

On Earth as It is On Heaven

The Promise of America, Technology, and the New Earth

by

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THE PROMISE OF AMERICA

Isn't God your Father and Creator? Didn't He make you and establish you? Remember the days of old; consider the years long past. Ask your fathers, and they'll tell you, your elders, and they'll inform you. When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, and when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the Children of Israel. But the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is His allotted inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:6-8

OF GOD'S EXPANDING EMPIRE

ONE OF the most famous scenes in *The Bible* has a supplicant Jesus standing before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The steely-eyed governor asked his prisoner:

“Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Are you asking for yourself,” Jesus calmly replied, “or are others asking that about Me?”

“What?” blurted Pilate. “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?”

And then, Jesus said, “My Kingdom isn't of this world. If it were, then My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now My Kingdom is from another place.”¹

And because of what Jesus said here about His Kingdom not being “of this world,” most people assume that only Heaven is worthy of being pursued, and that the Earth should be forever viewed as an enemy of God's Kingdom. As a result, generation after generation of the faithful have spawned all kinds of philosophies that denigrate anything to do with the present world.

Many who hold this view naturally point to the fact that this is because ever since Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden we live as fallen creatures in a fallen world. And as a believer in Scripture myself, I'd certainly agree that this is an accurate depiction of the human condition.

However, just as importantly, in spite of our fallen state as descendants of Adam and Eve, *The Bible* is just as clear on many other aspects that are just as worthy of our consideration. As for the true nature of our world, despite its present predicament, Scripture declares:

The Earth is the Lord's and all its fullness—the world and all who live in it.²

The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the Earth is full of His loving devotion.³

¹ John 18:33-36

² Psalm 24:1

³ Ibid. 33:5

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving.⁴

From passages like these, we see that Jesus' reference to His Kingdom not being "of this world" doesn't mean this world is entirely evil just because Adam's descendants continue as prisoners of death, Hell, and the grave until the consummation of the ages. For anyone who cares to notice, in contrasting His Kingdom with this world, Jesus didn't say the Earth itself was unworthy or ungodly; He simply stated that His Kingdom wasn't "of this world." The Greek word that Jesus used for "world" is *cosmos*, which doesn't speak of the Earth and all its fullness *per se* but, rather, of a world system, as in, a world philosophy or ideology.

So, in making this distinction between these two realms, Jesus wasn't warning us that because His Kingdom is so much better than our world we should treat the Earth as nothing more than the devil's domain. If that were true, then how are we to interpret what the gospel writer said about the origins of this *cosmos*? Said John:

The true Light Who gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world didn't recognize Him.⁵

Because John used the same word—*cosmos*—when speaking of the world in this verse, we can conclude that if Jesus Himself made the world, it follows that the *cosmos* isn't by nature alien to the God Who created it. As such, we see that Christ's purpose, in contrasting His Kingdom with the present world, was never to demonize the Earth and its inhabitants just because we're enduring the aftermath of Adam's disobedience. It was simply a prelude to understanding that the present *cosmos* required a radical intrusion from an outside force, which could only occur by establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth according to God's unfolding plan.

Further evidence of the compatibility of God's Kingdom and this Earth can be seen when we look to the famous prayer of Jesus, where He teaches us to pray for "God's will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."⁶ If these two spheres of existence are as foreign to one another as tradition often has us believing, why would Jesus urge us to pray for them to merge in this way?

What's more, our traditional view of the incompatibility of Jesus' world and ours is based on the English phrase that states His Kingdom isn't "of this world." But actually, the Greek word used in this phrase is *ek*, sometimes transliterated as *ex*, as in, *deus ex machina*, which is to say, "god from the machine." As such, what Jesus said was: His Kingdom isn't "from this world."

Now, at first, this might seem like an insignificant shift in meaning, but in fact when we focus on the assumption that Jesus' Kingdom isn't "of" this world, it implies that there's an impenetrable barrier between Earth and this other place. But in contrast, saying that His Kingdom isn't "from" this world just lets us know it didn't originate on Earth but instead comes from somewhere else.

