

FROM THE GARDEN TO GLORY

When God created the Heavens and the earth it was, in many ways, like the new Heaven and new Earth spoken of in the book of Revelation. There are some differences though that are quite telling. As we examine some of these differences we can get insights into the long range plan of God for Man and his relationship to God.

Before we get into that though, I want you to think about how a Holy, Righteous and Loving God could have a long standing Relationship with man. Let's start off like God did with Adam. He created Adam with no sin. There were no imperfections in the Garden. Man was built to live forever. There was no death, there were no predators. Everything was good. If only God had not put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden, everything would have been perfect. There could have been no fall and therefore no sin and we would live in the kind of fellowship that God seems to want with us. RIGHT? NO!!! There is one problem with that scenario. Man would have no choice, no free will. He would be the captive of God and not someone that He could fellowship with. For that to happen there has to be a free choice on the part of both parties. That is what love demands.

As we examine Gen.1:10 we see that God created the seas. In Rev.21:1 we see that there is no sea on the new earth. Why is this important ? The importance lies in the function of the sea. The sea acts like a giant kidney for the earth. It is a collector and purifier of the garbage and corruption of the earth. The rain washes impurities from the land into the streams which flow into rivers which eventually empty into the sea. This will not be necessary in the new earth because there will be no corruption in the new earth. Actually it did not work this way until some time after the fall of man because there was no rain. We read in Genesis 2:2-6, ***"Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground. But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground."*** Rain is not mentioned again until Genesis 7:4 where God says ***"For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of***

the land every living thing that I have made." Another difference that I want to call to your attention is the fact that in the Garden we find that there is the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.(Gen.2:9) In the new earth we find only the tree of life and not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So what is the significance of this ? It has to do with the nature of love.

Because God is a God of love, there must be sin. I can imagine that after reading that statement, you are sure that I am not completely sane. But let's examine that statement and what implications it has in our theology.

What is sin ? I submit to you that it is simply disobedience to God. Next we must examine love. The love I am talking about is pure love with no strings attached. In order for there to be pure love between two beings, there must be the possibility for each one of them to (not love) the other. This is especially true when one is dealing from a position of authority. In other words, love must be voluntary on the part of both parties. If love is not voluntary, then there is not love but bondage. So then, there could not be love between God and Adam unless there was an opportunity for Adam not to love God. He had to love God as an act of his own free will. But God had just given Adam everything. How could he choose not to love God ? What other option did he have ? Well, he had two options. There are two kinds of sin. There is the sin of omission, where we do not do what God says. Then there is the sin of commission, where we do something that God forbids. In order for Adam's love to be freely given, he had to have at least one of these options open to him. God gave him both options. In Genesis 2:15 we read; ***" Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."*** This gave the man an opportunity to say," I am not going to cultivate and keep this garden". That would have been an act of rebellion against God and a way of saying that he didn't care to share in this love relationship with God. It would have also been a sin of omission. Then, in the next two verses, we see a restriction put on the man. We read, ***"and the LORD God commanded the man saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die"***. Here God made a rule; and this gave man a chance to disobey that rule and do what God had forbidden. Thus we have the opportunity for the sin of

commission. So, you see, there had to be the opportunity for man to choose in order for there to be true love between God and man. This means that there had to be the opportunity for sin, if we define sin as being disobedient to God.

There will not be any tree of the knowledge of good and evil in heaven. Why ? Because, the only ones that will be there will be those who have made the decision here on earth to love God regardless of how many options they have. We have that choice here and now, and if we do not choose Jesus to be our LORD, we can not go to heaven because there will not be a choice there and neither will there be people there in bondage to His love. So we must make our decision of Lordship here.

We find more evidence of this in the book of The Revelation. In Revelation 20:1-3 we read, ***"And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time."*** Now why does Satan have to be released for a short time at the end of this thousand years? The answer is simple. During this thousand year period, Christ will be the absolute ruler of this earth. In verse 4 we are told who will rule with him for this period of time. Who will they rule? There are still people living on earth at the end of the tribulation. They will live for the next thousand years. There will not be any death during this time. There will be people born but no one will die. At the end of this time, there is the new heaven and the new earth. But these people who were born during the thousand year period had no chance to decide who will be their Lord because Jesus has been absolute ruler. So in Revelation 20:7-10 we read; ***"And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone,***

where the beast and the false prophet are also; And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

So you see, Satan is released so that people have a choice of who they will follow. As we can see, many of them choose to follow Satan just as Adam and Eve did so many years earlier.

Only people who have chosen Jesus Christ as their Lord will be able to enter Heaven. There can be no slave there. There can be no choice given there either because if there is, we would be right back to where we are now. There had to be the option of sin in the garden, but there can be no option for sin in heaven. So you see, if there had been no fall we would still be living much as we will in heaven. God knew that man would choose sin as evidenced by the provision of the creation of the sea.

We have to decide on more than, who will be our lord, however. We have another problem that must be solved and that problem is SIN. In Revelation 21:7-8 we read;

"He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolators and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." So even if we choose God to be our Lord, we can't go to heaven because of our sins. But God also made a way for us to deal with the sin problem. We read in Romans 5:8-10, ***"But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*** You see,

the penalty for sin is death. But if someone will take our penalty for us, we can go free. But everyone is under the same sentence of death because all have sinned and have their own sins to pay for. But Christ was without sin and therefore could take our penalty so we wouldn't have to. But here again we have a choice to make. Will we admit that we are sinners and can not save our self and accept God's provision or will we say no to God. It is hard on the ego. In I John 1:8-9 we read, ***"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all***

unrighteousness. "So then we see that, in order to enter Heaven, we need to take care of the sin problem by confessing our sins to God and asking Him, through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, to forgive us of our sins. Next we need to make Christ Lord of our lives. This means that we read the Bible and spend time in prayer to know what the will of God is for our lives. We ask that the Holy Spirit, whom God gives to us, reveal the will of God to us so we can walk in His will. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read,

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

These decisions have to be made prior to entry into heaven. Joshua had it right. He said; ***"And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."***

Paul Ziegler