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#MSS05**

**EARTH NOT
HEAVEN IS MAN'S
FUTURE HOME AND DESTINY**

BY JOHN C. RIBBENS

NOTE: **Charts 1 and 2** have been attached separately, **MSS05.1**, and it is recommended to download/print them to read along with this study

INTRODUCTION

By M.B. Hammond

In the March 1940 issue of *The Word Of Truth*, (Vol. IV, No.2), Otis Q. Sellers wrote an article on the nature and destiny of man. The study was well received and rewritten into a 16-page pamphlet titled, *The Study Of Human Destiny*. It had been out of stock several years, when in 1955, he restudied and rewrote the entire work into a 24-page pamphlet under the same title. During the intervening years, he studied repeatedly many of the Old Testament prophecies, and unraveled the teachings and parables of Jesus Christ concerning the future Kingdom of God. In the process, he had discovered that the Kingdom of God ("of Heaven" in Matthew), which was Christ's primary message, was to be a premillennial time of blessing here on earth. This would fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, in which God promised "that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). It would be a time of "divine government over the earth." God was planning to inject Himself into the affairs of men and bring His righteous order on earth. It was then that Sellers concluded that "the Earth, not heaven, is the future home of God's redeemed." (*Seed & Bread*, No. **SB041**, *God's Next Move*).

It was during those interim years that Sellers issued the challenge for all Bible students to prove that, at death, the believer's expectation was to "go to heaven." He received many responses, but not one was able to come up with any convincing "proofs." Most of these were based on mistranslations, misunderstanding of the nature and destiny of man, or an inadequate understanding of Christ's teachings. In 1960, he wrote a follow-up article titled, *The Challenge Stands*" (*The Word of Truth*, Vol. XV, No.7), giving details from the responses. Sellers had discovered in 1935 that the Acts Period was a unique administration of God, wherein believers had the manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit (healing, speaking in different languages, etc.) as their credentials. He found that we live today in the Dispensation of Grace (Eph. 3:2), a secret administration not previously revealed to the prophets of God and lacking manifest gifts.

The subject was restudied, and this pamphlet is a Scriptural description of the government of God on earth, which is the next event in God's plan. This is NOT the Tribulation, or even the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ will be personally present on earth. It is the time when God will unveil Jesus Christ as King over the earth, and all mankind will come to know and worship Him. And that is why we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

EARTH, NOT HEAVEN, IS MAN'S FUTURE HOME AND DESTINY

By John C. Ribbens

GOD'S CREATION

The infallible word of the living God declares that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Confirmation of this mighty act is found in Jeremiah, where we read, He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures (Jer. 10:12-13). This majestic act of creation is further revealed in the book of Proverbs, where we are told, When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding in water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the water should not pass His commandment: when He had appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men (Prov 8:24-31).

By means of this awe-inspiring act God brought into existence this marvelous planet Earth, destined to become the future home of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything God does has a definite purpose in mind, unlike the frivolous and vain acts of men. As Isaiah speaks, For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it; he hath created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord; and there is none else (Isa. 45:18). This verse in itself should be sufficient proof that earth and NOT heaven is destined to become the future home of mankind. This awesome work of the Creator defies human description. Its provision for life, with its beauty, wonder and design, far exceeds man's power of comprehension. God provided everything essential by that work of creation for the needs of mankind, past, present, and future.

The Lord asked Job, Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched a line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or

who laid the cornerstone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7). The Lord went on with more questions, Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? . . . Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. . . . Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, . . . Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? . . . Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? (Job 30:12-13, 16, 18, 22, 29, 33). The answers to these important questions stagger the imagination of even our most advanced scientists today. The complexities of God's creative power and wisdom defy the power of man's comprehension. These thought-provoking questions are but a reflection of the infinite power, wisdom, and skill of the creator of this universe. Men boast of their great learning and credential their store of knowledge with the term "science," surrounded by their degrees, academic achievements, and accolades. But Scripture declares, For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor. 1:19-20). Indeed Scripture tends to deflate man's ego, even in this day of "advanced knowledge."

