

HAS GOD INDEED SAID?

PART 4

The Purpose That Cannot Change

Genesis 3:1-4

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

We've seen in our previous study that rulership over the heavens and the earth was the very purpose behind God's act of creation described in Genesis 1:1. And God's purpose for that rulership has never changed, and never can.

Daniel 4:26b

...the heavens do rule.

We've also seen, through the type set out in Genesis 3, that it would be those looking to be the Bride of Christ — Christians from this dispensation — who would be targeted for deception, just as Satan targeted the woman in the garden. Because of what God has said from the beginning about the man and the woman and rulership, our enemy knows that Christ cannot remove the crown from Satan's head until He has a Bride to redeem the inheritance alongside Him — for it is not good that the man should be alone.

With the deception of Christians as his aim, the devil — as we see in Matthew 13 — sowed tares among the wheat, and it was these tares who were responsible for introducing a corrupted message into the church, a message designed to corrupt the Word of the Kingdom, the one message that proclaims God's purpose for the ages and teaches what's necessary for anyone who wants to be part of it. And this corrupted message struck straight at the heart of God's creative purpose.

2 Peter 3:1-7

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

This is the same passage we've circled back to more than once in this study now — worth it, because it's the hinge the whole deception turns on. To cast doubt on the return of Christ, which is inextricably connected to the revealing of His Bride, doesn't just call into question God's sovereign control over all things; it destroys the very foundation in which God's purpose is to be found. And what the scoffers willfully forget is that after the creation described in Genesis 1:1, God did intervene in His creation to bring about a far-reaching judgment. All things did not simply continue on as the scoffers claim. That judgment touched both the heavens and the earth.

Jeremiah 4:23

I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light.

The sun, moon, and stars of the original creation had been blotted out, leaving an all-enveloping blackness. And the earth itself was completely covered by a flood of raging waters.

Genesis 1:2a

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

This is exactly what the scoffers deny.

The First Intervention: A Universe Built to Be Ruled

Let's take a moment to remind ourselves what actually happened here. The creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 was not an arbitrary event. As one of what we have to assume are many provinces in God's universal Kingdom, the earth was created to be ruled over, and a specific angel was created for that purpose, under God's authority, to oversee an administration reaching from the heavens down to the earth.

The being created for that rulership is the one we know as Satan — also called Lucifer, the devil, the dragon, that serpent of old — along with an unspecified number of angels under him in subordinate positions. It's the same description of him we've already sat with once in this study, worth returning to here at the very point his story actually begins.

Ezekiel 28:12-15

"You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you."

The Second Intervention: The Fall of the Covering Cherub

Let's keep reading and see what became of him.

Ezekiel 28:16-19

"By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever."

The covering cherub sinned, and Divine judgment fell on him and on those who sided with him — pictured for us prophetically in those closing verses. The creation given to be under his dominion came into judgment as well, leaving his sanctuaries — the very places consecrated for him to protect — defiled, polluted, ruined: formless and void, because of what he had done. And Scripture also tells us plainly what it was that Satan did to bring this judgment down on himself.

Isaiah 14:12-14

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

In essence, Satan wanted to replace God as ruler of the universe. He rejected what God had said about his own position as the covering cherub and chose instead to do what seemed right in his own eyes. And right there — though it's never spoken aloud in this account — is the very question he would go on to ask, in a different garden, of a different creature: "Has God indeed said?"

A Plan That Cannot Change

In the beginning, then, God created the heavens and the earth in a perfect state, and Satan was created as the ruler of this one province in God's universal Kingdom, given an unspecified number of angels to assist him in the task. But Satan's sin brought Divine intervention in the form of judgment, and the heavens and the earth became formless and void as a result. This is Scriptural revelation the scoffers have deliberately chosen to ignore. But knowing, as we do, the immutability of God, we can be certain His plan for the rulership of the earth was never going to change because of it.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Hebrews 2:6-8

But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

Satan, the one originally created for this rulership, was now disqualified. But there's a prerequisite to Biblical rulership: the one who will replace a disqualified ruler must not only be present, but must also be proved worthy to rule before the incumbent can actually be replaced. Saul and David give us the type for this pattern.

And with Satan's own sin — the sin that ruined the creation — in mind, it's worth going back to his words to the woman in the garden, spoken after the restoration of the material creation.

Genesis 3:4-5

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

"You will be like God" — the very thing Satan himself had desired, the very desire that led to his own disqualification. And he knew perfectly well that if the woman accepted this deception and acted on it, it would ultimately bring about the disqualification of Adam as well, since Adam was the federal head, and Adam and the woman were one flesh. We find this same desire to be like God resurfacing in the molded calf incident of Exodus 32. Having rejected what God had said to them through Moses, the children of Israel exalted themselves to do what was right in their own eyes — not only taking God's place in doing so, but manufacturing a god of their own choosing, one rooted in the very place from which they'd just been delivered. And the same can be said of the generation present at the Lord's first advent, who rejected the one true God in favor of one of their own choosing.

John 19:15b

..."We have no king but Caesar!"