So, while one word—*of*—leads us to believe that we need to leave the Earth to go where Jesus is, the other word—*from*—lets us know that while that Kingdom definitely came from another place, it's now taking up residence in our *cosmos* as a new frontier of God's expanding Empire.

The following work concerns the story of that new frontier and of that expanding Empire, manifesting itself, one person, one day, one prayer at a time.

AMERICA'S NEXT CROSSROAD

AMERICA, in the year 2023, stands at a crossroad. But certainly anyone who has studied the history of America knows this is by no means its first crossroad. In fact, one of the classic earmarks that makes America unique in the history of nations is the clear-cut nature of these crossroads: 1492, 1620, 1776, 1865, 1918, 1945, all mark critical turning points in American history, at which time the nation went decisively in one direction instead of another. Instead of succumbing to the rule of the tyrant, Americans chose the rule of law; instead of knuckling under the way of tyranny, we

⁴ First Timothy 4:4

⁵ John 1:9-10

⁶ Matthew 6:10

chose the way of liberty; and instead of extending the hand of intolerance, we chose the hand of tolerance.

By these three hallmarks, Americans would abide by a determined choice, even while those who opposed such values would continue to vie for the hearts of men, women, and children everywhere. So, while these three—law, liberty, and tolerance—had once been the mark of only individuals, but never of whole nations, America would be the first in the history of nations to be founded entirely on such ideals, those born of “the better angels of our nature,” to which Abraham Lincoln once alluded.

More importantly, while each of these turning points marked events that impacted America itself, they would also impact the entire world around it. As such, 1492 marked not only the Spanish discovery of the American continent, but it also opened a doorway through which so many other Western nations would flow. 1620 marked not only the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, but it also opened a doorway through which many others seeking religious freedom would follow. 1776 marked not only the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which ratified American liberty, but it also opened a doorway through which many other nations would model their own futures. 1865 marked not only the end of the American Civil War, but it also opened a doorway through which we would enter the next phase of the Emancipation Proclamation, both here and abroad. And 1918 and 1945 marked not only the end of the First and Second World Wars, respectively, but they also opened doorways through which the hallmarks of American society—namely, law, liberty, and tolerance—would create an irresistible tidal wave unlike the world had ever experienced to date.

However, while men and women of character, both in America and around the world, embrace law, liberty, and tolerance, we know all too well that this never marked the end of the story; it was just the beginning, which brings us back to where we started, to America’s next crossroad. In the past, tyrants, tyranny, and intolerance had been the norm for most of the world’s population, but now they represent isolated pockets. In the past, the rule of law, the way of liberty, and the hand of tolerance were in the minority, while today they are so much more prevalent, thanks to all that is good and right about America and its allies around the world. But sadly, since the dark days of the 1960s, in the aftermath of JFK’s assassination, the Vietnam War, and Watergate, the American landscape is awash with a terrible enemy: that enemy is cynicism.

Cynicism can best be defined as the tendency to always question the actions of others, no matter how honest or good they appear to be outwardly. The cynic, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, will always assume others have an ulterior motive, which is said to be a secret desire for money, prestige, and power, rather than intending it for the goodwill of others. As such, the cynic cares little for the historical facts surrounding the incredible strides that America has made on issues like the abolition of slavery, the suffrage of women, and the more humane treatment of our animal counterparts. So it will always be with the corrosive power of the cynical mind.

And so, here we are, as a nation of law, liberty, and tolerance, standing at a crossroad, on the verge of choosing yet another direction in the course of our storied history. If Providence prevails, as it has always prevailed, the direction we take as a nation will no doubt make us even more of what we have always been destined to become. But make no mistake, we’ll never get to where we need to be by succumbing to the crippling cynicism that threatens our country today.

