

LESSON 15: OUR ETERNAL DESTINY; NOW AND THEN

(turn to 1 Cor. 6)

We are almost at the end of our journey through the meta-narrative. I know for some of you, there are still some questions – and that is not necessarily a bad thing. We have only been a few feet below the surface of this. But no one gets all the points the first time they go through a lesson. As I said last week, we are to meditate on the Bible. Chew on the scriptures and let them form the framework for your life, in your mind. Everything we have been talking about, including the notes, are posted on the website. Go back through and listen again, reading the notes as you listen. Things will become clearer.

Most Christians have only a vague idea of what eternity will be like for them. They have in their memory, some stories from the OT and then somehow, they jump to the Gospels and Jesus, not really knowing how all this, fits – at least below a surface understanding. We have been through and hit upon the major points that connect the

creation to the final restoration of things in the last two chapters of Revelation.

As Christians, we have to understand just who we are. We are the sons (and daughters) of God. But what does that mean? We have been talking about it for weeks now. Most of us have at least some idea of what that means for us now, but many have yet to put this reality into practice. People ask, “Where do I go from here?” The short answer is to go out and live what you’ve learned, as you’ve learned it. What have we learned? We have learned that earth was created in order that God could have a human family, on earth, that mirrored His divine family in the heavens. Earth, and those in it, were to mirror life in the heavenly realm. God works through a group, His family, in Heaven and desired the same thing here on earth. But humanity has failed time and again. That shouldn’t surprise us though. God’s heavenly family also failed. We can read that in the first verses of Genesis 6 and Dt. 32, et al. We may then ask ourselves how divine beings who saw God face to face and all that He had done in creation ever cease to serve Him. But that shouldn’t be a surprise either. The Israelites were guilty of the same thing. They saw all God did before, during and after the exodus – yet they still murmured and wanted to return to Egypt. Once again, as humans, we

are free moral agents, just as the council, God's heavenly family, and are free to make stupid decisions. They did, Israel did, and we do also.

Why would God allow for His creation to be able to choose to follow him or fall away from Him? The answer to that question is that we are imagers of God. We were created to be like Him. God is free, therefore, as imagers, we should be free to choose also. If we were not free, then by definition, we would not be like Him. God desires that we love Him and want to follow Him from the standpoint of love. If we aren't free, then we are mere robots – programmed to love. And as anyone knows who has ever been in a relationship, a “programmed love” is not what anyone wants. We want our spouses, our family and friends to want to be with us out of a love for us, not out of any other obligatory reason. We, just as the heavenly family, are free to rebel or to follow. That is the only way to allow loyalty and faithfulness to be governed by true love. And because of this freedom, this love, those who have chosen to follow Jesus, have a destiny different than anyone else. By allowing humanity to choose whether or not they want a relationship with Him, God ensures that eternity will be filled with a group that has everyone on the same page. But what does that

destiny look like? **What does it mean to be a “child of God?”**

We have talked about some things that seem to be strange. But we need to allow the Bible to say what it says. Do we believe what it says, even if what it says may seem strange to our modern ears? Even if what it says, when we dig in, may be different from what we have heard in the past? Let’s revisit a few passages.

Job 1:6

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

- **Satan = ha satan, the adversary – not a proper name, but a title or position.**
- **Sons of God – bene ha Elohim – same as Genesis 6.**

Job 2:1

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

- Same phrases, same context, God meeting with the sons of God, what we term a divine council meeting.

1 Kings 22: 19-23

And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; ²⁰ and the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² And the LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ ²³ Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you.”

In all three of these passages, we see God meeting with the “sons of God”, or “all the host of heaven.” In Job, we see that an adversary came from walking the earth and wanted to test Job. In 1 Kings, we don’t read of an adversary. It seems that everyone there is on the same page. Several of the council, “little g gods,” had ideas for how to deal with Ahab. God chose the idea He liked best. And from this we see how God chooses to work with His people. He does the same thing here with us. Once again, our purpose mirrors theirs. This group, this council has a part in governing things here. God, of course is the CEO, but they are all allowed a part and a “say” in things. They can work for God as they do in 1 Kings. Or, they can work against God, as we saw the adversary do in Job and as we

see in Genesis 6, as well as other places. They can choose which team they want to join.

Predestination and freedom work hand in hand in God's kingdom rule. His plan can never be halted. God can take sin and rebellion and still accomplish – through His imagers, whatever He desires.

