

Christ is the Summation of all Things
1 Corinthians 15.12-28

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

(Romans 5.14-17)

INTRODUCTION

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15.22, *for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*. In one brief sentence he captures the beginning and end of salvation history. Life as Adam and Eve experienced it before the Fall was free of the ravages of sin. It was, in short, perfect. The progenitors of our race enjoyed an unhindered fellowship with God. However, this ideal relationship was short lived. **As sin was introduced into the world, it brought with it the curse of spiritual and physical death.** Death has been euphemistically described by secularists as a friend to the suffering; it is merely the closing chapter of life. But the Bible does not describe it as an ally; death has never been a friend to man. It is the enemy of hope, an untimely interloper, a destroyer of dreams, a thief who steals the future. Death is not the end God intended for mankind. To the contrary, he created mankind to enjoy a never-ending fellowship with himself. For what other reason would he put the tree of life in the garden. The hearts of men are restless until they find their rest in the Lord. God put a hunger for eternity in the hearts of men (cf. Ecclesiastes 3.11). **If the sin of Adam and Eve had been the *coup de grace* for mankind, then God would have destroyed the race of man immediately.** It is apparent within the pages of Scripture that God had a plan sovereignly to overrule the effects of Adam's sin.

So, the great fall of man was not an end to history but the beginning of salvation history. **As one progresses through the pages of Scripture, it becomes increasingly clear that God's purposes in redemption cannot be thwarted by the sin of Adam.** Indeed, the biblical narrative from Genesis 3 to Revelation 21 is an account of how God purposed to restore mankind into fellowship with himself. Willem Van Gemeren outlines biblical history into twelve periods that he titles the "progress of redemption." From creation to the New Jerusalem there is an unalterable purpose to history. **There is a remarkable symmetry in Scripture:** The opening chapters of Genesis mirror the closing chapters of Revelation. The progress of mankind's

redemption is implacable; it moves forward in accordance with God's timeline until it culminates with Christ handing over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power - even death itself. When these things are accomplished in the general resurrection from the dead at the great day of judgment, the Son himself will be subject to God who is all in all (1 Corinthians 15.24-28). This is the final page in the history of mankind's salvation and Jesus is its last word.

In order to help understand the flow of redemptive history the following chart from Willem Van Gemeren in his excellent book *Progress of Redemption* gives provides an outline of the theme of redemption throughout Scripture.

Creation in Harmony Gen 1-2

Yahweh is creator and Lord of all: humans are vice regents; there is a covenant with creation.

Creation in Alienation

Gen 3-11

Rebellion against God's Kingship; establishment of two kingdoms, God and man; the Noahic covenant.

Election and promise Gen 12-50

Abrahamic covenant; A hierarchical covenant is comprised of 1. A **mutually binding relationship** between the Lord and His servant. 2. **Sovereign administration** of the covenant. 3. **Conditions imposed by God** (commandments, sanctions). 4. **Promises** of union and communion.

A Holy Nation

Exod – Josh

Consecration of Israel, Mosaic covenant, presence of Yahweh, Kingdom of God in Israel.

A Nation like the other nations Judg – 1 Sam 15

Israel's rebelliousness and Yahweh's sovereignty; necessity of human kingship in Israel.

A Royal Nation

1Sam 16 – 1Kgs 11& 1Chr 1 – 2Chr 9

Davidic covenant, the glory of the theocratic community, and Yahweh's presence in the temple.

A Divided Nation

1Kgs 12 – 2Kgs 25 & 2Chr 10 –36

Israel's rebelliousness and Judah's vacillation; the failure of the Davidic dynasty; prophetic message: remnant, day of the Lord, exile, and restoration.

A Restored Nation Ezra, Neh, Prophets

Restoration: renewal of the covenants.

Jesus and the Kingdom

Gospels

Jesus' proclamation, miracles, death, and resurrection; the presence of the glorious kingdom in the Son, renewal of the covenants, the new people of God, preparation for the glorious coming of Jesus.

The Apostolic Era Acts & Epistles

Rule of Jesus, his presence in the Spirit advance of the church, apostolic transmission of the tradition: New Testament writings

Kingdom and the Church

Progression of the church; challenge of being a holy and royal people in the world.

