

Our Salvation Story, Creation, and the Fall

We are starting a new series today entitled Our Salvation Story. We are going to trace and remind ourselves of God's mercy and grace in His dealings with us. Today we will start with an overview of God's plan and why our salvation story is necessary. In other words, I will try to set the context for the weeks ahead. Today we will look at Creation and the Fall.

I have been reading a book entitled, What is God Doing, by Renald Showers who helped form The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. This morning, I would like to summarize a part of the book because it is important to sometimes sit back and get a 100,000 ft view of what is God's plan for history and understanding God's plan for salvation. So, for next few minutes we will intend to get a view of the forest and not the trees –so we will move fast and begin.

The Bible's view of History begins with the personal God who exists as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In Eternity past God determined to have a Kingdom in which he would rule as a sovereign King as 1 Tim 1:17 notes, *"Now to the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and Glory forever and ever"*.

Now in any Kingdom you need three things, a King, subjects to rule, and a realm in which they inhabit. God determined He would be King, and He created two types of personal subjects over which he would rule. The first were angels. The Bible states angels are spirit beings (Mt 22:30) who at times can look like men (Gen 19:1-2). They have intellect (2 Sam 14:20), are mightier and stronger than men (2 P 2:11), can communicate with men (Dan 9:21), and have ability to inhabit both the spiritual realm and earth (Gen 19:1). There are also quite a lot of them (Heb 12:22).

The second personal subject that God created was Man. Ps 8 states man is a little lower than the angels. What the psalmist meant is man is a weaker, less powerful, and lesser creature than an angel, but no less important!! So now we have the subjects, we now need the realm.

God created both the heavens (where angels usually dwell) and the earth (where man dwells) to be the domain in which his creatures would live and over whom he would rule (Gen 1:1). God also made numerous non-personal life objects to fill his dominion and make life interesting and beautiful for his subjects to enjoy, hence we have animal and plant life (Gen 1-2). So, in summary, we have a hierarchy of creation, angels, man, the animals, and plants, and then the material world.

Now here is a crucial point. In as much as God made the earth to be part of his domain, he intended to have on it a kind of subject that would administer his rule over it, just as some kings divide their kingdom into provinces and appoint administrators or governors over each province and hold them accountable for their rule, so God created man to be governor over the earth and hold him responsible to administer God's rule over it (Gen 1:26, 28, Ps 8:3-9). God intended the government of the earth to be a Theocracy (which means men are to rule as representatives of God).

Man had to be specially equipped to do this job, and since the earth was physical, man needed a physical body, so God made him out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7). He also needed to receive God's directions on how to rule it, so God created man in His own image as a personal being that could think, reason, communicate, create, and work (Gen 1:26-28).

When God created man and the earthy realm that he was to rule, God was pleased and declared it all good (Gen 1:31). God set man in the Garden of Eden and charged him to be fruitful, to multiply, and to tend and work the garden God had given him. He also made one other important stipulation, for in the middle of the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and God asked Adam and Eve not to eat of it. If they did, God said they would die.

But soon something went wrong in God's kingdom. The Bible is not clear exactly when but something terrible happened in the heavenly realm. The Bible tells us the very brightest and most glorious and beautiful of all God's angels decided he wanted to be King and take God's place on the throne, but as God was hard to displace, he decided to rebel and create his own kingdom which would destroy God's kingdom and thus he would rule over the universe (Is 14:12-14, Ez 28:11-17). Therefore, he was called Satan (which means adversary). He became the great revolutionary, the enemy of God, and the enemy of every member of God's kingdom.

Satan knew that to establish his kingdom, he would need subjects to rule, but he lacked the ability to create beings, so he had to rely on his God given powers of persuasion, beauty, and promises, to convince his fellow creatures to follow him. To have his kingdom over both the heavenly realm and the earthly realm, he would need to convince both angels and men to follow him. In the heavenly realm his efforts convinced a third of God's created angelic beings to follow him (Rev 12:3-4). In the earthly realm, Satan entered man's perfect environment and tempted him with the argument that if man disobeyed God's command, he (man) would become as God (Gen 3:1-5). In other words, Satan was telling man, you may become a sovereign yourself, if you just disobey. This is what man did and so the governor of the earthly kingdom joined the rebellion against God (Gen 3).