We need an antidote, then, for this disease, which is currently eroding every level of our society. Widespread cynicism has many people criticizing our most important institutions, from our government, to our educational system, from our families, to our houses of worship. They are being criticized because they’re said to be, among other things, racist, misogynist, and intolerant, and therefore they must be dismantled. According to the critics, nothing short of an outright revolution is required.

The problem with such demands, though, is they overlook a critical aspect of the discussion, which is that while institutions are made up of people, institutions themselves aren’t capable of racism, misogyny, or intolerance. Only people are capable of that. And as we all know from our own experience, not everyone is guilty of such things, just some. Some people are racist, some people are misogynist, some people are intolerant; that is without question. So to insist on dismantling institutions that have served not only America but the world on the presumed basis that they’re racist, misogynist,

or intolerant seems to miss the point entirely. Far better to seek reformation of the things that can be reformed, the things which comprise these institutions, which is to say, people.

It is also worth noting that Jesus was no fan of revolutions “from without” or else He’d have toppled the Roman Empire Himself, as the Jews in His day had been hoping and praying for. He did, however, revolutionize it “from within,” one person at a time. That’s why the American Revolution succeeded, as it first originated from within, then grew into a coalition of thirteen colonies that eventually formed a uniquely singular identity. Of course, without France’s help, the Revolution would have failed. But who would argue that it was the French who imposed their will on the colonies to secede?

Even now, when America tries to steer other countries toward a republican form of government, from without, things don’t always turn out so well. That’s because unless the Lord builds the house—from within, beginning with one human heart at a time—the builders build in vain.

But rather than demand that people change, the critics insist that America itself must change, or else be changed. However, in doing so, they reveal they don’t really have the best interests of America and the world in mind. Something altogether different, then, is lurking within their zealous cries of racism, misogyny, and intolerance. Everywhere we turn, we see our most basic values as a nation being questioned in a non-stop effort to undermine the American way of life.

Taking a page from God’s own playbook—although a counterfeit version—the enemies of America have taken a new approach in their revolutionary effort. Rather than attack America in a head-on assault, they too are seeking to do their work from the inside out. But instead of appealing to “the better angels of our nature,” they’re pumping their favorite poison into every stream of public and private life: cynicism. Speaking of this very method of attack, President Lincoln predicted long ago:

At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reaches us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.⁷

Observations like this are vital to a work of this nature, because while it’s presented with an acute awareness of the political upheaval of the day, it’s by no means a political treatise about revolution, any more than it’s a psychological treatise about cynicism. This is, after all, a work about the prayer of Jesus that urges the God of Heaven to have His will be done on Earth. It’s about that expanding Empire—the coming of God’s Kingdom that the prophets of old spoke of and that Jesus sent into full swing with His death and resurrection. And it’s about the role that America, technology, and the New Earth are playing in this unfolding drama of the ages. So, while both the politics and the psychology of the day are relevant to this discussion, they will never constitute its main thrust.

The main thrust of this work will be what *The Bible* says about the promises that God has uttered concerning His nation, a people whom the Lord has called by His name. It’s especially about those promises, of the unconditional kind, that God intends to keep regardless of our typically human tendency to fail to live up to those promises. That’s because no discussion of America—its birth, its history, and its destiny—can ever be understood apart from looking at it through the prism of a biblical perspective. Because no matter how long and how hard the critics of America question the motives of its founders, including Columbus, the Pilgrims, and the Founding Fathers, all these pioneers looked to *The Bible* for inspiration. And one promise they were all aware of, and one that Lincoln almost certainly had in mind when he offered the previous warning, was:

No weapon forged against you will prosper, and you’ll refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from Me, declares the Lord.⁸

This is worth remembering when America’s problems so often concern outside forces generated by foreign nationals who seek to destabilize and destroy our way of life. But with God’s unconditional

⁷ From a speech to a group in Springfield, Illinois 1838

⁸ Isaiah 54:17

promises such as this one, we can and should focus our attention on where it's required most: not on any enemy without but, rather, on the enemy within.

