

6.

GOD'S COMMISSION— MAN'S FAILURE

It can be postulated then, as shown in the last chapter, that the original earth which God created was corrupted and ruined by Satan in his rebellion and that God then judged and destroyed that earth as a consequence. Therefore the first several chapters of the book of Genesis could actually be understood as a history of God's restoration and reconstruction of the earth. This restoration, like the original earth, was perfect, since it also was the work of God. After each day's work of creation, with the exception of the second, God "saw that it was good." God was pleased with His work when it was finished (Gen 1:31).

Although this is so there was still something wrong. In this beautiful, lush, recreated earth which God made was the presence of His enemy with all his hosts of wickedness. The atmosphere surrounding the earth was full of fallen angels (Eph 6:12, Col 2:15), and the sea (the abyss or the deep) was teeming with evil demons. This was the situation into which God placed the first man, Adam. Once we realize how the earth was corrupted by Satan and filled with his evil forces we should then have some understanding of why God created man in the first place. Of course we know that man was created for God's pleasure, but here in the book of Genesis we see a hint of something further. Part of His plan was to recover the earth for Himself. Before we get into these things, however, let us take a moment to examine this man whom God made.

When man was created he was made in God's image and after His likeness (Gen 1:26). To be created in God's image means that man is inwardly like God. And to be created in God's likeness means that outwardly, physically, man also resembles God. To demonstrate this a little further, let us begin on the inside. All men have within them three distinct abilities. They can think, they feel and they decide. These three capabilities are generally known as the mind, the emotions and the will. Significantly, God too thinks, feels and decides. In fact, God's thoughts, sentiments and decisions are infinitely greater and stronger than what we possess. He too has a mind, emotions and will. Therefore, it is easy to see that inwardly, man was made in God image. In his inner parts, man's make-up reflects – albeit in a very inferior way – His Maker.

The body of man gives him his outward appearance. When God has revealed Himself throughout biblical history to various people including Moses, Elijah and Daniel, His appearance was like that of a man. This is to say that He was seen having legs, arms, feet, body, a head with one face, etc. On the other hand, He does not have hooves, claws, wings, feathers, horns, scales or multiple "faces." When we see Him we will recognize the form in which He exists because man appears just like God. The likeness or the outward form of man is made after the likeness of God. As a matter of fact man is the only creature in the whole universe which has this privilege of inwardly and outwardly resembling God. Hallelujah! What a glorious fact this is that we have been fashioned after God Himself.

GOD'S COMMISSION TO MAN

Now to return to our original discussion: God made a new creature, man, in His image and after His likeness and placed him in the garden of Eden. In so doing He put him right in the middle of a hostile environment full of fallen angels and demons. Then He charged him saying, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). (The Hebrew word for "subdue" can also be translated "conquer.") God's plan was for man to exercise "dominion" (Gen 1:26) over this planet. Here we find God creating a man after His similitude, placing him in the midst of the devil's territory and charging him to conquer,

subdue it and have dominion over it. Man was given the task of having authority over the earth.

But wait a minute. There were already other beings here who had been given authority before they rebelled. There were already other rulers in existence. Therefore, Adam's appearance in the Garden was a direct challenge to the rulership of Satan. He was being put on the earth to confront and overcome the authority of the devil. Man's job was to be a substitute. He was to take the place of the present evil rulers. This was the beginning of God's plan to recover the earth, Satan's domain, back for Himself. God placed man upon the earth as His emissary to retake what had been lost during Satan's rebellion. You see, man was not just one of God's experiments. God did not make him merely on a whim. When our Creator fashioned us, He had in mind a very definite purpose and objective. Mankind was created to be the agency through which God would defeat His enemy and recover the lost territory for Himself.

To accomplish this plan man, resembling God and having communion with Him, was commissioned with the work of populating the earth with men just like himself who were submitted to the authority and rulership of God. As they multiplied on the earth God could again claim it as His own because it would be filled with creatures who loved and obeyed Him. What a glorious victory! But as we all know at that time the victory was not to be forthcoming.

Satan no doubt understood at least part of what God was doing. He probably could not stand a being who looked like God inhabiting his world. It must have galled him to the very core to see Adam and Eve living and working in submission to God on his earth, so he came and subtly deceived Eve. She in turn seduced her husband, and they fell. Instead of living for God and serving Him, they rebelled against God and became constituents of Satan's kingdom. They partook of the tree of which God had instructed them not to eat. Their natures were corrupted and death began to work in them. At that time they came under God's curse and became for all practical purposes servants of the evil kingdom. It seemed as if the Most High's plan had completely failed.

