***Restoration of the Earth, No. 2
RO111-01***

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This morning, we are in Romans 8:18-21. Our subject is the restoration of the earth, segment number 2.

**The Curse upon Nature**

Since Romans 7:7, we have been exploring God's experiential solution for the sin nature. How God deals with us in our experience to help us, to enable us, to live godly lives. By means of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of doctrine, the Christian then can please the holy God. And in chapter 8, that's what we're talking about: how to please a holy God.

Now, godly living, Paul has pointed out, is befitting the position of one who is a Christian. He is a son of God. He has full adult privileges in the family of God. He is a member of the royal family of God of which Jesus Christ is the king. Christians, therefore, are told that they will one day share the glory of Jesus Christ in heaven as they now share undeserved suffering as He has shared it. And so, the Apostle Paul in this immediate context, verses 18-21, has been talking about Christian suffering and the destiny of glory that is going to follow that kind of undeserved suffering as part of our heavenly inheritance. Paul points out that even the world of nature eagerly looks forward to this time when God's children will be glorified. Today, all of creation, all of nature is under the curse of God because of the sin of Adam, and therefore, we live in a world which is under suffering and death.

So, we come to verse 20 this morning where the Apostle Paul says, "For the creation was made subject to vanity." In the Greek Bible, the word "for" looks like this. It's the word "gar." It is a conjunction, and it introduces the reason that creation looks to the point in time when Christians are glorified. Verse 19 told us that the whole world of creation (the animals and plants is what it means there) is like someone who is looking down a racecourse stretching his neck out to see where the cars are, where the horses are, trying to see who's out ahead. And so, all of nature is eagerly looking forward to that point of time in the future when believers are glorified.

And the element that is looking for that is the "ktisis," which is the Greek word simply for the world of nature that we're speaking of here. And Paul says this whole world of nature, the reason it's looking eagerly down the road for the time when Christians are going to be glorified is because this world of nature was made subject to vanity.

We have a military term here. "Made subject" is the Greek word "hupotasso." "Hupotasso" is a word that means "to rank under." It indicates subordination. In the grammatical structure, it is in the aorist tense, and the aorist tense in the Greek language tells us that there is a point in time in the past when something happened. This points back to the time when Adam in the Garden of Eden, that's when the world of creation was put under the authority and in subjection to something that it was not in subjection to up to that point. It is in the passive voice, which means that nature didn't do this to itself. It was done to nature by an act of God. It's indicative mood which is a statement of reality.

Now, what the Apostle Paul is referring to is what is recorded for us. The historic event is actually recorded in the book of Genesis 3:17-18. Genesis 3:17-18, Adam and Eve have both rebelled against God. They have both sinned. They have broken his rule against eating of the particular fruit. Verse 17 says, "And unto Adam He [that is, God] said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it:' cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou 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.'"

So that here, suddenly, something is being done to the world of nature which was not true of it before. God is bringing a curse upon nature. Up to this time, Adam, living in perfect conformity to the will of God, he exercised his volition and full freedom. He had a perfect environment. He didn't have to sweat it out to have something to eat. Everything he needed was amply provided for him. All he had to do was enjoy life. It was one big recreation event.

A garden full of marvelous fruit. Who cares about eating one piece of it? That's so little. It surely is too trivial to be an important thing to give a second consideration to. But it was that event that brought a subjection upon all of nature which is described by Paul is vanity. The word "vanity" is the Greek word "mataiotes." This word is used here to describe what happened to creation. It connotes an emptiness as to any results. It connotes failure to fulfill the purpose for which something was designed.

So, here was creation. Here was nature designed for maximum blessing of man, perfect environment, and suddenly God who when He made this creation, said, "It's not just good." God looked at it, and He said, "This is really, very good." And the scriptures tell us that God pronounced His creation very good including everything in nature. And yet suddenly, something happens. Adam sins. God curses nature which up to now had provided everything that man needed for his survival with no strain on the part of man. Nature was a grace provision, and it was placed, remember, under Adam's authority. Adam walked around. He named the animals. He analyzed what was going on. He had a marvelous computer mind. He enjoyed studying God's natural world. He was totally in charge. He was lord and master of the whole thing.

