

FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH

What is the Bible's overall message?

January 17, 2010

Review last week: Reasons to trust the reliability of the Bible:

- ❖ The Bible's unity: 66 books written in different literary styles, by 40 different authors with diverse backgrounds over 1600 years and yet contains one central message.

There's more evidence that the Bible is a reliable source than there is for any other book from the ancient world. -Norman Geisler

- ❖ The Bible's transforming power
- ❖ Archaeological: 1000's of archaeological finds in the Middle East support the Biblical record.
- ❖ Prophecies fulfilled: The Bible is the only book in the world that has precise, specific predictions that were made 100's of years in advance and that were literally fulfilled.
 - 191 predictions in the Old Testament regarding the coming of Christ

When it has been proven to be accurate over and over again in 100's of details, the burden of proof is on the critic, not on the Bible. -Norman Geisler

How should we respond to the Bible?

Is the Bible really God's Word? **YES!** We should know it in the head, stow it in the heart, sow it in the world, and show it in the life.

Today:

Since the Bible is God's Word, what is he trying to tell us?

Some will say...

- √ The Bible is God's rule-book.
- √ The Bible tells how to live a happy, prosperous life.
- √ The Bible tells how to live a good, moral life.
- √ The Bible warns that sin kills.
- √ The Bible promises that Jesus saves.
- √ The Bible explains how to get to heaven.

Just like a good novel, the beginning and the end tell a lot about the main plot...

As it was: compared to **As it will be:**

Genesis 1:1 (*heaven and earth*)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 21:1 (*new heaven and earth*)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,

Genesis 2:8-10 (*trees and a river*)

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. **9** And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden;

Revelation 22:1-2

then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb **2** down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

Genesis 3:8 (*God, in person*)

the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day,

Revelation 21:3

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Revelation 22:4

They will see his face,

Genesis 2:9 (*tree of life*)

In the middle of the garden was the tree of life

Revelation 22:2

On each side of the river stood the tree of life,

Genesis 3:22-24 (*sin lost the right to the tree of life*)

the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." **23** So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. **24** After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Revelation 22:14 (*salvation restores the right to the tree of life*)

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Genesis 1:26-28 (*mankind rules the earth*)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **28** God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Revelation 21:7 (*mankind rules with Christ*)

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Revelation 22:3-5

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The beginning and the end of the book are virtually identical!

Originally, God created everything and it was “very good.” In the end, God will re-establish his creation and it will be “very good.” But currently, things in this world are not very good!

We see at the beginning that God established a relationship with mankind. In the end he will re-establish that relationship. In the beginning God created man to rule over his kingdom on earth. In the end God will re-establish man’s place in the kingdom.

So, the overall message of the Bible, in one word, is this: “Redemption”

= the act of saving something from a declined, dilapidated, or corrupted state and restoring it to a better condition

In a paragraph, it’s this: “Mankind was designed to rule the earth in relationship with God, but sin has disrupted that plan. Through Jesus Christ, the original plan is being restored and mankind can be redeemed. God will reestablish his Kingdom on earth!”

God’s Kingdom is a recurring theme in the Bible...

- √ Genesis begins with the creation of man for the purpose of ruling over the earth, but man rebelled. The rest of the Bible tells how God reaches out to man to bring him back into a right relationship.
- √ The Gospel that Christ preached was the Gospel of the kingdom. (Mt. 4:23)
- √ Paul, the great apostle, preached the message of the kingdom. (Ac. 28:30ff)
- √ The last book of the Bible, Revelation, celebrates the everlasting establishment of God’s kingdom, and man’s inclusion in it. (Rev. 11:15; 21:7)

Our current problem is sin, and the solution is salvation through Jesus Christ.

We can see throughout the Bible that God is continually reaching out to man for restoration, but man continually rebels against God.

- √ God created Adam; Adam disobediently ate the forbidden fruit.
- √ God made a covenant with Noah, Abraham and Moses; but they all sinned and failed to perfectly carry out his plans.
- √ God called the nation of Israel; Israel fell into sin and rebelled repeatedly.
- √ God called David (a man after his own heart); but David sinned, too!

God finally sent his own son, Jesus, who obeyed him wholeheartedly without fail. Now, through Jesus Christ, we can have a relationship with God again! Not only that, but it sets us on the right course to become rulers in his kingdom with him!!

So, let me sum this whole thing up...

- √ This world is not as it should be.
- √ Man was designed to have a close relationship with God and even partner with him in overseeing the Kingdom.
- √ Sin and rebellion disrupted that original plan.
- √ God continually reaches out to man in order to restore the plan, but man continues to rebel and persist in sin.
- √ Since no man could fully accomplish God's plans, he sent his very own son to fix everything once and for all.
- √ We can still be included in God's plan by submitting to the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- √ God wants as many as possible to be restored, thus he patiently waits.
- √ But very soon he will personally come to earth and finally put an end to sin and rebellion.
- √ Then his original plan will be fulfilled and we will rule and reign with him!

Colossians 1:12-23

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in

him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. **21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Our assignment now is to follow Christ and surrender to his leadership. He will develop his character in us so that we will be prepared to rule with him when, in the end, he returns.

Envision what the Garden of Eden was originally like: A perfect life on a higher plane, where we were doing splendid work and didn't have to spend half our time on damage control for our own stupidities. Yet now, in this heart-stopping endgame, God is raising us to an even higher level. Don't just slide into heaven under the wire; become the kind of person who keeps defeating the evil in this world, and when you get to Heaven, you won't just barely qualify for a condo, you'll "own the joint!" Now, there's a goal worth shooting for! --James Rutz, The Endgame of God

Next week: The Kingdom of God