C.S. Lewis said it this way in the book, *Perelandra*:

“Whatever you do, He will make good of it. But not the good He had prepared for you if you had obeyed Him.”

So, how does this sort of thing play into our daily lives as well as our eternal destiny? We need to have a divine perspective on life and all it entails. We are to participate with God in liberating people from darkness, in order to show people how to live justly and with mercy. We are to be the illustration for those who need to see what it is like to live for Jesus – in order to have a foretaste of the kingdom. Look at what Paul says to the Corinthian church once they had lost their divine perspective.

1 Cor. 6:1-11

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not

know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!

Or do you not know that the unrighteous² will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,⁹ ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The Corinthian church was always a rough crew for Paul to pastor. In his letters to Corinth you read about more drama than any other. It almost seems that the church was about to come apart at the seams. We see in this passage that the Corinthians were bickering among themselves about temporal things. In fact, they were arguing so much, that they actively pursued lawsuits against one another in civil court. This upset Paul. But look at why it upset him. All this bickering came about because they had lost their sense of who they were. They

seemed to have lost their focus on their roles as Christians and had become more enamored at the things of this world. The result was that they were airing their dirty laundry. And to the outsider, they looked stupid. Their testimony and their mission were now hindered. But look at how Paul dealt with it. Look at his rationale behind their chastening.

1 Cor. 6: 2 – 3

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?
³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

His argument is sound. I wouldn't expect anything else from Paul. But he asks them, rhetorically, if they were aware that they would judge the world AND THE ANGELS. And if they are entrusted to judge on such a large, important scale, why then could they not settle disputes among themselves. He goes onto say that it would be better to be defrauded, i.e. turn the other cheek and accept the wronging than to drag things out into the courts of the world.

The point is, as far as we are concerned today, is what does he mean by judging angels? He was getting at something specific.

Col. 1: 13 – 14

He ²has delivered us from ⁴the domain of darkness and transferred us to ⁴the kingdom of ⁴his beloved Son, ¹⁴ ⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We see from these verses that we have already been delivered from darkness and have been transferred to the kingdom of His beloved son. This verse is in the past tense. Yet we don't yet see the kingdom on display in its final form. That is yet to come. When it does, the powers of darkness will be defeated. The demonic, "little g gods", those that rebelled, will be replaced by God's glorified human family. Remember last week when we talked about our new, resurrected bodies? Look at what Jesus said in Revelation.

Rev. 2: 25 – 29

²⁵ Only hold fast ⁴what you have until I come. ²⁶ ⁴The one who conquers and who keeps my works ⁴until the end, ⁴to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and ⁴he will ⁴rule³ them with a rod of iron, ⁴as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him ⁴the morning star. ²⁹ ⁴He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

When Jesus returns to take His throne on a new earth – a new global Eden, He will share that rule with us. The principalities that now rule unjustly and in rebellion to God will be thrown down and we will take their place, meaning that we will rule over the nations (v.26). The

dominions of the fallen council members will not be given to faithful angels, we will outrank them and rule over them! This is what Paul was getting at when talking to the Corinthians, chiding them for not being able to resolve their issues among themselves, in grace.

Now, what did Jesus mean by, “And I will give them the morning star?”

And I will give him the morning star. (v.28)

While it seems odd, it speaks of our joint rule with Jesus over the nations. “Morning star” is used to speak of divine beings in Job 38:7.

Job 38:7

**when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**

From this passage we can see that these divine beings were there at creation and they shouted for joy as the creation unfolded. “Morning star” is also a Messianic term. And since the messiah is divine, “star language” was sometimes used to describe Jesus’ coming reign.

Num. 24:17

**a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;**

Jesus describes himself this way in the book of Revelation.

Rev. 22:16

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

When we look back at Revelation, the wording should jump out at us. Not only does Jesus identify Himself as the Morning Star, but He also says that He will give us the Morning Star, meaning that He will share His rule with us. Look at what He says elsewhere in Revelation.

Rev. 3:20 – 21

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Why does Jesus do this? Why does He introduce us to His heavenly family, as we talked about last week? Why does He at that time refer to us as His brothers and sisters? He does so, in order that He can give us the dominion over the earth that was originally intended through Adam and Eve in Eden. Only at that time, the world will be restored to what Eden was originally.

