

When Genesis Comes Again

By PAUL J. SCHARF

In my training in the original Biblical languages, I was clearly instructed to remember that words have greater meaning than the sum of their constituent parts.

While that rule stands true, there is still one particular New Testament word that is built of fascinating components. It is a word that has a significant presence in our theological vocabulary, even though it is actually found only two times in the Scriptures. It is the word *regeneration*.

We're probably all familiar with its most prominent use in Tit. 3:5, from which we draw its theological meaning with regard to God's working in salvation. But have you considered its other usage, by Christ Himself, in Matt. 19:28?

The occasion for Jesus' statement was one of Peter's infamously misdirected inquiries, when he asked: "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" (Matt. 19:27).

Christ's initial response in v. 28 was most intriguing:

So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This is the only other occurrence of the word *regeneration* in the Bible. And what are its component parts? It literally refers to the time when the world will experience *Genesis again*.

We know that we do not reside in Edenic conditions today. Like fish in the ocean, we swim in the residue of the cursed, post-fall world. It is a world which, at its very core, is awaiting its own redemption, as described by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 8:19-22:

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

So, what will it mean to return to *Genesis again*? It must mean that Christ will answer the cries of creation and return to redeem the physical world. It must also surely refer to that time when "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20). God must work here in this world—not only in eternity future—to defeat Satan, remove him from his current position of rulership (2 Cor. 4:4), and overcome the curse.

Then Christ will take His rightful place on the throne, ruling in perfect righteousness and justice (Rev. 11:15). Again, this reign will take place within history, in a renewed world,

for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-10). But it will also lead into God's eternal kingdom in "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1; see 1 Cor. 15:24-28). In fact, the 1,000-year kingdom is so similar to that eternal kingdom in so many ways, at least from our fallen, limited vantage point, that good dispensational Bible teachers differ as to which one is being described at times, especially in Revelation 21-22.

And it will be in the process of "(making) all things new" (Rev. 21:5) that Christ will bring back *Genesis again*. But to what portion of Genesis does this refer?

It is surely not Genesis 12 and following. As glorious as God's covenant with Abraham is, we would not want to go back through all the ups and downs and trials of life that followed its inauguration.

It is not Genesis 10 and 11—the tower of Babel. It is not even the post-flood world of Genesis 9. It is absolutely not the flood year of Genesis 7-8. We would never want to go back to "the days of Noah" (Matt. 24:37) and the horrors of the pre-flood world of Genesis 6. Nor do we want to revisit the antediluvian cemetery of Genesis 5, or the first murder, in Genesis 4. Of course, we are hoping to escape the curse that resulted from the original sin of Genesis 3.

No, the only time in Genesis to which we long to return is the paradise of Eden before that fall—and we believe with certainty that we will do so. This will occur first in that millennial, Messianic kingdom—an Israelite kingdom, ruled in part by the 12 apostles of Christ (Matt. 19:28). Then, it will continue forever in the recreated world of eternity future, where so many aspects of the original garden will be fully restored (see, for instance, Rev. 22:1-5).

The problems of this shattered world weigh us down on a daily basis. They appear to be insurmountable! And, indeed, they are, when compared with our strength and wisdom. But when appraised in the light of all that is to come, they simply fade into oblivion.

Oh Lord, we pray, let there be *Genesis again*.

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