:** “Christ Jesus has given every living thing, even us insects, a means of defending itself against attack from other living things—especially bacteria and fungi. *He is so kind!* The cells of your body, for instance, produce chemicals that prevent serious infection when you are exposed to most germs.<sup>6</sup> The Lord has even furnished lowly bacteria and fungi living in the soil with a way of protecting themselves from other microorganisms. Microscopic decomposers frequently produce antibiotics, divinely-wrought chemicals that stunt the growth of other microbes. This prevents one type of microorganism in the ground from taking over the soil. Many of the antibiotics that doctors prescribe today originally came from dirt.”<sup>7</sup>

**Judge:** “Please tell me more!”

**Beetle:** “Our Creator Jesus uses bacteria in the soil to break down animal tissues—such as a dead squirrel. He employs molds (or fungi) to decompose plant parts.”

**Judge:** “Like . . . ?”

**Beetle:** “. . . tough plant materials such as wood and bark. Fungi consume *cellulose* and *lignin*, two extremely complex biochemicals found in plants that bacteria can’t digest.

“There are also special microorganisms God made that are half bacteria and half fungus—a chimera of sorts. They’re called actinomycetes (pronounced ak - tih - no - my - SEE - teez). They form grayish-white, spidery threads in healthy soil and compost. In fact, Your Honor, the earthy odor of dirt after it rains comes from chemicals produced by actinomycetes.<sup>8</sup> Actinomycetes and mushrooms<sup>9</sup> are especially important in

5 Enzymes are special proteins that our Lord Jesus created to help break down organic molecules; examples include cellulase, cutinase, peroxidase, laccase, glucosidase, chitinase, and phosphatase.

6 Please read **CREATOR** Volume 19 Number 1.

7 Please read **CREATOR** Volume 17 Number 3.

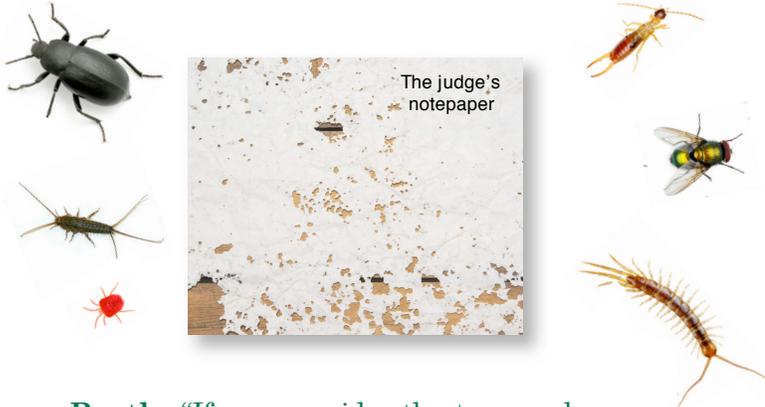
8 Actinomycetes produce the chemical *geosmin*.

9 Basidiomycetes

forests because they decompose wood; few other things can.”

*(The judge has been so interested in what the beetle has been telling him that he has failed to notice what is happening on his desk. He gazes down in horror to find several of the decomposers chewing on the paper he was going to use for additional notes.)*

**Judge:** “HEY, KNOCK IT OFF! GO DECOMPOSE SOMETHING ELSE.”



**Beetle:** “If you consider the tremendous speed at which animal decay occurs in nature, and the variety of organisms Jesus orchestrates during decomposition, it is not hard to see a tiny glimpse of the unbelievable power and wisdom of our great God!”

**Judge:** “How fast can decay occur?”

**Beetle:** “Well, the air you breathe is full of bacterial and fungal spores. Normally a person doesn’t succumb to these spores because of the God-given immunity I just mentioned. When a leaf falls from a tree to the ground, fungal spores land on it and grow, and the leaf begins to decompose almost immediately. The same is true for an animal when it dies. Bacteria quickly multiply in lifeless tissues and—in combination with fly larvae (maggots) that are frequently present—can consume a small mammal *within a week*, leaving only the fur and bones. The complete decay of a leaf on a forest floor may take six weeks to two years,

however, depending upon the species of tree.”