Keep in mind that as troublesome as bombs or missiles are, coming at us from beyond our borders, the greater threat is the one that can hide in plain sight, the one where you're never quite sure about its origins. After all, who needs bombs and missiles when a daily diet of nationwide cynicism has its own citizens undermining the foundations of its own institutions? Who needs physical weapons when we lay down and die of our own accord because someone has convinced us that we're to blame for the decadence and decline of our own nation? Like a cancer cell that must first trick its host into believing that it's part of the original organism, cynicism is insinuating itself into every organ of the once-stable national order of America.

But fortunately, for our sakes, the remedy for cynicism is as close to us as it's always been—in our collective memory as a society. Like Dorothy's ruby red slippers in *The Wizard of Oz*, the answer has always been with us, had we not become so jaded about the answer. When the power of cynicism seeks to poison every aspect of our national life, we should seek to remember.

Remember what the prophet Isaiah said, speaking for God:

Listen to Me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were hewn. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave you birth. When I called him, he was but one; then I blessed him and multiplied him.⁹

To help with that remembering, this work will trace the history of Abraham, from the days when he was but one to the days when his descendants would fulfill God's promise to become so numerous that they could only be compared with the dust of the Earth and the stars of Heaven.¹⁰ Who are these people in today's modern world? Where in the world do they reside in order to contain so vast a population? And most importantly, did God fulfill His promise to multiply these people because they're more righteous than any other nation on Earth?

Certainly, answering such questions won't be easy. But just as certainly, we have no doubt that the antidote we need has everything to do with remembering what God's word says concerning the destiny of these dust-like descendants of Israel.

In this instance, that remembering can come to us—if we're willing to look to the quarry from which we were cut—just as it came to another famous group who once faced their own crossroad in history. The group in question was none other than those outcasts and wanderers in the days of Moses who had led them for forty years through the Wilderness. Now they were on the verge of entering the Promised Land. But before Moses handed them off to Joshua, he left them with one final admonition that history records as *The Song of Moses*. What he told them in that fateful moment is the same thing our American ancestors took to heart in their day, and we'd do well to take it to heart in ours. Said Moses:

Isn't God your Father and Creator? Didn't He make you and establish you? Remember the days of old; consider the years long past. Ask your fathers, and they'll tell you, your elders, and they'll inform you. When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, and when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the Children of Israel. But the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is His allotted inheritance.¹¹

When the Pilgrims made the impossible voyage from the Old World to the New, they looked to Scriptures like this to shine a beacon of hope, to light their way in their darkest hour. For them, the idea that God had already determined the boundaries of the Children of Israel renewed their strength and courage when they needed it most. As fellow outcasts and wanderers, they found the parallels between those Israelites and themselves compelling and downright inspirational. Little did they know that the connection between these two groups, separated by so many centuries, was more than coincidental. In

⁹ Isaiah 51:1-2

¹⁰ Genesis 13:16; 15:5

¹¹ Deuteronomy 32:6-8

fact, with the benefit of hindsight, we now know just how connected they truly are: a connection which just happens to constitute a dimension of the antidote that I'll be offering in the pages of this work.

But to fully grasp what I mean by that, I'd first encourage everyone interested in partaking of this much-needed antidote to take Moses' advice:

Remember the days of old; consider the years long past. Ask your fathers, and they'll tell you, your elders, and they'll inform you.

Most importantly for the purposes of this work concerning the borders of the Children of Israel, let's also remember what Jesus said, in *The Gospel of Matthew*, that the Kingdom of God was being taken from the Jews of His day and was being given to a nation that would bear fruit.¹² Knowing as we do of God's promise to bless the world through the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob,¹³ we again have to ask: Who among these dust-like peoples—the allotted inheritance of the Lord—qualifies for such a blessing? And where are they now?