Now several things happened as a matter of man joining Satan's rebellion.

First, man died spiritually (Gen 2:16-17) What does this mean? it means man's nature changed. God had created Adam and Eve with a disposition that was favorable to God and that disposition affected how they acted. Adam and Eve walked with God, talked to Him, and took care of the things God had made. Now that nature was disaffected towards God. Man had become disposed to enmity (Rm 8:7) and all his actions reflected this new nature (Gal 5:19-21). Adam and Eve, through their own choice, had cut themselves off from the source and creator of their life who is God. And because we were genetically in Adams loins, we inherited this same nature.

Secondly, Adam and Eve began to die physically. When they rebelled, a process of decay started both within themselves through age and without as they become subject to disease, violence, and accidents (Gen 3:22-24). This is the world we now inhabit. We are all decaying and are subject to unforeseen external forces which affect our well-being.

Third, because man was governor of God's earthly realm, his choice to follow Satan's rebellion led to changes within the earth itself. The productive level of the soil diminished (Gen 3:17). For the first time it brought forth thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18) Animal nature changed from a tame non-carnivorous state (Gen 1:30) to a carnivorous one. All nature became subject to vanity and corruption, and it continues to groan and suffer to the present day (Rm 8:19-22).

Fourth, Adam and Eve were transferred from membership in the Kingdom of God to the Kingdom of Satan. Because the original parents of humanity chose to rebel against God, and because humans

reproduce after their kind, every person born since (except Christ) is born with a disposition against God (Ps 51:5). Hence every human is born spiritually dead and is a member of Satan's kingdom (Eph 2:1). With any membership comes privileges and these are ours: as members of Satan's kingdom, we are energized by him and live our lives according to his ways and power (Eph 2:2). We are blinded to the truth by him (2Cor 4:4), we are held in darkness and his power (Acts 26:17-18), we are his child (Mt 13:37-39, Jn 8:44) and do his work (Lk 22:3-6), and we are headed for the same judgement as him (Mt 13:40-42, Rev 20:10).

Fifth, because man, the governor of the earthly province, defected to Satan, the original theocracy was lost. Satan was able to usurp the rule of the world system away from God. Earth's government changed from a Theocracy to a Satanocracy. For this reason, Christ called Satan the "*prince of this world*" (Jn 12:31). Note Satan had the authority to give all the kingdoms of the world to Christ (Lk 4:5-6). Eph 6:12 calls some of Satan's angels the powers of this dark world. 1 Jn 5:19 states, "*The whole world lies in the power of the evil one*". Paul called Satan *the god of this age* (2Cor 4:4). Heb 2:8 tells us man lost his authority to rule as he was intended to do so, and because of his fallen nature, he began to abuse and exploit the earth, rather than steward it.

Now let us summarize what has happened, Man was duped (but still made his own choice) by Satan into following Him (Jn 8:44). Look at what we got for our choice,

- a. instead of freedom we are now slaves to our evil nature (Rm 6:6)
- b. we are now slaves to death (Rm 5:12), and to the fear of death throughout our lives (Heb 2:15).
- c. Where once we were under a kind and loving sovereign (God) who promised life, beauty, communion, and sovereignty over the earth, we are now under the rule of a new sovereign, one who brought death, fear, slavery, sickness, grief, and every misery that we experience.
- d. Instead of improving ourselves through our rebellion, we debased ourselves and lost our dignity (Rm 1).
- e. Most terribly, we lost all ability to help ourselves out this mess (Is 43:11, Rm 3:9-20, Eph 2:1-3). Satan has been successful so far in his ability to transfer many of God's angels and all of mankind into his kingdom. He has usurped man's rule and now rules the earth.

There are now two opposing Kingdoms in the universe. The kingdom of Satan which has attacked the Kingdom of God and is trying to displace it. This fight is going on in both the heavenly realm and the earthly realm (Eph 6:12). Because we live on earth and the Bible is God's revelation to man, we are primarily concerned with this battle on earth. This fight is the key to understanding the purpose of history. It is Satan's purpose to make himself the only Sovereign King of the universe by destroying God's Kingdom and taking God's place as the Everlasting King ruling over both the heavens and the earth. God's purpose is to glorify Himself by demonstrating he alone is the sovereign King of the universe, to judge Satan, and to restore earth and man to its original condition before man's rebellion.