So, a great calamity came down upon nature when the earth's head and ruler fell into sin, and then Satan took over. The specific emptiness that came into nature, the specific "mataiotes" of vanity that developed is described in a moment here in verse 21 by the word "corruption."

Creation became a corrupt place. It became a place of decay and death working against man. Man's hard labor produces food from the earth. Man eats the food, but he dies. Vanity. Emptiness. Frustration. Utility. Up till then, every time he ate, he lived. And it ensured his living. The mineral resources of the earth are now wasted in the destruction of wars and in the squandering of mankind. Economic systems are imposed upon the human race tyrannically which depressed human productivity so that man suffers the depravation of basic human needs. It is what even man has done to himself that he cannot use what nature still can provide in such a way as to provide for human needs. All you need is to introduce a system of socialism and you will ensure want and poverty and depravation of the human race.

**The Human Immune System**

Disease threatened man's daily existence. Where once maximum health was the norm - maximum health - every moment of the day, now a disease comes in. And the way God created the body was a marvel in itself.

The great terror of AIDS now which is on everybody's mind which is so prominent in the news is a testimony itself to the perfection of God's creation. Have you ever stopped to think about that? People do not die from AIDS, per se. What people die from when we say they have AIDS is some disease that they have become infected with which their body's immune system cannot resist and destroy. Now, when God made the body, here is the grace of God, the creative power of God. He created a body that had a built-in guard system that destroyed anything that was a threat to that body.

Now, before the fall, that wasn't necessary. But after man came into a world that was filled with disease and decay and destruction, now, suddenly, the body's immune system becomes critical. And it is a marvelous, divine grace provision to enable man to survive in the cursed world. If it wasn't for your immune system, you wouldn't last at all in the world which is now under God's curse.

Be aware of the fact that every day of your life, you have something that threatens your physical life because of this cursed creation. You're picking up things all the time but unbeknownst to you, providing you have maintained your immune system at a maximum point of effectiveness, your immune system is charging to every invader of that body to destroy it.

And nowhere is that more evident now than with the terror of AIDS which is a judgment of God upon a violation of His moral code. And make no mistake about that. But this is the demonstration of the marvels of God's creation. AIDS strips the body of all of that defense system so that anything that invades can now bring you down.

Twenty-four hours a day, you are under attack of diseases of this cursed creation. And we take it in stride because of the immune system. If you sit quietly, you can probably feel something attacking you right now, as a matter of fact. But take comfort in the fact that God has provided a means for resistance. Isn't that being graced out?

**The Curse and Hope of Creation**

Nature resists now the efforts of man to survive in the world. Nature resists man's efforts to grow his food. It attacks it with the weeds and the bugs. So, the curse that was placed upon creation was very definite. It was very clearly there. And suddenly creation, nature which was designed for man's perfect blessing, has proven now to be empty, futile, unable to provide that goal.

But, verse 20 tells us that this condition did not come about willingly on the part of nature. The word "not" is the Greek word "ou," which, as you know, is the strongest negative in the Greek language. The word "willingly" is the word "ekon." It means "of one's own free will." Nature itself here is treated as a person, and it is declared that nature did not take on the frustration of decay and death by choice. Nature was innocent in Adam's sin, but nature was helplessly damaged by it. Creation does not have volition, but Adam did. And he bore the consequences of his evil and nature along with him.

So, it says nature did not willingly take on this curse of God but it did it by reason of (meaning "because of") by reason of being of Him (that is, God) who had subjected. And here again, the subjected is the same word, "hupotasso," that we had a moment ago. That is, to put under authority of Him, that is, of God the Father. At the point when Adam was cast of Eden, God did this to nature. And He did something to nature. He brought a curse upon nature. Nature did willingly take this. This was done by an act of God, but when God did this, He did this by adding a quality to the curse which is described here as hope. "Elpis."

I hope that by now, you know that when the New Testament uses the word "hope," it is totally different from the way that we use it in the English language. In English, the word "hope" connotes something that may or may not happen. "Are you going to come over this afternoon?" "Yeah, I hope so," meaning, "I don't know. That's my intention, but maybe I won't." But that is totally wrong impression in the Greek language. In Greek, the word "elpis" means absolutely it's going to happen. When it says "hope" in the Bible, it means a certainty.

