

THE GREEN BIBLE

Understand the Bible's powerful message for the earth



With over 1,000 references to the **earth** in the Bible, compared to 490 references to **heaven** and 530 references to **love**, the Bible carries a powerful message for the earth.



The Dominion of Love

Barbara Brown Taylor

I cannot tell you how many times I read the first chapter of Genesis before I noticed something new on day six. For years and years I thought that humans had day six all to ourselves—you know, the pinnacle of the story—God’s last, best word in the utterance of creation. With all lesser creatures out of the way, the sixth day finally arrived.

God ordered a kettle drum roll, cleared the divine throat, and said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;”—yes, yes, here we are at last!—“and let them have dominion”—oh yes! Do let us have that! I have always wanted dominion!—“over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Over the whole ranch! As far as the eye can see! This really is a wonderful book, don’t you think?

Then I noticed for the first time that day six does not start there. Day six starts two verses earlier, with the creation of land animals—cattle, to be exact. The text does not mention any other animals by name except cattle—twice, in fact, along with unspecified creeping things and wild animals.

So now all of a sudden I do not have day six to myself anymore. I am sharing it with cows, for God’s sake, which I do not have anything against except that they seem incredibly stupid, they slobber a lot, and basically all they do is eat grass. Couldn’t God have started day six with—oh, I don’t know—snow leopards? Or maybe antelope?

I understand that cows were probably very valuable in the ancient world—like buffalo for Native Americans—one single animal that provided milk, meat, hide, and even dung for the fire. Cows are sacred in India, after all. Cows rank higher there than most humans. And then there is the book of Jonah, with the best last line in the whole Bible: “And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand their left hand; and also much cattle?” (4:11 KJV).

Still, this new information is a real come down—a reminder that while God may have made human beings for special purpose, we were not made of any more special stuff than the rest of creation. We were made on the same day as cows and creeping things and wild animals of every kind. God gave us dominion, it is true, but God did not pronounce us better than anything else that God had made.

“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31).

To read the entire sermon from Barbara Brown Taylor, buy your copy of *The Green Bible* today.