The overpowering wisdom of God in creation is clearly revealed in Paul's epistle to the Colossians, saying, For by (in) Him were all things (Gk. -ta panta. these things) created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things (these things) have been created by (through) and for Him: and He is before (takes precedence over) all (these) things, and by Him (in relation to His plans) all (these) things consist (are placed together, cohere, and are held together) (Col. 1:16-17). Clearly this passage reveals that all authority, influence, power, intelligence, control and dominion have their ultimate source and origin in the infinite resources inherent in the Creator of this universe. He is the supreme Sovereign in control of all nature, both in the microscopic level and in the macroscopic elements that constitute all living and inanimate things. This includes the range from the structure of subatomic particles to the majestic splendor of the universe.

EARTH CREATED FOR MEN

Every principle, axiom, doctrine, law, and commandment governing the behavior of this physical universe finds its source in the unlimited power of the Creator, the ultimate expression of God's love. What man claims he has discovered already exists because of God's predetermined act of creation. Every physiological and

psychological aspect of living creatures, governing their health, behavior and conduct are all under His sovereign control, from the infinitesimal to the infinite; things that govern the behavior of man in this universe; all these find their cohesion in Christ, the Creator. The kohaleth (assembler or convener of the wisdom of God, Solomon, king over Israel in Jerusalem, Eccl. 1:12) declared, **The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10). And, I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever (Heb.-o/aw, in relation to the coming eon of God, which is His manifest government): nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear (stand in awe of God) before Him (Eccl. 3:14).** This marvelous truth makes it plain that if you and I, as believers in Christ, have any expectation of service in the Kingdom of God, it will be because of what He has given us, as those who are part of either God's theocracy or God's theophany. Every aspect of our future service for God will be to extol the grace and judgments of God. As He flows into us, we will flow out to other men, and in so doing enter into the joys of eternal (eonian) life. Inasmuch as God is infinite in wisdom, mercy and love, our future life of service will be to progressively learn more of Him. This is the Biblical definition of eternal life. God's resources are inexhaustible.

The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the Biblical revelation of creation, declares, **Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in » measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the spirit (controlled the intelligence) of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel (asked for advice), and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed Him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:12-14).** God, speaking through the mouth of Isaiah, asked, **To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all names (Job 38:31-32) by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power: not one faileth (Isa. 40:25-26).** The psalmist David also declares, **He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite (Psa. 147:4-5).** These words of the prophet Isaiah and the psalmist David are an expression of God's supreme power and intelligence, and are clearly supported by the record of Genesis. There we read, **And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: and He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over**

the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good (Gen. 1:14-18).

The reader should contemplate what an incredible act of creation this was. Man is incapable of comprehending the importance of these "two great lights." As a result of this, the greater light, the sun, the earth is able to produce its plentiful harvests so essential to man's survival. Without the comfort and warmth of the sun, and the light it provides, man would not survive here very long. God also gave mankind the lesser light to rule the night: it even became the basis for the earliest calendars. The significance of these two heavenly bodies cannot be overstated. As a reminder of God's abundant peace, the psalmist David writes, "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and (an) abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." As an anthem of praise, David said, The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language, where their voice is not heard (Psa. 19:1-3). We also read in another Psalm, Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men. (Psa. 115:15-16). And in Isaiah He says, . . . the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth: ... But I am the Lord thy God, that divideth the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of Hosts is His name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people (Isa. 51:13, 15-16). God has a distinct purpose for the heavens, even to populate a large portion of this universe with the undeserving of men, who in God's judgment are not qualified to live upon the earth.

SATAN AND EARTH TODAY

The uniform witness of Scripture makes it plain, contrary to the belief of most Christians, that this earth, not heaven, is ultimately to be redeemed, and restored to be the home of the sons of God. Within the past several years, this earth has fallen victim to a series of great physical perils. The most recent (Jan. 1999) in the city of Armenia, Columbia, a great earthquake has taken the lives of 2,000 men, women and children. A great hurricane in the fall of 1998 took the lives of over 4,000 in Central America. Also tornadoes, drought, and floods have caused enormous material damage and loss of life throughout the United States. Furthermore, the genocide of religious groups in Bosnia, and the on-going governmental chaos in Sierra Leone, and the brutalization of women in Freetown only serves to underscore the problems mankind is facing today. While most men will ascribe the earth's trauma to "mother nature," I believe that to a significant extent they mirror the Satanic influence over mankind today. Isaiah, speaking of Satan's rebellion, declared, How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which

didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms: that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? (Isa. 14:12-17).