However God is not easily thwarted. He does not give up quickly. He has the power to carry out His plans in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity. Even before He began His plan by making Adam and Eve, He knew everything that would happen. Man's fall did not take Him by surprise. Though the first man Adam failed to perform the charge of God to have dominion over the earth, God promised to the woman a seed. And of this seed He said, "He shall bruise your head" (meaning the head of the serpent) (Gen 3:15). Although the devil had won an apparent victory, still God had a plan. From woman, through the race of man, God was going to bring forth a seed that would finally fulfill His desire, crushing and defeating the enemy. This seed is the man Jesus Christ, the One who triumphed over the devil and made an open display of this victory to the principalities and powers (Col 2:15).

THE DEVIL'S APPARENT VICTORY

After the fall men began to multiply on the face of the earth. As time went on God would occasionally find a man who was open to Him, who would love Him and who would serve Him. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was such a man. The scriptures testify that he walked with God, and was not, for God took Him (Gen 5:24). In the long run, however, the multitudes of fallen men corrupted their way upon the earth very much. They walked in evil, lust, greed and violence. They continually practiced all the things which God hated. These men performed daily what the enemy with all his evil desires led them to do.

This situation worsened until mankind became so much a part of Satan's kingdom and rebelled against God to such an extent that they engaged in every imaginable sin. Violence was rampant. No human government existed at that time to control the passions of men and so they beat or killed one another at the slightest provocation. Unrestrained sexual lusts also were in evidence. This situation went so far that it appears that some began to have sexual intercourse with the fallen angels. In the first several verses of Genesis chapter six we read about the "sons of God" coming in to the "daughters of men" and intermar-

rying with them. The product of such an unholy union we are told was the giants, the Nephalim, a race of beings whom God never intended and did not want on His earth. A careful reading of Genesis chapter six will make this evil development undeniably clear. At this juncture God saw that the imaginations of men's hearts were only evil continually. Not only was man himself rebelling but he was polluting the human race by illegal sexual intercourse.

The "sons of God" of Genesis chapter 6 must be angelic beings since the scripture in other places refers to them as such (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, Dan 3:25). In fact some of the ancient scripture manuscripts render the words "sons of God" as "angels of God" in this passage. Although some believers, being offended by the very idea, have tried to find another explanation and taught that these must be the descendants of Seth (i.e. men in the lineage of those who walked with God) this cannot be the case. Such a theory does not explain why the offspring of these marriages were giants or why God considered their activities to be so wicked. The procreation of normal men, especially those of godly descent was actually commanded by God. As depraved as we may believe this kind of sin to be, and as much as we might like to deny it, it is likely to occur again before the second coming of Christ. Jesus plainly tells us, "as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:37).

The situation on the earth had become so bad that God repented that He had ever made man. He looked upon the earth and saw that it was altogether corrupted, filled with violence and evil deeds, and increasingly populated with giant beings whom He never desired to exist. Consequently, God planned to destroy the earth with all the creatures that inhabited it. But in one man, Noah, God found someone who was righteous. Noah walked with God. And so God decided to save this man and his family from the destruction which He was planning. God instructed him to build an ark and take into it one pair of every unclean animal along with seven pairs of every clean animal. This ark was to be the vehicle whereby they would all be saved from the second flood of waters upon the earth.

It is interesting to note that Noah's ark, through which this salvation was effected, is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the side of the ark was a door through which all who entered were borne up above the judgment of God. When Jesus died, an opening was also made in His side. It proved to also be a kind of "doorway" through which we can enter into Him and be saved. It is through the pierced side of Jesus Christ, from which blood and water flowed, that we are saved from the impending judgment of God for a new world which is to come.

Although Satan had apparently won a great victory by corrupting mankind and again ruining God's earth, God found one man with whom He could start over and begin a new world to eventually accomplish His purposes. After the flood waters subsided and the ark landed, Noah's descendants once again began to populate the earth. Sadly, they too failed to know God, to love God, and to fulfill God's commission to the first man. Evil and rebellion again began to spread unrestrained. Striking examples of this are recorded, such as the incident of the Tower of Babel where man decided that he could control his own destiny, essentially claiming that he was God and could do whatever he desired. It is here that the Lord confounded them by changing their languages so that they could not understand one another and dispersed them across the face of the earth. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah provides another graphic illustration of how depraved mankind became. Apparently Satan continued to triumph and man continued to fall deeper into sin.

