

## SERIES 2006: BELIEVING TO SALVATION

### Study 5: Love from Beginning to End

#### INTRODUCTION: MORE OF GOD AND HIS LOVE INTENTION

In our last study we saw that God's *intention* has always been being fulfilled by love, which arises from the gifts of ministry. God's intention arose out of love—His love; see Ephesians 1:5–6, 'He destined us in love to be his sons *through* Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved'. God's intention was out of His love, he—the Son—being called 'the Beloved'. So God's intention, before time, was the intention of *love*. Likewise in 1 Corinthians 2:6–10, Paul the Apostle speaks of a wisdom of love, planned before time:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But *we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God*, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

These Ephesians and 1 Corinthians Scriptures—amongst other New Testament references—show us that God had planned the future before time. The fact that Christ was His Son before time is most important because only a Son could portray a Father—see Psalm 2:4–9 and Psalm 110:1–7. There are other Psalms and prophets which speak of Christ *prophetically* as the Son, Messiah, Lord—and so on. The use of these terms tells us that the one who was and is the Creator, is the one who is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. The Father is the Alpha and Omega. Likewise the Father is the First and the Last. *He who creates is He who destines from before all time*. He who predestines all things is He who completes all such things. *He who began all things is He who completes all things*.

In his/her lifetime a man or a woman must give much time and thoughtful attention to come to comprehend what the Scriptures teach about God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In all time no one will fully comprehend. In Psalm 14:1–4 (cf. Ps. 53:1–4) the writer speaks strongly:

The fool says in his heart,  
    'There is no God.'  
    They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,  
    there is none that does good.  
The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,  
    to see if there are any that act wisely,  
    that seek after God.  
They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt;  
    there is none that does good,  
    no, not one.  
Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers

who eat up my people as they eat bread,  
and do not call upon the LORD?

Many assert that none of us can be atheists, nor agnostics for that matter. Far less can we claim to understand the matter of time. We are creatures of time, created in time, yet we have to listen to God and His word. We have to hear and to believe. Without God's word none can be a person of faith. One of our problems is that we take up a wrong time vantage, as though God works from the beginning, and he—man—thus sees all things from his own point of view. He/she thinks all things have pivoted around him/her. We, as humans, are thus self-centred. It seems to man that God must work for him—man! It is man who believes he must work to fulfill his own intention. This idea spreads even into his theology. He may be very short on hope whereas hope depends on promises made early on by God. So—Promises. '... faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' The split between God and man causes disbelief in anything God had promised man. The man believed in himself—or in nothing.

The serpent told the woman, 'You will *not* die'. He also told the woman, 'you will be *like* God'. It—the serpent—would eat of the dust of the earth and be forever a shameful creature, having lost the sight of glory. How confusing that battle of true glory and hideous deceit! All of it in words!

## A REVIEW OF THE GLORY OF GOD'S PURE CREATION

How many an occasion we have taken off time to read accounts of the pure creation. We have gloried in the majesty of mountains, the brilliant colours of the autumn leaves, the beauty of the rivers which flow till they are filled to their banks and crash in cascades. The flocks of gentle deer drift across the hill and plains and savannah. Times of the days when lights coruscate brilliantly, and sunsets and sunrises break out. From the waters of the spring and the thaw of the ice and the seasonal outbounding of the floodwaters. We are impressed by fertile hills, and plains, heavy stocks of animals, and fish in lagoons, rivers and in oceans, and plains thick with grasses. 'How well the Creator has provided for all creation', we tell ourselves. We also sing:

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful—  
The Lord God made them all.

Yet in this survey we discover many a blemish. Looked at from a perfectionist point of view we find human creatures treat one another quite cruelly. They often kill or maim one another. They starve one another. Humans war against humans, even to the point of genocide. We starve, steal, deceive, and are selfish to the point of hatred. Bitterness and selfishness are rampant throughout the human and creature worlds. We wonder what kind of Creator could have created it. We find all kinds of dreadful diseases, chemicals and substances that lead to death, and yet in this same world we find the most beautiful and gracious arts are present, and the presence of lovely thought, tenderness and concepts of love that are unbelievable.

No wonder the history of the world attracts philosophers and thinkers, the highest and the lowest, and no wonder it breeds the most marvellous and the most dreadful and most wonderful of all things. We wonder, then, how all these things can be, and be tolerated, and how we dare live together!

## THE DAY THE WORLD CHANGED AND THE BATTLE FOR ITS LOVE AND HATRED WAS LAUNCHED

The Bible spends its first two chapters giving us lively accounts of the creation and in Genesis 1:31 sums up God's first account, 'And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was *very good*'. The term 'very good' means 'functionally good'. That is, it was all perfectly operative and wholly moral. It is certainly not now what it was as described in Genesis 1:26–31. When we look at the creation of today we have to say that it is not 'very good'. Something or someone must have changed it drastically. We need to examine chapters 2:4–25 and 3:1–24. We have done this a number of times in the days of our studies. Now we will give a précis of the action. We use the term 'précis' because so much happened it seems, so much to alter a pacific world into one of internecine conflict.

### A Précis of Genesis 2:4-25

The primal man and woman *together* constituted 'man' or as we may we say, 'Man'. Genesis 1:27 says, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. Together they were sent to do God's will as set out in Genesis 1:26–30. Provision was made for all their needs. In 2:18–23 both male and female made sense in the light of each other because the male and the female constituted 'man'. 'Then the man [male] said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [Heb. *Ishshah*], because she was taken out of Man [Heb. *Ish*]"'.

