

HISTORY IS HIS STORY

One of my favorite ways of summarizing the entire story of the Bible and all of human history in one sentence is this: **"The story of the human race as written by God is the journey from Paradise lost to Paradise restored, with everything in between centered on the cross where Jesus died."** Everything written in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and every event in all of human history, participates in this one summary sentence. The Christian who can understand and explain this simple yet profound concept will have a tremendous grasp on the meaning of life, the love of God and the Christian faith. Let's break our sentence down into its component parts:

PARADISE LOST

The story of the Bible and of humanity begins in the first chapter of Genesis. God created a beautiful world for Adam and Eve to enjoy and to rule as His representatives (Genesis 1:26-28). The particular garden where they dwelt was called Eden, or Paradise. Satan sought to ruin that which God had blessed and Satan's temptation of Eve and her subsequent failure (and Adam's) permeates the human heart today. What was the essence of the temptation? To place oneself in authority OVER the Word of God (Genesis 3:1-6). Man becomes the measure of all things (homo mensura), not God. In our day we call it Humanism, and Humanism can be secular or religious.

The spirit of Humanism dominates our world today. There are some very poignant verses in the Bible that remind us of the tragedy of elevating the authority of a finite creature (man) over the authority of God. Please read Judges 21:25; Proverbs 14:12; Isaiah 40:5-8; II Timothy 4:3-4.

As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, they forfeited their right to Paradise. So much was lost! Their marriage suffered, as did their children (Genesis 4:1-8). Every failure in human relationships today can be traced back to the introduction of sin into human history. Even the created world, with all of its natural catastrophes, bears the scars of Paradise lost (Genesis 3:17-18; Romans 8:19-22).

The greatest loss of all was the fellowship of man with God. Death took hold. When the Bible speaks of death, it is another word for separation. Sin brought spiritual death, the separation of man from God (in this life and in eternity). Sin brought physical death, which is the separation of man's material body from his immaterial "inner man". When we see the prevalence of death around us, we see evidence of **PARADISE LOST**.

PARADISE RESTORED

One of the most remarkable features of the Bible is how the last book in the New Testament, Revelation, reflects so much of the first book in the Old Testament, Genesis. The book of Revelation ends with the great promise: **PARADISE RESTORED**.

Take a look at Revelation 21-22 and you can't help but notice the parallels to Genesis 2-3. What went wrong in Genesis is made right in Revelation. Here are just two of many examples: In Genesis 3:22-24 man is denied access to the tree of life, yet in Revelation 22:2 he is given the tree

of life. In Genesis 3:14-20 the curse begins, in Revelation 22:3 there is no longer any curse. Parallels between Genesis and Revelation are numerous.

The greatest measure of how the Paradise which was lost will finally be restored is centered on the presence of God with man. In Revelation 21:3 the most wonderful aspect of Heaven is explained: God will live with His people. This is **PARADISE RESTORED**.

THE CROSS

The climatic point in human history was the death of Jesus on the cross. It was his atoning death, accepted by God the Father as a substitute payment in our place, that opens the way for us to be with God (Hebrews 10:19-22). Everything in the Old Testament was designed to look ahead and point to (foreshadow) the provision of God to cover our sins through Christ's sacrifice. This began in Genesis 3. Even as Adam heard the curse and was being expelled from Paradise, God was foreshadowing the sending of a Savior (3:15, 21). Something innocent died to cover (atone) for Adam and Eve (3:21).

In Genesis 22, God provided a lamb so that Abraham's son, Isaac, would be spared - something innocent died (Genesis 22:6-8, 13-14). In Exodus 12 God's people were redeemed from bondage through the instrument of the passover lamb (Exodus 12:3-7). Jesus Himself would someday become the true Passover Lamb (I Corinthians 5:7).

In Leviticus 16 instructions were given for the Day of Atonement. Again, something innocent died so that the guilty could have their sins removed. In Isaiah 53 a prophecy was given several centuries before Jesus was born, a prophecy which foretold of His suffering in the place of the guilty (53:4-7).

What about the New Testament? Just as the Old Testament used foreshadowing to look ahead to the cross, the New Testament calls us to look back to the cross. The Old Testament foreshadowing is explained in the New Testament (John 1:29; 11:45-53; Acts 8:30-35; I Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:13-17; I Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 4-5). One way of summarizing it is like this: "The saving work of Jesus is in the Old Testament contained, and is in the New Testament explained". We know that God accepted the work of Jesus on the cross because He raised Him from the dead. The empty tomb is proof of our deliverance!

Everything in history fits, someplace, into this divine flow of history of "Paradise lost to Paradise restored, with everything in between centered on the cross where Jesus died". We don't always understand how individual events, people and nations fit into God's master plan, but He is in control of all things. Even what is obscure, and seemingly unimportant to us, still has a place in God's purpose (Romans 8:28). History does matter because it is His story, and when viewed from a Biblical worldview it gives us meaning for today and hope for tomorrow.