At this point it appears God altered His method of working. Instead of dealing with mankind as a whole He decided to choose for Himself a people – to call out from among all men a race that was especially His. And it was with these people that He would work towards accomplishing His original goals. For this plan God chose a man of faith, Abraham. When he was still childless he was called by God and promised that his seed would multiply and inherit all the land of Canaan. God told him that He would make of him a great nation and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. It was with this select group of people that God planned to accomplish His

original desire. He would separate them to Himself from the rest of the inhabitants of the earth and teach them about His statutes and His ways. He would instruct them concerning His laws and His judgments and cause them to overcome the devil and to live instead for Him.

As you probably know, God carried out this “phase” of His plan with the children of Israel – the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. After Moses led them out of Egypt into the wilderness, God began to speak with them and work with them to mold them into the kind of people He desired. There He tried them, purified them, revealed Himself to them, and it was there, separated from all the rest of the world, that He prepared them to be a people for His own possession. After 40 years of God’s dealing they were ready to enter into the land which God promised, take it from the inhabitants that were there, and set up a kingdom of righteousness over which God Himself would rule supreme.

Biblical history tells us that in the course of time this project also ended in apparent failure. The people of Israel after their entry into the land of Canaan began to mingle themselves with the indigenous population, which God had specifically commanded them not to do. Consequently they began to practice their evil ways. Idolatry, fornication, lust, and sin again sprang forth in God’s people. Time and time again God would do something to turn them back to Himself. He would arrange circumstances to make them miserable and then raise up a leader who would rescue them out of the bondage into which they were falling. Again and again He would save them from the power of the devil that was encroaching into their lives and restore them to Himself.

At one point in their history, it seemed as if the victory had almost been won. During the reign of Kings David and Solomon the kingdom of Israel under the rulership of God had become a real testimony. Its fame had reached to the ends of the earth and to a large extent, at least outwardly, the people were fulfilling God’s commands. It was at this time God again promised a seed that would come to sit on the throne of David and rule according to God’s desires forever. This promise also was and will be fulfilled

in the person of Jesus Christ. Someday He is coming again as King to rule over all the inhabited earth and subdue it in righteousness to God Almighty.

Eventually this kingdom of Israel also fell into degradation. Idol worship and sin of every kind crept in and many of the kings who succeeded David and Solomon chose not to continue in God's way. After several small restorations and numerous larger failures God allowed His people to be carried away captive into Assyria and Babylon. Seemingly all was lost and the devil had again won the victory. God's plan of subduing the earth to Himself through a select group of overcoming people was apparently thwarted and the devil reigned supreme. But as we all know, God's plan and His purposes remained. Still He had a way in which He was going to fulfill all that He set out to accomplish. The many defeats suffered by God's agent, mankind, will serve in the long run only to bring more glory to God, and to show His might and power in finally fulfilling His original purpose through such weak, frail human beings.

No, God is not defeated, and neither will He be. He has not abandoned His original plan and now simply gone into the business of just rescuing man from the earth. He is not accepting defeat, leaving the earth to the devil and simply whisking a few souls who believe in Him off to heaven. No, He is going to establish His Kingdom, His authority, His rightful rulership here on the earth! All the territory which was "lost" will be regained. Man, who was originally charged with this job of recovery, will, through the power of Jesus Christ, have victory over Satan. The charge which He gave to the first man, Adam, will be fulfilled. His people, with Christ at their head, WILL have complete dominion over this earth for 1,000 years. This is the Millennial Kingdom which is coming. It is the fulfillment what God started out to do in the beginning.

Some, when reading about the coming Millennial Kingdom, have perhaps been perplexed and have not really understood what the purpose of it is. Hopefully this chapter has been of some assistance in helping the readers understand God's eternal purposes and to see the revela-

tion of the Bible as a whole – a total picture of God’s working in man on the earth from beginning to end. God has intended from the beginning to defeat His enemy and He has chosen to do it through created beings. He has not lowered Himself to fight with Satan personally, but through His emissary – who looks like Him outwardly and resembles Him inwardly – God (as we will see in the following chapters) is retaking the earth. He is filling it with human beings who are subjected to Him, who love Him and who are serving Him.