So, here is a hope which is given at the same time that God places this curse upon creation. A confident expectation of something happening in the future. When Adam was judged for his sin, he too was given hope. Genesis 3:15 tells us that immediately God said to Adam, "I'm going to send a Savior which will resolve this problem of the barrier that your sin has created between you and me, and I will remove it for you."

So, immediately, Adam had hope. God indicated His intention of releasing Adam from the consequences of sin and to release nature accordingly. So, there is good reason for the earnest expectation that is described in verse 19. There is good reason for nature stretching its neck out, looking down the road to see when this event is coming, because it has a hope that is a reality that someday, nature is going to be released from this terrible condition.

So, here's a summary of what verse 20 tells us. Number 1: Paul says that nature was subjected to a state of futility and frustration in fulfilling its divine purpose. Number 2: Nature was not subjected to the divine curse by an act of its own volition; it wasn't the fault of nature. Number 3: Paul points out that nature was placed under a curse with the hope of a future restoration.

Now, verse 21, "Because the creation itself also shall be delivered." The word "because" here gives us the reason for the hope that there's going to be a release which has been described in verse 20. Creation, again, refers to the world of nature - of plants and animals. The word itself emphasizes that creation as such has this strong expectation. Creation itself also shall be delivered. And the word "shall be delivered" looks like this: "eleutheroo." "Eleutheroo" is a Greek word that means "to be set free." The idea is to be delivered from some kind of bondage. Nature itself has this specific hope that it will be released from the bondage of corruption. This word is in the future tense which tells us it is going to happen at some place in the future. We know specifically from other scriptures that that will be the thousand-year reign of Christ here on this earth, the millennium. It is passive which means that nature cannot free itself from God's curse, but God will take this action in its behalf. It's a statement of fact.

And what it's going to be released from, it says, is bondage, which is the Greek word "douleia." This word denotes any kind of enslavement. Nature suffers undeservedly under some kind of a bondage, under some kind of suffering, and he spells that out as being the suffering of corruption. The Greek word is "phthora." The word "phthora" refers to a stinking condition of decay and death. So, the vanity of verse 20 to which creation was subjected is the slavery of corruption in verse 21. This corruption of nature is the result of Adam's sin, not of something that nature itself did. Rebellion against the Word of God destroys the quality of one's life.

We hear a lot about "the quality of life." Isn't it interesting how often the quality of life that people are calling for in some respect is based upon a violation of the Word of God? "Abortion protects the quality of life of a woman," and yet abortion is a violation of the Word of God. That's the insanity of the human race. To think that when you violate the Word of God, you will improve the quality of life.

What in the world do you think was in the mind of Eve but to improve the quality of their life? It's hard to imagine a gal that had a high IQ of Eve. You know, she was no "dumb blonde." I mean, this was one smart girl! And yet she thought she could improve on the perfect environment that God had provided. That's the insanity that can creep into the human mind.

And the quality of life is what is referred to here. Creation itself, that wonderful quality that God provided, is turned into decay and death because of Adam's rebellion against the Word of God. So, if you want to improve your quality of life, if you want to improve your circumstances of life, then get with doctrine. Get with learning and functioning on the principles of the Word of God. Get them into the hearts and minds of your children, and you will improve the quality of their life. You will put them under prosperity.

So, the very sufferings in nature tell us that there is a God out there. He is a God of justice. He is a God of righteousness, and He is sovereign. And He will deal with sin. Nature has been disrupted by disease, exploitation, disaster, weeds, thorns, and death just because man rejected what God said. God keeps a corrupted creation functioning, and here we are told that this creation has a hope. It was delivered into creation with the hope that in the future, this would be changed. And the very creation that we now have, the Lord Jesus Christ, even in its corrupt state, keeps it functioning.

