

Now For the Beginning

In the last article we took you to the Book of Ephesians which is far from the beginning of the Bible. We did so to give you an insight into some things that transpired before the creation. We saw that God is the central figure in the biblical account and that the redemption of mankind that is found "in Christ" was determined before the creation. There are many other concepts contained in the first fourteen verses of Ephesians, such as how we are made blameless and holy, our adoption as sons to God, redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins, the seal of the Holy Spirit, and our guaranteed inheritance, but these occur much later in the biblical story. We must first look at how it came to be that we need such things and cannot provide them for ourselves. It is now time to look at the opening of the Bible, the beginning of creation and time, Genesis.

With the first line of the Bible we encounter one of the great marvels of existence, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)." This is as simple a line as can be composed but it contains one of the most profound messages that has ever been delivered. There may be none to compare with it other than, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... (John 1:1; 14)." God creates and God becomes flesh! We are given two infinitely profound thoughts which are cornerstones of truth about our existence, but which also stretch our minds to and beyond their limits of understanding. With the opening line of Genesis, God wastes no time in bringing us face to face with one of the great unfathomable realities of life. If we can accept this statement as fact, we are already a long way on our journey to God. What remains is to explore the Bible that disclosed this idea and follow its message to reconciliation with our Creator. When this is achieved we will have laid hold of eternal life.

Reading through the first chapter of Genesis, one is acquainted with the order of creation. On the sixth and last day of His work God made man. While we acknowledge that the Bible is about God, not man, we also find early in the account that man is designed to play an important role in the created world. God says in Genesis 1:26 that man would be made in the image of God, thus forever distinguishing him apart from all the rest of creation. We should note that in this section God uses the term man to refer to mankind, for God includes woman in the work. In Genesis 1:27 we read, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." In verse 28 God declares that man should multiply in number and have dominion over all the earth, including all life on land and in the sea.

In chapter 2 we have a more detailed view of man's beginning and see the uniqueness of his formation compared with the rest of creation. Man's special relationship to God and his role in the world is magnified by the manner in which life is given to the inert elements that form him. Moses records, "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 (Genesis 2:7)." There is something uniquely "up close and personal"

about the way in which man is created that clearly demonstrates that he will have, or is supposed to have, a special relationship with the Creator of the universe. And when it was done, God saw that everything that He had made was good, "indeed it was very good (Genesis 1:31)."

The question may arise then, "If all that was made was so very good, what went wrong?" And if it went wrong, why could not the power of the awesome Creator prevent it? The answer lies in that evil exists as well as good and this creation business is not about man. Being made in the image of God, man has a free will. With the existence of both good and evil, we can choose between the two. The conflict created by our choices and the resolution of this conflict through the suffering of God in the flesh is the central theme of the biblical message. Seen in God's preordination for the reconciliation of man [refer to our previous article], the creation was not expected to survive uncorrupted. Once again the story is not about you and me. It is about God. See you in a couple of weeks. Read the second half of chapter 2 and chapter 3:1-13.