While these words have an ancient repercussion, they also point to a yet distant future time in which Satan is seen in the grasp of an angel who "bound him for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:2), ultimately to be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet were (cast)" there to be "tormented day and night (subjected to the most excruciating judgments of God) forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Although this marks Satan's ultimate destruction, he is still actively at work in the world today as "the prince of the power of the air (this environment); the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Although, we do not know to what extent his power and influence in the world today is, his doom has been sealed by God. Matthew 25:40 reminds us of the future time when those nations, who have reeked havoc upon Israel in the great Tribulation, will be instructed by God, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire (the symbol of destruction), prepared for the devil (Satan) and his angels."

GOD'S BLESSING OF MANKIND

Once God breaks His present silence (of the Dispensation of Grace), this creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now" (Rom. 8:22). We recall from Genesis 3:17-19, that because of the sin of Adam, God said to him, ... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. This curse, that God imposed upon mankind as a result of Adam's sin, continues up to this present hour. Certainly Satan was instrumental in God's decision to pronounce a curse upon the ground. Nevertheless, while earth groans and travails, "the expectation of creation is eagerly waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). When that time comes the earth will again become the paradise of God, the garden of the Lord. And for mankind, paradise lost will become paradise regained. The curse which drove man out of the garden, to prevent his eating of the "tree of life," shall no longer keep him out, away from that tree, which is eonian life. This truth is based on the Scriptural promise that the Lord God, in His

day, that is the Day of Jesus Christ, will finally overcome Satan and crush the serpent's head in fulfillment of Genesis 3:14-15.

In that day, The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose. . . . Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: . . . And an highway shall be there, and a way, it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein (Isa. 35:1, 5-8). The realization of these glorious conditions do NOT wait upon the coming of the Millennium, but on the divine assumption of sovereignty. This earth, which has been subjected to an innumerable amount of misfortunes, will be transformed by the power of God to become the future home of God's redeemed. Nowhere in Scripture does God hold out the promise of men dying and "going to heaven," as modern theology proclaims. Instead, it holds out the majestic promise revealed by Paul in Colossians, where he said, If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on (is seated in) the right hand (the "rights" of God, no word for "hand" is there) of God. Set your affection on things above (things that relate to the manifestation of divine government), not on things on earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is (personifies) our life, shall appear (becomes manifest to all men), then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:1-4). This means, that when all men have full recognition of Jesus Christ at His appearing, then we, the believers in Jesus Christ, will be recognized as the sons of God.

OUR FUTURE CHALLENGE

Believers, whose lives have been ridiculed as not being part of the current day "religious cult," referred to as churchianity, will be recognized, honored and held in esteem by God, for all men to see. This is not a promise of being removed from the earth, but rather, to enter into a life of service extolling the God of every grace; a love and favor totally undeserved. This is Paul's message in Ephesians 1:5-6, where Paul declares that Having predestinated (predetermined) us unto the adoption of children (to the son-place) by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to (in harmony with) the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted (He has graced us) in the beloved (the One having been loved, or the beloved One, Christ).

God has qualified us, as believers in Him, for the high honor of sonship, and the distinct privilege of extolling the glories of the grace inherent in His character. This distinguished service will be performed right here on earth, NOT in some fictitious place called the "superheavenlies." No greater privilege or honor can come to any man,

but to be found serving the God of Grace in the coming eon. All physical restrictions, all enmity, and all obstruction by men who do not know God will be removed. These things, today, wait upon the unveiling of the glory of the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13).

This is the divine scenario awaiting planet Earth, as well as us, who will be called upon by God to express the glories of His grace. This is where and how I expect to spend my future life. And what a joy and privilege it will be to be able to give honor and glory to the God of every grace, our Lord Jesus Christ. Under God's government men will have blessings, but also the restrictions of God's law of righteousness. Anyone who breaks that law will be immediately penalized, and this is called His justice, or righteous order. Our delight will be to tell them, in that time, of a God of grace whose character is expressed in a superabundance of love and devotion to His creation. Those of us, who have responded by believing in Christ, will understand the magnificence of God's grace and share this with all the peoples of the earth, in a time when His government enforces mankind's righteousness and has a tight rein on evil.

As a fellow believer in Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, shouldn't our hearts sing together the line from a familiar doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow?" Let us rejoice, as the Psalm says, Kings of the earth, and all peoples, princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. Amen (Psa. 148:11-13).

End MSS05