Colossians 1:17. Hebrews 1:3 both tell us that the reason life goes on is because Jesus Christ keeps it all together. We call it "the laws of science." It's not the laws of science. It is the power of Jesus Christ that does all this. So, creation itself, Paul says, "shall be delivered [shall be freed] from the bondage of corruption [of this decay and death] into the glorious liberty." The word "glorious" is really the word for glory, "doxa." The word "liberty" is "elutheria." "Elutheria." This is the word for freedom, freedom here from the cursed consequences of Adam's sin in Eden. We would better translate this as "into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. From the slavery to corruption, into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The future freedom of God's children is their glorification at the rapture. That's when we will be freed from the body that has the sin nature. That's when we'll have a resurrected body. That's when we will be freed from all the curse that is upon creation. It is the glorified body, it's the point of the believer's glorification at the rapture. This is the condition that we describe as ultimate sanctification, which is our status when we return from heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to the earth a second time.

God's original intention of a perfect creation as the environment for man will again be realized by the removal of the curse during the millennium. The curse is upon us now. Paul is point out that this curse is there but even when the curse was put on, it was put on with the hope that someday nature itself would share in the liberty of the glory that was to come upon the children of God.

Now, of course, to some degree, we can be liberated from the curse on nature by observing the biblical dietary and sanitation practices. Those are put there in a prescientific age. We even know a great deal more than what's in the Bible. But the Old Testament people were given certain dietary and sanitation rules for the explicit purpose of countering the curse upon creation.

So, the Bible said, "Don't eat pig's meat," because it is physically destructive to you, not because he wallows in the mud but because the nature of the flesh. The pig is a scavenger. And therefore, whatever he eats in twenty-four hours has become cellular structure in his body. Whatever dead, destructive thing he eats becomes what you eat. So, all these scavenger animals were put off-limits to the people of God. They're part of the sanitation laws. Why? To counter the curse upon creation.

**The Millennium and the Tribulation**

But the real era of joy and of release is going to come in the millennium. The Old Testament scriptures are filled with promises of a time in the future when nature is going to be released from a curse. This gives us a guideline of how we should view the future. Where is mankind going? What is God's program? What is ahead?

There are some people who say that Jesus Christ will never rule upon this earth as its kind a thousand-year earthly kingdom. There are some people who say that the Word of God is going to become so powerful that all of mankind will be restored to a position of righteousness in relationship to God that we Christians can change society and bring it to godliness and then Jesus Christ will come to bless us because we have restored His creation. There are some people who say the future is all in heaven. There is never going to be a position on this earth of a kingdom of any kind.

So, you have what you have these millennial viewpoints. We here at Berean Church are a pre-millennial, which means what the Bible tells us that there is a future time coming when this earth will be restored in its pristine environment and that Jesus Christ will reign over it for a literal thousand years and that we Christians who form His royal body will rule and reign with Him. And therefore, Jesus is going to have to come back to this earth before that thousand-year period. So, we call that "pre-millennialism."

There's the view that the earth is going to get better and better by the action of Christians, and after a millennial condition has been established, then Jesus Christ will return. That's called "post-millennialism." It was pretty well destroyed as a serious theological viewpoint at the end of World War I. It was finished off at the end of World War II because it demonstrated that at the heart of the post-millennial concept, there was a fatal flaw: mankind is not getting better. The world is not improving. The morality of the world is going downhill, not uphill. And all you have to do is go to the book of 1 Timothy and read what Timothy says, "Here's how it's going to be at the time that our Lord returns." And you'll see that it's a devastating, catastrophic, wicked, sinful, corrupt world. So, post-millennialism is not taken very seriously except by some very optimistic people.

And this other position, amillennialism, means that there's no millennial condition on this earth at all but that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is in heaven.

Now, turn to Isaiah 11 and see what you would conclude on the basis of this scripture when faced with those three viewpoints. Because we're going someplace. Paul has told us that creation is going to be released. The bug is going to be taken off the back of the world of nature. When is that going to happen?

Isaiah 11:1, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots." This is a poetical expression referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesse there refers to the father of King David, and the line of Jesse through David forms the royal family of Israel. So, in verse 1 refers to the Lord Jesus Christ ruling over the earth as a descendant of David.

Verse 2. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." This is God the Holy Spirit resting upon the humanity of Jesus Christ describing now the character of the Lord Jesus and describing seven qualities that would be characteristic of His humanity. He will have ".the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel, of might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." So, here's the character of the humanity of Christ the ruler.