Again, I say: Ask your fathers; they'll inform you.

And remember...

CHAPTER ONE

A FIRM FOUNDATION

They won't hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain: for the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:19)

Wanderers and Outsiders

WHenever you hope to build something of lasting value, it's always wise to build it on a firm foundation. That's why I've built this work, *On Earth as It is On Heaven*, on the foundation of the first two books I've written, namely *Tales of Forever* and *Fish Tales (From the Belly of the Whale)*.

If you've already read them, then all the better, because those who have will be better equipped to receive my conclusions in this book. However, even if you haven't read them, hopefully what I'll describe here will prepare you to receive them.

As for *Tales of Forever*, the first key takeaway is how it establishes a clear pattern of God's word being given to humanity, of that knowledge being lost, then of it being found again after a "set time" of punishment has expired.

This pattern of "lostness" is one in which God bestows His wisdom through His chosen messengers, but because of complacency and pride that message is, over time, taken for granted and marginalized, so God removes that knowledge from the Earth as a wakeup call.

Then after a specified period of time has run its course, which usually corresponds to the time humanity had been gifted with that wisdom, there's a time of rediscovery and reawakening, with the next group being afforded the opportunity to succeed where the previous group failed.

This happened in *The Old Testament* period when *The Bible* was lost during the Babylonian Captivity, until Ezra, like Enoch long before him, miraculously authored the books that then restored its lost contents.¹⁴

And it happened again in *The New Testament* period when *The Bible*, as we presently know it, was "lost" during the Dark Ages when it was imprisoned in Latin so that only a cadre of elites could read it, until John Wycliffe in 1381 began the process of translating it into the language of the common people.

¹² *Matthew 21:43*

¹³ *Genesis 28:14*

¹⁴ *Second Esdras 14:21-22, 24-27, 44-48*

By 1387 Dutch lay preachers called Lollards, which means “wanderers” in Dutch, were roaming the English countryside, inspired by Wycliffe’s belief that everyone deserved the opportunity to read God’s word for themselves, and not just a handful of cloistered scholars.

By the way, the idea that “wanderers,” or “outsiders” as they were deemed by the mainstream, spearheaded the great awakenings in biblical history is one of the cornerstones of this book, as we’ll see throughout this work.

The next key takeaway from *Tales of Forever*, which feeds directly into the main thesis of *On Earth*, is that the dramatic narratives of *The Bible* reveal a truth far more potent than the typical view of Scripture as being a mere guide to right and wrong modes of human behavior.

Therefore, *Tales of Forever* seeks to establish an awareness of the role of biblical typology, in which we see how the stories of the patriarchs don’t just record the lives of folks who encountered God and who had various reactions to those encounters.

Instead, when we look at the whole record of Scripture, we see how God entered into the very lives of these people to weave a tapestry for the sake of an onlooking world. In short, Scripture doesn’t just record random stories, here and there; instead, it tells the stories of lesser messianic figures like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, and David in such a way that they foreshadow the role that the ultimate messianic person, Jesus Christ, plays in God’s redemptive plan for humanity.

As such, the life of Abraham doesn’t just tell the story of someone who was lucky enough to have God single him out, talk to him, and rescue him from a life of wandering aimlessly about. In the context of biblical typology, Abraham was a stand-in for all humanity who are in a far worse condition than any of us cares to admit.

Thus, in response to God’s audacious promises, Abraham asked: “How will I know, Lord, that You’re telling me the truth? Not that I doubt You, but because I doubt myself, because I doubt my worthiness to receive such wonderful promises as You’re describing.”