For the Romans, Caesar was received as a deity — the same old desire, dressed in Roman clothes.

The Third Intervention: Let There Be Light

The scoffers deny that God has ever intervened in the affairs of the earth. But the creation of the heavens and the earth marks the first such intervention. It was created for a specific purpose, not as a random act.

And in line with that purpose, because of sin, God judged the ruling angels and brought ruin to the place of their dominion — the second intervention the scoffers deny. And then, beyond even this, God intervened again — because if He hadn't, there would have been no man and woman, and the scoffers themselves would never have existed.

Genesis 1:2b-5

...And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

Right here, in the second half of the second verse of all Scripture, is the beginning of the restoration of the previously ruined creation. And to accomplish that restoration, God worked for six days and then rested on the seventh from all the work of the previous six.

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

In this restorative process, God set a divinely perfect pattern for the restoration of a ruined creation — the perfect way to accomplish His ends, one that cannot be improved on, and for the very same reason cannot be circumvented. And this, too, is exactly what the scoffers have willfully forgotten. It isn't as simple as the words "where is the promise of His coming?" might make it sound. What they've chosen to forget is the very foundation of Scripture, the skeletal framework on which the whole of God's revelation to man is built.

Remove the foundation, and nothing can be properly built on it.

Psalms 11:3

If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

We met this verse once already, and it's worth hearing again here, because this is exactly the foundation in question. We can understand, then, the seriousness of what's at stake in the scoffers' message, both in what's taught and what's left untaught in the church today. But from our vantage point — the Word of the Kingdom — let's remind ourselves that God's intervention in restoring the ruined creation was for a very specific purpose. Witness the events of the sixth day.

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Man — a newly created being unlike any other — was made for the specifically stated purpose of having dominion, ruling over the restored creation. The man and the woman were created specifically to replace Satan. But as we've already seen, this change in rulership could only take place if the one created to rule proved faithfully obedient to the Word of God, worthy to take the crown from the incumbent. Scripture is silent about the process by which Satan himself was created, but when it comes to Adam, the process is spelled out plainly.

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Why the difference? Because Adam was formed from the very substance of the restored creation he was to rule over — a creation that had itself already been restored from ruin caused by sin. That's what makes restoration and redemption possible for ruined man in a way Scripture never extends to Satan and his angels.

One Flesh, One Fall

We've spent these past weeks studying what happened next. The serpent, positioned on the earth in his fallen state, at the very place of testing, deceives the woman — understanding fully that if the man could be disqualified from ruling, the serpent would keep his own position.

The woman was deceived and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and gave to her husband, who ate as well. Adam, though, was not deceived — he knew exactly what he was doing, forming, in that moment, a type of Christ, who would become sin for us. Adam knew, because of what God had said, that without his wife he could not rule, and that without her husband she could not be redeemed — they were one flesh, and it was not good for the man to be alone.

Genesis 2:23-24

And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The sin of the man and the woman carried consequences God had already specified — consequences affecting all three parts of their being.

Genesis 2:17b

"...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death,

Their spirits experienced death in the sense of separation from God's purpose. Their souls were now corrupted with a sin nature. And their bodies began to decay — they would, in time, experience physical death as well. And as a consequence of their sin, the restored creation itself came under a curse.

Genesis 3:17b-c

"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life."

Both mankind and the material creation were now in a ruined state. But this ruin didn't touch the heavens and the earth in the same way Satan's rebellion had — cursed as it was, the earth remained inhabitable. And both the ruined creation and ruined man were given a promise of redemption.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.

God's purpose — restoring the creation, and creating man to rule over it — will be brought to pass. Nothing can prevent it.

The Pattern of Redemption

Following the very pattern God had already set for the restoration of the ruined creation, God began the process of redemption for the man and the woman with a sovereign act that parallels the light shining into the darkness on the first day.

Genesis 3:21

Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

Through the death and shed blood of an animal, Adam and his wife passed from death to life, their separation from God's purpose ended. They now had spiritual life. And so begins a process of restoration that must ultimately find God's created being, man, fulfilling the very purpose of his creation — ruling over the restored earth in Satan's place. And this process can only follow the pattern already set in Genesis 1: six days of work, followed by a seventh day of rest — not only as a picture playing out over a specific span of time,

2 Peter 3:8-9

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

but as a pattern that also corresponds to each Christian's own salvation experience — the progression from the initial sovereign act that saves the spirit, to the ongoing work that saves the soul, until we're able to enter the seventh day as an adopted firstborn son, to rule as a co-heir with Christ in the very place of Satan and his angels. This, again, is exactly what the scoffers have willfully forgotten: the pattern God has established in the foundation of Scripture itself — creation, ruin, restoration, rest; six days of work followed by a seventh day of rest.

Hebrews 4:4-13

For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

The Clock That Cannot Stop

The atomic clock ticks with unerring precision. But there's a clock even more precise than that one, and it hasn't skipped a single second since it started running, back when the light first shone into the darkness. The alarm is already set, and it will soon sound to call us upward. This the scoffers intentionally and willfully forget. But we will not.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.