Now, verses 3 and 4, "And shall make Him [Jesus Christ] of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears [no hearsay decision-making]: But with the righteousness [absolute righteousness of God] shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity [fairness] for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his waist."

Now here, this person, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in His reign here is portrayed as enforcing justice and righteousness. Now, I ask you, when has Jesus Christ ever so reigned as a king? In this context, the person who is the meek of the earth, what does the word "earth" mean? Now, what could that mean? What could the word "earth" mean?

That must mean heaven. All this is taking place in heaven. That's what the amillennialist says now. Don't sit there smiling at me like I'm a dodo! I'm telling you I'm giving you the biggest smarts in the theological world now. All this passage is attributed to heaven. You got to symbolize the word "earth." "The rod of His mouth, with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." "He shall smite the earth." What does that mean, "smite the earth with the rod of His mouth," that is, with His Word, with His judgement? He's going to smite heaven because earth is going to float up to heaven, you see, and then heaven will be around the earth and the earth will be heaven, and. well, you figure it out. I don't know [laughter].

When has Jesus Christ ever so reigned upon the face of the earth? And if this scene describes heaven, what are you going to do with the word "earth" and the principle of literal interpretation? Well, obviously, this language clearly in the mind of the prophet here refers to the earth with Jesus Christ present upon that earth as its ruler.

Now, notice verses through 9. Here's what Paul is talking about when the curse is removed. "And the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child shall play on the hole of the asp [deadly snake], and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den [another deadly snake]. And they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Has this ever been fulfilled in nature as you know it? Have you ever known a scene like this on the face of the earth where the ferocity of animals has been removed? Have you ever known a lion and a lamp to lie down together, unless the lamb was inside the lion to begin with? When has this kind of a condition ever existed on the face of the earth? This is a scene where corruption and the suffering of nature have obviously been removed and a perfect environment restored, where even your little child who is always curious about everything will see a wiggling, deadly snake (a snake which is deadly now) and he will reach out and grab it. Because children like to grab slimy, wiggly things, and the snake is a prime candidate for that sort of thing. But he will not be killed when he does it. The earth has never seen this kind of a scene.

Well, what is God talking about? Is He lying? Is He mistaken? Ah, I know. Poor God. This was His plan, but He was frustrated. Man's sin has outwitted Him. God couldn't handle it. Has He lost His sovereignty? You cannot honor the Word of God and what its words are saying and pretend that something like this has ever existed in any point in history on the face of the earth. And I am reluctant to say that God has been whipped or that this will not be fulfilled, that He is deceiving us. Furthermore, tell me, when has it been true as in verse 9 that the earth has been full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? When has it been true that throughout every nation of the world that there has been a maximum knowledge of Bible doctrine truth?

Furthermore, verse 10 says, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse [Jesus Christ], Who shall stand for an ensign of the people [a rallying point]; to Him shall the nations seek: and His rest shall be glorious." Is this true today, or has it ever been true, that Jesus Christ is the ruler of a world government to which all the nations of the world look and which all nations of the world honor? Tell me when has this been true of the person of Jesus Christ? When has the whole world enjoyed the kind of peace, the rest, that is envisioned here?

The kind of peace that Isaiah refers to in Isaiah 2:4 when he says, "And he shall judge among the nations." What could "the nations" mean? Could that be on earth, or in heaven? It's dumb even to ask the question, isn't it? If it's nations, it has to do with the earth. "And shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Now, please tell me, when in the history of the world has this ever been true? No, there are no people running around in heaven picking their weapons of war and converting them into weapons of agriculture. They are not beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks, and they are not failing to teach war. We still have the War College in Pennsylvania of the United States government fully functioning, fully training officers, fully teaching them the art of war. The picture here, you see, cannot be a picture of heaven without violating the literal principle of interpretation.

And then, verse 11, Isaiah 11:11, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, who shall be left." Who are the Lord's people? Now, here's a good chance to use your interpretive ability. Who are the people of God in this context? You know what the amillennialist says. I don't have to tell you. He says, "All the Christians. Those are the people of God." You know what the post-mill says, "All the Christians. They're the people of God."

