

GENESIS 2:8-25

When children properly learn history, they find they are uncovering God's masterpiece. The world is God's theater, and history is his "His Story." God is the Divine Engineer who establishes the set. With precision he sets it in order and pronounces it very good. God is the Heavenly Artist who fills his set with beautiful props. Animals, trees, mountains, and sunsets have been fascinating additions to behold. He is the Sovereign Playwright who pens the script. The Lord knows and plans everything from the beginning to the end of his story. God is the Sovereign Director who produces his drama; with effortless ease he uses angels, demons, masters, slaves, kingdoms, storms, plants, animals, men, women, boys, and girls to accomplish his purpose. And his audience is growing. The angels have been watching from the beginning, but to their number saints are regularly being added. And all of them together, in paradise, are exclaiming, "How long?" They pant to see the conclusion. They are sitting on pens and needles to see the glorious end. They long to see the good guys win, the bad guys defeated, and the glorious day when everyone lives happily ever after. Yes, there is mystery. Yes, there is tragedy. The tension in the story comes and goes, but God is the author of this earthly drama, and progress is being made towards his final scene.

Therefore, with this thought in mind, what is the plot of God's story? Where has history been, and where is it going? Here is one really good stab at presenting history's over-arching theme:

Man, who squandered harmonious glee with God in the earthly garden, is being redeemed by the God he offended, that man might eternally enjoy harmonious glee with God in the eternal garden to come.

The Bible begins with a beautiful garden. Consider the opening scene where we see man, in a beautiful environment, walking hand-in-hand with his neighbor, enjoying the benefits of God, while acceptably worshiping his Maker and Creator:

Genesis 2:8–25 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother

and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

All was great. All was glorious. All was harmonious. All was worshipful. However, all was lost. Due to man's rebellious siding with Lucifer, the paradisiacal existence of man with God on earth was ruined. Souls, bodies, and relationships were cursed. Nature began the process of falling apart. Paradise was lost.

Yet, despite man's mutiny, God promises a Savior. And the Bible slowly unveils attributes of this Promised Son. He is the Son of Man and Son of God. He is a Prophet, Priest, and King. He is a Lamb who is slain while also being a Lion who roars. He is the Builder of heavenly mansions, and in the final book of Revelation, he is the Master Gardener grooming a garden for all his friends. Such is the work of Jesus as presented by John:

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Revelation 22:1–21 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever ... "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. "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." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Therefore Christian friends, rejoice that this earthly existence is not the ultimate paradise. "Better" is coming. "New and Improved" is on the way. Satisfaction is guaranteed. After several decades of earthly turmoil, eternal glee will be had. God is in charge; all is working according to his script. Rejoice in your Savior, and wait for your ultimate salvation.

And a final word to my non-Christian friends, why would you allow this world to be the only heaven you experience? Why would you die in your sins and suffer eternal separation from God? We deserve his eternal wrath, but we do not have to experience it. In his script, he sent his Son that sinful rebels might find a righteous substitute. He is that one. If you will believe, repent, profess, submit, and love him, his Spirit will take residence in your soul, and he will be found waiting for you in the paradise of God. And until that day, he will enable you to walk with joyful confidence and commitment in this less than idealistic world.