Here is a critical point. This restoration must occur on the present earth and not a new one –or else God could be accused of being incapable of overcoming the devastating work of Satan in this earth. In other words, it is far easier to start over than it is to go in and restore, and most importantly there would be no demonstration to the universe that God was capable of fighting Satan on his own territory and winning. History now becomes the story of how God has, is, and will restore, the tragic consequences of man's rebellion. Note what God must do.

First, he must give man new spiritual life. He must restore to man a disposition towards Himself; a nature that is inclined to God, which wants to be with and enjoy God.

Second, God must abolish physical death. He must eliminate the process of decay within us. He must abolish disease, accidents, violence, hazards, all the external things that do us in.

Third, God must restore the perfect environment that man enjoyed before his rebellion. This means a restoration of the physical earth and all living things.

Fourth, God must transfer mankind from the realm of Satan's kingdom to His Own, by causing within them a new spiritual birth.

Fifth, God must cause man to govern the earth in the manner he originally intended. This would involve a restoration of this ability and a healing of man's nature to abuse the earth.

Sixth, and lastly, God must judge Satan and rid the earth of Him and his followers. He must re-establish his Theocratic Kingdom as He once had.

This is God's plan of Redemption, and our Bible is the story of how it is and will be accomplished. In any battle, there are objectives and strategies to get us to victory. For God, the strategy for victory was laid out almost immediately after Satan usurped earth for his kingdom. God delivered a prophecy in Gen 3:14-15. Note that as Satan had won over man to his side, it would be man, born of a woman, who would be Satan's demise. This was God's initial way of promising a Redeemer would come and do the work necessary to crush Satan and his work. This Redeemer would be the great counter revolutionary to Satan's revolution. Scripture later reveals that to rid the world of the penalty and consequences of sin, an adequate payment would have to be made to God's justice, and this payment was the death of God's Son to take our place (Rm 5:12, Rm 6:23). This is why the prophecy of Gen 3:15 foretells that while the Redeemer would crush Satan, Satan would bruise him, a reference that the promised Redeemer would have to suffer death to defeat Satan. Later scripture reveals that through his death, the Redeemer would pay the penalty for sin, causing the removal of sin, and making it possible for God to reverse the consequences of man's rebellion.

However, God is not alone in this battle. He uses his angels to fight (Dan 10:20, Rev 12:7) and through Christ the Redeemer, he saves people out of Satan's kingdom and makes them members of his own. We are therefore soldiers in God's army, enlisted in this great struggle (Eph 6:10-17). This army of redeemed soldiers are to remain in the world (not of it Jn 17:14-18) and fight for the redemption of others. God sometimes uses nations, and unbelieving people for his purposes (Jer 25:9) and though God's kingdom has not yet come, we are like soldiers behind enemy lines, preparing the world for Divine invasion.

Since God sent a Redeemer into the world to save it, Satan's strategy in the past and moving forward takes two primary thrusts. First, He will do anything to prevent the Redeemer from coming and will do anything to destroy those who are aligned with the Redeemer. Therefore, he will use his fallen angels, his human subjects, and nations to do his work of obstructing and destroying anything aligned with the Redeemer. His second strategy is predicated on the failure of the first. In other words, if he is unable to destroy, he will seek to pervert or discredit the witness of God's Kingdom with apostasy in belief or practice.

This spiritual struggle is the lens we should use to view history and our current world events. But one thing is sure, God is the creator and Satan is the created. God's plan will win out. We can see some of the objectives God set forth have been achieved such as God's substitutionary payment for the penalty of our sin, the installation of a new nature within us (2 Cor 5:17), and our translation from one kingdom to another (Col 1:13-14). The others remain to be fulfilled. But we may remain confident that He will accomplish what he has set out to do. In the next few weeks, we will examine more closely some of these topics so we can see how great and wonderful our salvation is. Amen.