**Judge:** “Why does species matter?”

**Beetle:** “Some trees, like oaks, produce leaves possessing higher than normal amounts of lignin—the chemical that makes wood ‘woody.’ And lignin is very difficult to break down.”

**Judge:** “If decomposition is so ubiquitous, then everything in the world that’s not alive should start to rot.”

**Beetle:** “Yes, that’s true, Judge. All the things that people have constructed over the years will decay sooner or later, which points to the fleeting nature of our world. Bacteria and fungi can eat almost anything, even plastic. More British ships were lost during the Revolutionary War to dry rot than in sea battle, Your Honor.”

**Judge:** “I didn’t know that.”

“You mentioned compost—is the decomposition that takes place in a compost heap any different than in ordinary ground?”

**Beetle:** “Why don’t we let Rocko answer that question?”

**Judge:** “Rocko?”

**Beetle:** “Yes, Your Honor, he is my first witness.”

**Judge:** “The witness may come forward.”

*(A muscular, hulk of a man makes his way to the witness stand.)*

**Rocko:** “Ow ya doin’, Judge? I’m Rocko, and I tink I kin answer yar question.”

**Judge:** “Please.”

**Rocko:** “Well, dah decomposition in ah compost heap es essentially dah same as what goes on in dah soil found in ah forest or meadow. Only, in ah compost heap decomposition es sped up some. It ‘ouses microorganisms an’ bigger critters, like worms an’ beetles. Dah microbes eat up dah dead leaves, grass clippings an’ stuff, an’ turn





Decomposers: **1st row**—Actinomycetes, mites, algae, nematode  
**2nd row**—amoeba, millipede, bacteria, water bear  
**3rd row**—earthworm, springtail, mushroom, mole

it intah rich soil called *humus*. Dat’s if day git enough oxygen.”

**Judge:** “What happens if day . . . I mean, *they*, don’t get enough oxygen?”

**Rocko:** “Well, den dah anaerobic (pronounced an - ah - ROW - bik) bacteria take over an’ start makin’ some really nasty smellin’ stuff! Dees bacteria kin survive in environments without oxygen, an’ produce chemicals like *putrescine* (pronounced PEW - tres - een) an’ *cadaverine* (pronounced kah - DAV - er - een), which are chemicals dat make dead bodies smell bad!”

**Judge:** “They produce these kinds of smells in a garden compost pile?!”

**Rocko:** “Yep, it’s super importin’ dat ya take real good care of yar compost. Ya know, ya gotta turn yar compost over frequently so it gits plenty of air. Dis also helps keep dah compost heap warm.”

**Judge:** “What dah ya mean? *Errrrr!* . . . What *do you* mean?”

**Rocko:** “As dah bacteria in ah compost heap decompose dead stuff, day produce ah lotta heat. Dah center of ah compost pile kin git tah 150° F (66° C). Hot enough tah scald ya!”

**Judge:** “That’s incredible! Doesn’t it kill the decomposers in the compost pile?”

**Rocko:** “It kills some, Yar Honor, but dah Lord constructed certain microbes, like actinomycetes, tah withstand dees high temps.”

**Judge:** “Oh, I see.”

**Rocko:** “Decomposition in nature es sped up

with increased temperature, high moisture content in dah soil, an’ lots of oxygen. Soil decomposition es fast in dah tropics where it’s warm an’ moist all year, an’ slow in dah colder forests of Canada, Siberia, an’ high up mountains.”

**Beetle:** “Your Honor, please allow me to now redirect the focus of the court.”

**Judge:** “The witness may step down.”

**Beetle:** “When our Creator Jesus first made the universe, He created man in His own incorruptible image (Romans 1:23). But people turned their back on God and, as a result, fell into corruption, dragging all of us in creation with them. My co-counsel, Springtail, and I would like to present testimony showing that mankind can, once again, return to an incorruptible state.”

**Judge:** “I am very interested in hearing such testimony, but due to time constraints, the court will need to recess until tomorrow morning. We will convene at 9:00 a.m. sharp. Court is now adjourned!”

**Editor’s Note:** Day two of *Decomposers v. An Unbelieving World* will be presented in **CREATOR** 21-3.



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