

HAS GOD INDEED SAID?

PART 1

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."

In our study of the spiritual warfare being waged over rulership in the seventh day, we've seen that the actual field of engagement is God's Word itself. Whether the question concerns which tree to eat from in the garden — the very foundation of Scripture — or which works will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the same challenge keeps being raised: "Has God indeed said...?"

At the heart of this question sits a very simple choice. We can take God at His Word — "God has indeed said" — and go no further, or we can do what seems right in our own eyes, asking "Has God indeed said...?" so that we might find some way around it and follow the flesh instead. It is a simple choice, but the motive for asking the question is anything but simple; it's deadly. Underneath the question sits its constant companion, the lie: "You shall not surely die."

Let's be under no illusion about what is at stake. This concerns the salvation of our soul — whether we stand as a joint heir with Christ in the seventh day, or suffer loss in that day, cast into a place of darkness and shame appropriate to the Kingdom age.

Matthew 25:30

And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And it is how we choose to regard God's Word that determines which of these outcomes will be ours.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

We could even say that the unnatural growth of the mustard seed in Matthew 13 — a garden herb swelling into a tree large enough for birds to nest in its branches, something no mustard plant does on its own — is characterized by this same question. So is the work of the tares sown among the wheat in that same chapter. False doctrine cannot take root unless God's Word is challenged in just this way, propped up by the same false assurance that death is not possible for the Christian. This, we would suggest, is exactly the leaven working its way through the three measures of meal.

Consider, too, the Ephesian church as it appears before the Judgment Seat in Revelation 2.

Revelation 2:4

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

In some form, the Ephesians had been asked the same question and offered the same false assurance, and they had answered "no" — deciding, in effect, that God had not said, and drifting from the faith without any fear of consequence. This is no doubt why the writer of Hebrews warns us so pointedly:

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

It is why James tells us:

James 1:21-22

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

And it is why Peter is so passionate about reminding us, again and again:

2 Peter 1:12-15

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

As we've discovered elsewhere, the Word is God, and God is the Word—

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was [always has been and always will be] God.

To ask "Has God indeed said?" is therefore to challenge the very existence and purpose of God Himself. It removes the hand of divine orchestration from the affairs of man and places human destiny entirely into human hands, running on an endless progression of time with no end in view. And if that is so, then indeed "you surely shall not die," because there would be no divine accountability and no judgment to answer to.

As shocking as it sounds, this is exactly the doctrine introduced by the false teachers — the tares sown among the wheat — at the very beginning of this dispensation, this present age in which God is dealing with mankind through the church, running from Christ's first coming to His second.

2 Peter 3:1-4

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."

To ask "Where is the promise of His coming?" is, in effect, to ask the very same question asked in the garden: "Has God indeed said?" It is a doctrine which declares that time runs on as an endless continuum, into which the kingdom of God will, at some undetermined point, simply emerge through the actions of the church — rather than through the direct intervention of the divine will — since, so the reasoning goes, God has never intervened in the affairs of man since time began. And along with it comes the same destructive lie: "You shall not surely die."

Directly connected to this challenge concerning Christ's return is the timing of the resurrection/rapture of the church, a subject much debated even among those who do look for a literal return of the Lord. At first glance these two questions can look like they have nothing to do with each other. But they belong to the very same deceptive strategy — one built to produce confusion, uncertainty, and doubt, enticing us to simply choose whichever option best suits us.

Yet Scripture is neither ambivalent nor ambiguous on any of this.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

Either the Word God revealed to His servants the prophets is true, or God is a liar. Scripture leaves no room for doubt as to which of these is correct:

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

So when Jesus Himself, speaking as Prophet, said—

John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

—we cannot take this to mean anything other than exactly what He said. And the same holds true of what the two men in white told the disciples at the ascension:

Acts 1:10-11

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Add to this what we find in the types — a "type" being a person, event, or object recorded in Scripture that God has fashioned in advance to foreshadow a greater, future reality, its "antitype" — and the timing of the resurrection/rapture of the church becomes abundantly clear. It cannot be separated from the coming of the Lord.

Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam and the foundational type of the church, was taken alive into heaven before Noah — the tenth generation from Adam and a type of Israel — passed through a worldwide flood picturing the Great Tribulation. Isaac, a type of Christ, married Rebekah, a type of the faithful Christian, before Abraham, a type of God the Father, married Keturah, a type of Israel in repentance. Joseph, another type of Christ, took a Gentile bride, Asenath, before he ever dealt with his brothers during the seven years of famine. And Moses, yet another type of Christ, also took a Gentile bride, Zipporah, before he returned to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt and lead them toward the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In every case the union with the Gentile bride comes before the type deals with his own brethren in judgment and deliverance — the very order we find again when we turn to the Book of the Revelation.

There, the complete church — pictured through the seven churches which are in Asia — appears before the Lord in judgment before He ever opens the first seal on the seven-sealed scroll, the opening of which marks the beginning of the redemption of the inheritance, the time of Jacob's trouble.

Knowing the truth in the face of the lie can only ever come from the clear evidence of Scripture, for God has indeed said. Scripture must always be allowed to interpret itself. It's through the lens of Scripture, with the eyes of faith, that we come to understand the time and place in which we live, as we anticipate what God has set in place for the seventh day. And what we are looking for next — before anything else appears on the prophetic horizon — is the resurrection/rapture of the church.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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.

So let's look at the conditions that have grown up within the church that have allowed this challenge to God's Word to flourish and do its destructive work. We can begin, as Paul does, with the Old Testament type of the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt.

1 Corinthians 10:6-11

Now these things became our examples [types], to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples [types], and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

God had redeemed Israel out of the bondage of Egypt for a very specific purpose, one the nation both knew and understood.