The verses 2:4–25 are immensely important for they show the significance of man and woman in the world and for the whole of the creation. They were intended to reflect God. They—man and woman—were called upon to lead by God's qualities and thinking. The man as God's lord, in God's stead, ruling His world. Look again at Genesis 1:26–30, the mandate given to rule God's entrancing creation. Genesis 2:24–25 says, 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.' The mention of nudity without being ashamed is introduced at this point in the text with a view to showing what will happen when the two eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is the incoming of self-consciousness of nudity.

### A Précis of Genesis 3:1-7

The two—the man and the woman—'became one flesh' (2:24). This meant marriage, and marriage without shame, even though in a state of nudity. Genesis 3:1–7 shows no conflict between the man and the woman. The serpent was wily enough not to divide the man and the woman. 'Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden"?' Her answer was that God had forbid eating of only *one* special tree of the garden, namely the tree in the midst of the garden—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were neither to touch nor eat of it, lest they die. The serpent ridiculed the commandment of God the Maker of the whole Creation. His answer to the woman was:

... 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the *woman* saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he also ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

Here is a point and place for discussion—why should it be wrong to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? It would take a whole paper to discuss this fully. *Firstly* it indicated that the knowledge they possessed in innocence was not enough. *Secondly*, the knowledge they desired to have would put them on a par with the Creator or even, eventually, ahead of what He knew. *Thirdly*, 1 Corinthians 8:1–3 teaches, “‘Knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up. If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him.’” Love builds up. Commentators show how passionate the woman was, as though preparing for a knowledge fest and looking to it to give her—or both of them—power beyond the knowledge of others. They dared not lag behind others—God, the serpent and others. Exhortation in both OT and NT seek to keep us humble about what we know. Think of the would-be power-people, such as Cain, Nebuchadnezzar, the leaders of great nations, and all evil powers. It is true they received their stimulation from Satan, principalities and such. To have the power go up by knowledge, is to have the love go down. To watch a battle between spouses or any two or more people on the basis of knowledge is to detect the battle of knowledge. To read 1 Corinthians 13 often, is to be taught the way of love. True, pure knowledge is to know God more and more. Ego gathering of knowledge is the destruction of love. Our last study pointed to the destruction of evil by love. The action of love works the closure of evil.

We now comment on verse 7: Then the eyes of both were opened and *they knew that they had become naked*, and to escape this horror of nakedness, as it appeared to be to them, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. Nudity had not been new to them, but rather it had been the ‘norm’ to them. A shock it had not been, but now it was a shock. And it was all to do with the unity of God. God was marvellous in His unity, in His tri-unity, and the great communion of the Triune God. In the very day—the very day man would eat of the forbidden tree—they would lose life: they would die. Being *in life* man would have been joyous, but eating of the forbidden tree had changed created joy to loss of life. Each human being became his or her own person, that is, ‘every man for himself (herself)’. Not that it always seemed to be that way. Without doubt this is where Cain became a killer whereas Abel loved his brother to the end (see 1 John 3:9–18; Gen. 4:1–16).

In our two previous studies we saw that man in seeking his selfish life became homicidal, so that the pacific (peaceful) creation has constantly been invaded by terrible wars and over the centuries has been in states of evil. On the other hand there are those who are God’s people of love who have lived in forgiveness of dreadful sins. Always, ever, God’s people have been folk of love. Those who have the fruit of the Spirit have lived beautifully in the power of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 5:22–26).

### **A Précis of Genesis 3:8-24**

Something about their bodies had changed. We are not told what had changed it, but we are told that what had changed was that nudity had come and yet was not acceptable. In their case, uneasy nudity was the sign of death from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: ‘In the day that you eat of the tree you shall die’. Former pulchritude (pure appreciation of beauty) had changed to prurience (seeing things as evil, Titus 1:15). To be together but shocked by nakedness was a deathful matter. Technically speaking, man could not live a nude life in joy—as hitherto had been the case. They both needed to make aprons from fig leaves—that is, covering their nudity with leaves from the largest

leafy trees—from fig trees. When they heard the sound of the Lord God in the garden, they hid among the trees:

But the LORD God called to the man and said to Him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate’ (Gen. 3:9–12).

At this point in the narrative begins the judgements of God; judgements of the male, the female, and the serpent, that is in regard to their future actions. It is interesting that the male is addressed first, and not the woman who had stepped out of place as the man had neglected to lead her. The woman knew she had been tricked by the serpent and had not listened to her husband, let alone heard the voice of God her Creator. All they were to do was in the future. God’s will was and is to produce a community of love, this community being likewise called ‘the Kingdom of the Son of His love’, to which belonged all who have been raised from the dead, and who will serve God in eternity. They will include all creatures such as angelic beings, principalities and powers, celestial spirits, elders, martyrs, many angels, numbering ‘myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands’, ‘a great multitude which no man could number’:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!’ And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes’ (Rev. 7:9–17).

This great multitude is working the will of God in defeating the kingdom of the Serpent whose defeat is of the Red Dragon and his supporting princes:

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!’ (Rev. 12:7–12).

The *evil city*—Babylon—commits corruption with the nations and seems to defile all these nations.

## **Précis of the Eschaton—the Last Battle and the Era of God's Everlasting Kingdom of Love**

Satan as Prince of the power of the air appears to be king over all the earth, but every victory turns out to be at the same time a call for a judgement by God on the Serpent. So battle and judgement are the one.

Humanity has occupied the earth for many millennia and has had time to examine its own behaviour. Especially it is familiar with that action of war and peace, hatred and love and it should be competent to show that in the Bible it is inevitable that love will destroy all evil. Even Christians falter at coming to such a conclusion. That is why in our next study we will have to work hard to prove this truth.