

Summer 2016 Newsletter
Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia
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~~~ *Isaiah 11:6-9* ~~~

## Paradise Lost — Paradise Restored

*“We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,  
wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2Peter 3:13*

Another presidential election year is upon us. The aspiring candidates have been sparring with each other for the last four years, each purporting to have the only right answers to the country's ills. One of the hopefuls campaigned under the slogan, “A Future to Believe In.” Meanwhile, *“men’s hearts”* are *“failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth”* (Luke 21:26) as conditions both foreign and domestic continue on a downward spiral. Many perhaps wonder, “Is there really a future we can believe in?” “Why doesn’t God do something? **Can** God do something, or is he waiting us to do it?”

Past issues of this newsletter have presented the internal evidences that the Bible is the revealed Word of God. It has been demonstrated that within its pages are found scientific facts known only to the God that created them until centuries, even millennia, after the Bible was written. Prophecies spoken by ancient writers such as Daniel, Isaiah, and others by inspiration from God have been fulfilled, some as recently as in our day. Recent findings in archeology confirm the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. With all this evidence of the reliability of the Bible and the truth of its teachings, where better to search for hope for the future. Did the God who would give the writers of the Scriptures such privileged insights to record also reveal a plan for the salvation of his creation?

It is no stretch for a reasoning mind to see that a God who would set the order and plan of the heavens so precisely that even the very minutest deviation would destroy the whole, and who set up the unchanging and predictable laws of nature, and who even knew in advance the course of man, and the path man’s nations would take, is not a God who is out of control of his creation, trying one thing or another to see if something works, or giving up and consigning mankind to destruction. Nor does he need man to come to his aid. A God who works by fixed laws and with perfect order would have a plan for man.

And so it is with our Heavenly Father. How do we know that he had a vision or made a plan? He told us so. In fact, he outlined his vision in the Book he has given us. He even told us how he planned to complete the work. But, if God’s vision is contained in his Book, why can’t we open it up, read, and understand the vision in plain language? It wasn’t meant to be easily understood.

Just as a worker may look at an architect’s blueprint without understanding unless he is willing to study and learn the meaning of the various symbols, lines and numbers, so God’s plan cannot be understood unless a seeker is willing to study the Scriptures with diligence, seeking God’s guidance.

The prophet Daniel wished to understand the meaning of the visions he was given by God. *"I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, 'O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?' He said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.'"* (Daniel 12:8-10)



Jesus told his followers, *"I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them."* (Matthew 13:17) For the prophets of old the time was not right for the revelation of God's plans. God wisely gives us only that knowledge that will edify us. For the prophets, the specter of thousands of years intervening before the completion of God's plan would have been a discouragement.

That is a characteristic of God's dealing with man. Although he has put all his plan into his Holy Book, his workings are obscured to our eyes until it is time for them to be understood, and they are totally hidden to those whom God has not called. (John 6:44; 17:9; Matthew 11:25-27) Jesus told his disciples, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [those not disciples] it has not been given... This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand...but blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."* (Matthew 13:10-16; Isaiah 29:10-13)

The prophet Habakkuk asked God the same questions that trouble us today. Why all the wars and unrighteousness? Why does it seem that wrong is triumphing over right? *"And the LORD answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.'"* (Habakkuk 2:1-3 English Standard Version)

God has a vision but it has taken time for it to develop. The Apostle Peter tells us *"one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."* (2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4) For man, the time has been very long, but God reminds us, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."* (Isaiah 55:8)

God knew that man, having been given a free will and being ignorant of the effects of evil, would be enticed into sin and lose his right to life. He would need a Redeemer to rescue him out of death. Thus we read, *"He [Jesus] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."* (1 Peter 1:20,21 ESV)

To many, the Bible seems to be a disjointed collection of unrelated books. However, it is in fact a comprehensive record of

the history of man and God's dealings with him. Genesis begins by telling of man's creation and fall into sin and death.

God created man in his own image—a thinking, reasoning being—and gave him the earth to populate and subdue. God gave him dominion over all the animals and provided fruit yielding trees and plants for his food. (Genesis 1:27-30) But man lost his life and his paradise home because of disobedience. *"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'"* (Genesis 2:16,17) Thereafter, all Adam could pass on to his children was a cursed and condemned life, and our whole race has been dying ever since. No man could give his life as a ransom for his brother (Psalm 49:10) until God sent Jesus who was *"holy, harmless, separate from sinners"* (Hebrews 7:26) into the world to give his life for the world as a *"ransom for all."* (John 6:51; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; John 3:16)

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, tells of Paradise restored. The books between Genesis and Revelation fill in the details of how God's plan would progress.

The result of God's plan for man will be the restitution of all that Adam lost. *"And he [God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* (Acts 3:20,21)

God will establish his everlasting kingdom on the earth, as Jesus taught us to pray, *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth..."*. (Matthew 6:10) Isaiah prophesied of earth's future King, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, ... The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."* (Isaiah 9:6,7)



King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great image made of gold, silver, brass and iron, and of a stone cut out of a mountain without hands that struck the image on its feet. The stone crushed the image and ground it to powder which was then blown away by the wind. Then the stone grew until it became a great mountain.

Daniel explained that the image represented Babylon and the empires that would succeed it—Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Finally, iron mixed with clay formed the feet and toes representing the Church/State kingdoms of Christendom. *"And in the days of those kings [the ten toes of the image] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom [the stone which became a mountain] that shall never be destroyed, ... It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms*

and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ...The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." (Daniel 2:44,45)

Daniel's prophecy shows us that a mountain in Scripture pictures a kingdom and provides us with the key to the understanding of other prophecies. "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain [kingdom] of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, ... and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; ... and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken." (Micah 4:1-4 ESV; Isaiah 2:2-4)

The law under which God's kingdom will operate, will be a New Covenant that he will make with the nation of Israel, and through them all the rest of mankind. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:33, 34)

The Scriptures tell us that this earthly kingdom will be for **all** who have died in Adam, whom God will raise from death and educate in righteousness. "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28,29 ESV) For God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22; Romans 5:12, 18,19)

The earth will be a place of beauty and yield her bounty for mankind. All sickness will be healed and the ransomed of the Lord—the whole world of mankind—will rejoice in their release from death and the devastating effects of sin. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly...they shall see the glory of the LORD and the excellency of our God...Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: ...and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35:1-10)

Before God's kingdom can be set up, the kingdoms of this world must first be swept away in a great time of trouble, (Matthew 24:21,22; Daniel 12:1; 2 Peter 3:11-13) but the destruction of these systems of man will be followed by Christ's glorious kingdom

because God has promised, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ...for behold I create Jerusalem to be a joy, ... no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days...they shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, ...They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD." (Isaiah 65:17-25)

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6-9)

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; ... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, ... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:1-4)

Never judge an architect by his unfinished work. The Divine Plan is a work in progress, planned from before the foundation of the world, already progressing toward its completion and guaranteed by its Divine Architect to be a future to believe in.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river there was the tree of life, ... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: ... These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." (Revelation 22:1-6)

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