Exodus 6:8

'And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'

They had watched God raise up Moses to lead them toward it. They had experienced His power firsthand through the plagues in Egypt, the night of the Passover, and the crossing of the Red Sea.

Exodus 24:12-13

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

Before going up, Moses left instructions for those who would wait behind for his return.

Exodus 24:14

And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."

They were told to wait for his return — to look for it, to expect it — since he had told them plainly that he would return. And while he was gone, Aaron and Hur, the leaders of the people, carried spiritual oversight for them.

Moses was gone forty days and forty nights — forty being one of Scripture's numbers of completion, marking a complete period of time. We see this pattern again and again: forty days and nights of rain in the flood, forty years of wilderness wandering, forty days of Christ's own temptation in the wilderness. It is not a coincidence; it is a pattern. And during that complete period of time, we read this:

Exodus 32:1-4

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." [where is the promise of his coming?] And Aaron

said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

Notice what's happening here. Because Moses was delayed, the people were not content to watch and wait as they'd been instructed. "We do not know what has become of him" is simply this generation's version of "Where is the promise of his coming?" — which is simply another way of asking, "Has God indeed said?" Rather than wait, they took matters into their own hands, recreating God for themselves in the very image of the world they should have left behind: a golden calf, a symbol pulled straight out of their life in Egypt.

Notice, too, the word used for "god" in verse 4: 'Elohim' — the very same Hebrew word used of the true God throughout Genesis 1, a plural-form noun that carries its own witness to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, One God in three Persons. The people at Sinai did not coin a new name for a new god; they borrowed the name of the God who had redeemed them and hung it on an idol. They called their creation by His very name. But in doing so, they had simply turned away from the one true God to idolatry instead.

And their idolatry produced festivities Scripture itself calls childish.

Exodus 32:5-6

So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

It's worth noticing that Aaron — the very man who should have kept the people's eyes fixed on Moses's return — instead gave them exactly what they asked for. And the result was that the people cast off all restraint.

Exodus 32:25

Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),

In other words, the people — led by Aaron — simply followed their own fleshly desires. "Has God indeed said?" was answered, in effect, with "You shall not surely die," and they turned to idolatry, all the while very likely convinced in their own minds that they were still serving God.

When Moses did return, exactly as he'd said he would, judgment fell on the people because of what they had done in his absence.

Exodus 32:27-28, 33-35

And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every

man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day... And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin." So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

Verse 33 is perhaps the most sobering part of this account. We're not looking at an eternal issue here — Israel had already been eternally redeemed on the night of the Passover; they had passed through the place of death in the Red Sea, and there was no going back from that. What we're looking at instead is the loss of inheritance in the land God had promised them. They remained saved, yet fell short of the goal of their calling — a goal to be fully realized only in the Millennial Kingdom. As with this wilderness generation, what's in view is inheritance and reward at the Judgment Seat, not eternal salvation itself. Eternal salvation, once given, cannot be forfeited; "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). What can be lost is the fullness of our inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom.

We find almost identical language used of Christians in the Revelation:

Revelation 3:5

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

We too have been redeemed for a specific purpose.

Matthew 21:43

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you [Israel] and given to a nation [the Church] bearing the fruits of it.

And Christ — of whom Moses is a type — has gone to the mountain of God, and He will remain there for a complete period of time.

Luke 19:12

Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return."

Acts 3:20-21

"and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

Psalms 110:1

The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

And before He went, He left instructions for those of us who wait for His return.

Luke 19:13

"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'"

Mark 13:33-37

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

But what do we generally find within Christendom instead? Rather than following the instructions the Lord has left us, we hear the very same old question: "Has God indeed said?" "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Rather than following the Word — God the Word — Christians have, generally speaking, sat down to eat and drink and risen up to play, casting off all restraint.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

The "itching ears" of the unrestrained Christian find a direct parallel in the earrings the children of Israel handed over to fashion something bearing the name of God that was, in reality, nothing more than idolatry. And there's no shortage of "Christian" teachers today ready to supply a remedy for every kind of itching ear. For many, God has effectively been turned into a genie in a bottle, conjured up to do their bidding — an organ grinder's monkey performing tricks for a price.

The God of the universe has been packaged, marketed, and distributed according to the economics of supply and demand, a multi-million-dollar business whose various man-made forms compete with one another for a greater share of the market. And Christian leaders — even from the very beginning of this dispensation, the very ones who should be keeping the people entrusted to their care focused on the Lord's return and their appearance at His Judgment Seat — are too often the ones responsible for encouraging and perpetuating this same idolatry, all of it growing out of that one foundational question.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, [Has God indeed said?] and bring on themselves swift destruction. And

many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

For our own part, we have to be careful not to let any relationship we may have with Christians who have cast off restraint shape the way we see things. We have to rely on the evidence of Scripture alone, and see things the way God sees them.

Revelation 3:16-17

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

With regard to the word of the kingdom, Christendom at the end of this dispensation is lukewarm — precisely the condition in which leaven flourishes and multiplies, corrupting everything in its path. But when Christ leaves the mountain of God — and He will — judgment must follow.

1 Peter 4:17

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Jude 1:14-15

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

"Has God indeed said?" "Where is the promise of His coming?" "You shall not surely die..." It will be the one who remains steadfast and immovable in the faith — who has looked from this world unto Jesus, who has watched and prayed for the coming of His kingdom, who has not cast off restraint — whose name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life, the book that records the names of those faithful Christians who will have life in the age to come.

Psalms 24:3-5

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

We'll continue this next time — if we remain, and the Lord is willing.