From the first chapters of the bible, Eden was a focal point of God’s plan for mankind – His divine imagers. Therefore, it is no surprise nor a coincidence that the last chapter of Revelation takes us back to Eden. And the focal point within the garden of Eden was the Tree of life. Look at how it is mentioned in Revelation.

Rev. 22: 1 – 5

Then the angel¹ showed me ¹the river of ¹the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of ¹the street of the city; ¹also, on either side of the river, ¹the tree of life² with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were ¹for the healing of the nations. ³ ¹No longer will there be anything accursed, but ¹the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and ¹his servants will worship him. ⁴ ¹They will see his face, and ¹his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And ¹night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp ¹or sun, for ¹the Lord God will be their light, and ¹they will reign forever and ever.

Did you catch the part about the tree of life healing the nations? That word, “nations” should jump off the page at us now. The nations that were once dominated by dark powers will then be ruled by the new sons and daughters of God. That is us! The tree of life is also mentioned elsewhere in Revelation.

Rev. 2: 7

¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ¹To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of ¹the tree of life, which is in ¹the paradise of God.'

Remember how the garden was a paradise where God walked with His people. This will be the case once again.

Rev. 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ¹The one who conquers will not be hurt by ¹the second death.'

Those who conquer are the ones who get to eat of the Tree of life. Those who eat of the tree of life will not be hurt by the second death. The “tree of life” is a reference back to Eden, but it also turns us forward to the new Eden. The first death refers to physical death, brought on by Adam’s sin and expulsion from Eden. Since all of humanity, believers and unbelievers alike, are resurrected before judgment, the second death refers to the final judgment (**Rev. 21:8**). Those who continue to live with God in a new Eden do not suffer the second death.

Why does all this matter?

Many believers have an inadequate view of the afterlife. We aren’t told everything, but we can grasp certain aspects of what awaits us. We definitely won’t be floating on clouds in the form of chubby babies, playing harps and singing songs forever. And we won’t just be lounging around talking to friends and family. Rather, we will be living the life Eden offered in the beginning. We will be busy enjoying and caring for what God has made, side by side with the other divine beings who remained

loyal to God. There will no longer be any sort of separation between Heaven and earth.

Knowing our destiny SHOULD mold our thinking in the here and now. And this is where the application comes into our daily lives.

1 Cor. 2: 7 – 9

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, ⁷which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of ~~the~~ rulers of this age understood this, for ⁹if they had, they would not have crucified ~~the~~ Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

⁹“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has ⁹prepared ⁹for those who love him”—

We can only begin to imagine what God has prepared for us! That is what Paul is clearly saying here.

We either live with our destiny in view, or we can be like the church at Corinth, which had forgotten their place and mission as imagers in God’s kingdom now, as well as their future place. Forgetting these things greatly affected their everyday lives and actually created a great deal of drama for them. Our awareness of what lies in store for us should alter our behavior for the better. Think about it. We will live and reign with believers from

all over the world, from all points in history. But also think about it in the now. Going back to the drama in the church at Corinth, where the church folks were biting each other's heads off over money and other things that don't mean anything eternally. Would you criticize, fight, cheat and talk about someone if you knew you were going to have to share an apartment with them for eternity? I don't believe we would. I believe we would invest more time in getting to know them, encouraging them and working with them. You see, when we understand our purpose and identity, it focuses us on what is good for the church as it works in this world. It focuses us on the will of God, rather than our own agendas. It focuses us on evangelism and discipleship.

We have to ask ourselves, **“How is it that we don't put as much energy into moving the unbeliever towards Jesus and His kingdom as we do engaging him as an enemy?”** That should hit home, especially in the political climate in which we now find ourselves. Many of us are quick to jump up and engage in political discussions – and these are important issues, in difficult times. But I believe, it is short-sided, in a sense to lose the opportunity to witness to someone regarding eternal matters in order to win an argument over a temporal

kingdom. In essence, this is the trap into which the Corinthians had fallen.

The Corinthian church also had an issue with vying for status among themselves. Do we have that issue? Look at it this way: **“How much of His rule would Jesus have to share with us to make us happy? Why do we bicker with each other for advantage, attention and personal gain?”**

We are either content to rule and reign with Jesus, or we are not.

It is time to live as though we know who we are and know the plans God has for us, whether in the immediate future, or the world to come.