The New Jerusalem Gen – Revelation 22.21

Transformation and restoration; a new heaven and earth; redemption of creation; a holy people; the beneficent presence and rule of God and of his Messiah. (*The Progress of Redemption* p.33)

MANKIND'S ORIGINAL FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

The antediluvians lived exceptionally long lives, but they could not hope to live forever. They had no hope of once again enjoying an Edenic fellowship with God. **As with those whose lives are short lived, they could only hope for what might be gained in this present life. Without Christ, every life remains unfulfilled.** Death is a curse, and its reality is all the more tragic because God has put eternity into the hearts of people who inhabit bodies of death. If this were the sum of man's existence, his circumstance would be hopelessly bleak. But there is more. God breathes into the soul of man his Spirit, that which is neither fragile nor fleeting, and from his Spirit there comes to mankind a life that is freed from slavery to death. This new life is effervescent and eternal. **Everyone, regardless of nationality, age, education, or station in life who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, who believes that Jesus died in his place and that God has raised him from the dead, will be saved** (Romans 10.9-13). The Christian may be confident that what God has promised will become a reality (indeed, it is a reality): *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8.32). The believer may set his soul at rest regarding his final state if he will but set his mind on the things of God and the resurrected Jesus (Colossians 3.1-3). Television dramas graphically depict death as a part of our "entertainment package," but the reality of one's own death is something that few Americans seriously contemplate. However, the unexpected death of a relative or friend is a reminder that one is mortal and that he has very little time to prepare for the eternity that lies before him (Ephesians 5.15-16). **The Christian has already died and his life is hidden with Christ in God. When Jesus appears, the believer will appear with him in glory** (cf. Colossians 3.3,4). So, Christians ought to be careful not to fall into the sin of exchanging that which

is immortal for that which will perish (Romans 1.21-25). Rather, they should keep their eyes fixed on the author and perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12.2), because they are being prepared to spend eternity with Him (Hebrews 12.22-24).

While this life is precious and to be highly valued, it is nonetheless fleeting and only preparatory for eternity (Hebrews 11.13-16). The apostle John writes that the life Jesus gives to his children is abundant and full (John 10.10). Everyone who believes in Jesus has eternal life. He will never die; even though his body dies, his immortal soul will not die. Rather, with the death of the body, the soul, that which is immortal, will be immediately in the presence of the Lord and will remain with him forever. At a future time (known only to God) there will be resurrection of his body from the dead (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18). After Lazarus died, Jesus journeyed to Bethany to comfort the sisters of His friend. He told them: *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”* (John 11.25). Of course, the penetrating question is, do you believe this? If you are saved you must believe it. Jesus’ resurrection is at the heart of the gospel (Romans 10.9-13). God gives everyone who believes in Jesus the right to become His children: *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God* (John 12.12-13).

The Christian’s confidence that he has eternal life (a present reality) as a result of his or her faith in Jesus’ vicarious atonement emboldens him to live and, if necessary, die for Christ (Galatians 2.20). Such was the testimony of the martyrs in Revelation: *They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death* (Revelation 12.11). **The practical implication of the resurrection, ascension, exaltation, session, priestly reign, priestly office, and judgment of Christ is that the believer may live his or her life with loving abandonment for God, knowing that he or she has an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed...** (1 Peter 1.4-9).

UNIFIED CREATION

There is a day coming when heaven and earth will be unified under the headship of Christ (cp. Ephesians 1.10). The one who is in Christ has already become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5.17), but the day is coming when creation itself will be renewed. Paul writes that *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of*

the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8.19-22; cp. Isaiah 55.12-13). **This is what God has always intended. Man will no longer be confined by the shackles of sin inherited from Adam. He is a new man, recreated in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2.10) and he will, in the general resurrection, become like Christ (1 Corinthians 15.49).** This new world was envisioned by the prophet Isaiah: *“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind”* (Isaiah 65.17). The apostle John sums up his message of the Apocalypse with a similar kind of imagery: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And 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. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”* (Revelation 21.1-4).

CONCLUSION OF ALL THINGS

In Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians (1.15-23) he gives us a glimpse of the heavenly realm, that which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived about the things that God has prepared for those who love him (cp. 1 Corinthians 2.9). The Holy Spirit reveals these things to his church so that they may anticipate a future as the bride of Christ (Revelation 21.9). The New Jerusalem has no need of a temple because Lord God Almighty himself and the Lamb are its temple. God will be source of its light and the Lamb will be its lamp (Revelation 21.22-27). Everything will be unified and subject to Christ, and Christ will be subject to the Father.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually

immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (Revelation 21.1-8)