

The Three Eternal Destinies #208

God's Image Marred but not Lost

Man was made to occupy the earth, to take up occupation in order to subdue the evil forces of spirit beings — Satan and his angels. How? By man doing and being what the Creator made him to do and to be (Ps 8; Gen 1:27).

Gen 1:2 — The Spirit of Elohim was *brooding* over what had become waste and wild, and darkness was on the face of the waters (flooded earth, 2 Pet 3:5-6).

Gen 2:18 — The counterpart of man is woman, as Gen 1:26-27. It was not good for man to remain alone. But when woman was given to man, it was now not just plain good, but very, very good. When man (male and female) was created, it was the highest thought of Elohim, in order to achieve His ultimate purpose for life and goodness, which was the abundant life of Jn 10:10 and 1 Jn 5:12 — abundant or above the measure of all other created beings, including fallen and restored man.

Gen 1:2 — The earth had become waste and wild through a previous disaster or catastrophe (2 Pet 3:5-6), due to Satan's fall with one third of the angels. This fact was introduced to indicate or emphasize what was about to be dealt with on the face of the darkness and roaring deep — the preparation for a new order of things ("brooding").

Gen 1:2 reads "Now" the earth had become waste and wild. "Now the earth..." is emphasized for the purpose of singling out the fact. In the beginning (eternity past) Elohim had created the heavens and the earth (verse 1), which had now *become* waste and wild, in need of restoration, which takes care — brooding over.

There were two aspects to our Father's plan:

- 1) The redemption of man (Jn 10:10; 14:6);
- 2) The restoration of man (Gen 3:22; Isa 24:5; Rom 2:6-16)

The Restored Man will be those who maintain partially the image of God by the knowledge given them (Gen 3:22), which they must apply in the circumstances of their lives in the fallen world (Gen 3:16-19; 9:1-7).

The Redeemed Man is set apart and made ready for his purpose as in 1 Jn 3:1-3.

Many different ideas have been held by theologians as to what the image of God is, in which man was created by God to be like God, and to represent Him in all His ways. It is still given to man to display his God-likeness before all others by being friends and neighbors who love and support one another. Certainly man's intellect or thoughts are marred, as are all other aspects of man's personality. But there is enough left innate or inherent in man to be kind to one another in an effort to keep peace, and to restrain those who destroy the peace between man, either by imprisonment or capital punishment.

Man has a certain wisdom and knowledge that he is responsible to use for the good of mankind. In spite of man's fall into sin, a man can refrain from being as evil as he could be, and he can strive to be as good as he can be, although he cannot attain to oneness with his Creator by himself alone, and he cannot avoid the first death sentence (Gen 2:17). Man, when he fell into the first death sentence in Gen 2:17, would still be able to keep himself from falling into the second death sentence (Rev 20:12-15; Rom 2:6-16). But as Heb 9:27 says, man cannot, no matter how well he keeps the everlasting covenant in Gen 3:16-19 and 9:1-7, prevent the first death, which is the consequence of his sin, since all have sinned (Rom 3:23).

However, as Rom 6:23 says, there *is* a way out of the first death sentence, but only for the redeemed man; there is none for the man who has not received or even heard of the Redeemer. The first death is certain for all who do not obey the Redeemer (Jn 8:51; Acts 5:32; Jn 3:18,36; 2 Ths 1:8-9). But the redeemed man can attain to Messiah at his physical death (2 Cor 5:8), if he maintains his fellowship with Him.

Fallen mankind in the world today still have, although marred, the image and likeness of God in them. As long as they maintain this likeness they will not be worthy of the second death, although they will still be worthy of the first death in order to pay for their sins, since they have sufficient worth in order to pay. They are not as those in Rev 21:8, who are worthy of the second death, for they had no worth left in them (Rev 20:15).

Man has lost his free access to the tree of life (Gen 2:9,17; 3:22-23), and must now fend for himself to keep a good enough conscience to choose the good over the evil. Still he must die and go into death and be raised for judgment to determine his eternal destiny. Even though man has lost his freedom to go to the tree of life (Gen 3:24), there is still the ability left in him to lift himself out of the second death. But he does not have the ability to lift himself out of the first death, for it is a sentence God Himself executed upon mankind. Only after his first death sentence is cancelled, having paid in full for his sins, which is its due wages, can he now face the judgment before the throne of God and be rewarded with a second life. All whose names *were* found in the book of life will not have to pay any more consequences for their sins, since the first death was sufficient accounting, for their sins were not as those of the unjust and the filthy in Rev 22:11. They were counted as the just, not the unjust who committed certain sins that destroyed or hurt others to their demise.

So fallen man lost his freedom and has no ability to lift himself out of his spiritual death or separation from God. He nevertheless has retained his power to consider and to love and to live out his inherent sense of right and wrong. God has “books” that record all his deeds and thoughts (Rev 20:12), which will determine whether his name is to be taken out or found in the book of those worthy of a second life.

Some theologians tell us that since man sinned and still sins, the image of God is entirely lost, so there is no hope of a second life, and Rev 20:12-15 is only for those whose names are not there, since there are only two eternal destinies — heaven or hell!

But Rev 20:12-15 assumes that there will be some whose names *are* found written in the book of life. This is the purpose for the judgment, which renders a decision to determine one's eternal destiny. Not *all* are of the nature of Rev 21:8. Not *all* have rejected the water of life by their cowardly and unbelieving heart, or committed such sins as those recorded there.