But you know very well that here in this context of which Isaiah was speaking, he was talking about the people of God who are the Jewish people. They who are left "from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea." A description of worldwide regathering of the Jewish people once more into God's nation under the ensign and the authority of Jesus Christ. Do you know in the history of the world any regathering of the Jewish people under the authority of Jesus Christ? Do you think that the Jews who indeed are a special people of God with a special distinct plan and program that God has for them and that God intends to fulfill, do you know a Jewish nation on the face of the earth who rallies and looks to Jesus Christ?

But the time will come when the Jews will indeed be restored as God's chosen people. They will be made the leading nation of the world, and it will happen with the earth's curse is removed, which will be in the millennium. So, Isaiah's telling us here that there is a future for the Jewish people. When has such a gathering taken place? On what ground can we say that this refers to the church now?

You can only do this when you symbolize the words of scripture, and that's the devil's ace card. That's what he wants you to do - to say that the words do not mean what they say. Once you do that, [click] he's got you. And he will lead you down the primrose path.

During the millennium of Revelation 20:4, we find that Satan is bound. During the thousand-year period, Satan is out of commission. This is why there is a restoration in creation to its pristine beauty. Notice Revelation 20 beginning at verse 1, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit [the pit of the abyss] and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, who's the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years [this is the literal chaining of Satan for a thousand years], And cast him into the pit of the abyss, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations." [How can he deceive nations if they don't exist on the earth? Deceiving nations for a thousand years because they exist.]

"And they should deceive them no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." So, there's no religion on the earth. So, there's no contamination of divine viewpoint. Satan is out of commission. There is no demonic influence to corrupt human thinking. But once Satan is released (as you see at the end of verse 3, it says he will be released for a little season), once he is released again, then creation deteriorates. Satan comes on the scene again, and the same thing happens that happened with Adam: the curse comes down upon creation.

In Revelation 20:7-10, we have the description of this event so that when Satan once more has been released, down comes the judgment of God upon planet earth once more. And one final destruction of the one final rebellion. And what will be the result? Something very wonderful. Because after this final rebellion, Revelation 21:1 says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

2 Peter 3 gives us a little more detail about how God is finally going to clean up after the last rebellion on the face of the earth against the living God. 2 Peter 3:7 says, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." God intends full restoration of creation. Then, in 2 Peter 3, beginning at verse 10, "And the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." And the day of the Lord begins with the tribulation era. The day of the Lord begins immediately after the rapture, and it goes on through the whole millennial period. The day of the Lord has two facets: a facet of judgment and a facet of blessing. Judgment in the tribulation; blessing in the millennium.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein it shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, we look to His promise, we look for a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness."

After Satan has been cleaned out, there will be a total destruction of the heaven and the earth as we know it now. The very elements of which it is made up will be dissolved by God's fervent, burning heat that He'll apply, and out of it will evolve the most beautiful, absolutely perfect earth will be the environment for the Jewish people for all eternity and the most marvelous heaven which will be the environment of the church, the royal family of God.

So, the future for mankind is very bright. When God cursed the earth in Adam's day, He indeed as Paul has said, cursed it with a silver lining. He cursed it with a hope that is going to be changed and it is going to be restored.

**The Christian's Calling**

So, what is our calling? Our calling is to warn people to the judgment which is ahead. Our calling is to evangelize. Our calling is to teach Christians the Word of God so they can have some hope of rising to the capacity of their spiritual maturity and to preserve them from a diluted generation. It is our calling to be able to keep Christians so informed that they'll never be suckers for all the deception, all the cults, all the devices, all the something substitute for what God can do for you through His Word. All the delusion, all the disorientation that is out there. It's only the Word of God that can protect us from that.

So, the Apostle Paul gives us a hope for now in the fact that God provides us with all we need to survive in spite of the surrounding of sin, in spite of our own sins. He keeps our closets full of clothes, and He keeps our stomachs full of food, and He gives us all the good things of life we need. Let's capitalize on them and use that to serve Him and store our treasures indeed in heaven. And not to squander it in the vain hope of trying to pursue a world which never will be.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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