So how did God respond to Abraham when he asked for evidence—as any sane person would—that He wasn’t hallucinating? God gave Abraham—and all of us—a marvelous way to verify the truthfulness of His promises. He told him:

Certainly you’ll know I’m telling you the truth when you see how I treat your descendants in the days to come, when you see them wandering for many years as strangers in a strange land. Then after becoming slaves, they’ll suffer terribly at the hands of their overlords, but in the fourth generation, they’ll come out richer than when they went in.¹⁵

The important thing to understand about this scenario, to those who appreciate God’s habit of typological revelation: This wasn’t just a way to confirm God’s word to Abraham when He promised him descendants as numerous as the stars, and the gift of land previously owned by others. It was also a window into the human condition, of which Abraham and his descendants would act as surrogates for all peoples and for all time. In other words, God wasn’t just promising Abraham a marvelous destiny for his sake alone but for the sake of every living human being—past, present, and future.

That is to say, God would work out a universal mystery, in Abraham, that actually began when Adam fell from grace and was cast out of the Garden as the first “wanderer” and “outsider.” Originally acting as the master of God’s creation, Adam became a slave of Satan, and so was doomed to wander the Earth as a stranger in a strange land. But fortunately, because God is both a God of mercy and a God of “set times,” the times of divine punishment are not eternal in nature.

Now, without going too deep at this point, I mention this in passing to make one important point, which is to confirm the pattern in Scripture, of God’s consistent habit of periodically removing His blessings from mankind but then just as consistently restoring those blessings right on time. If you reject this, however, if you reject that God provides humanity with signposts as to His times of punishment and restoration, then you’ll certainly reject the main thesis of this work. On the other hand, if you do acknowledge this timeless pattern of “give and take,” then you’ll be perfectly attuned to the idea that biblical figures like Abraham really do act as God’s type for humanity.

¹⁵ Genesis 15:13-15

In Abraham's case, then, although he faithfully embraced God's call by leaving his father's home en route to an undiscovered country, that state of having been "called out" didn't immediately deliver him from the foibles of human nature. Till the day he died, Abraham wrestled with the same state of spiritual ignorance, alienation, and slavery that haunts us all whether we realize it or not. Contrary to church tradition, which wants to declare Abraham an instant saint, he still failed many times in his journey of faith; he lied repeatedly—to himself and to others—even though from his point of view he was just trying "to help" God keep His promises. But in the end, despite God's imputation of righteousness for his faith, Abraham was still a slave to death, Hell, and the grave, until such time as Christ broke asunder that condition into which every human has been born ever since Adam was exiled from the Garden.

Concerning this interplay between ignorance and enlightenment, between alienation and restoration, between slavery and freedom, we'll have more to say as we continue in this work.

Paradoxes and Misconceptions

AS FOR the key takeaway from *Fish Tales (From the Belly of the Whale)*, toward a better understanding of *On Earth*, it's critical that we gain the tools to read *The Bible* so as to make our own conclusions free of the traditions of mankind. And when I say mankind, I also mean to say free of the traditions of the Church. Now in saying that, I'm not saying that *all* the traditions of the Church should be rewritten; I'm only saying that if you read *The Bible* for yourself, then you can't help but be struck by certain inconsistencies.

Now sometimes, as I've explained in *Fish Tales*, these aren't so much inconsistencies as they are paradoxes, which are there by God's design and are clear expressions of the paradoxical nature of the Divine. However, there are many verses in *The Bible* that after further review constitute genuine inconsistencies and so are really misconceptions of *The Bible*.

What's the difference, then, between a paradox and a misconception?

Examples of a paradox are when Jesus is called the Prince of Peace,¹⁶ but elsewhere in Scripture He said, "I haven't come to bring peace but to bring a sword."¹⁷ Or when Jesus said, "Seek and you'll find,"¹⁸ but elsewhere He said, "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."¹⁹ By definition a paradox is something that at first glance seems incongruous but turns out to be true when we take the time to reconcile the paradoxical nature of the verses in question.

In contrast, a misconception is when a traditional reading of Scripture contains an obvious contradiction, and no matter how much we try to reconcile that view with the rest of Scripture, it still can't be done.

Take for example how *The Bible* has Jesus telling us: "Blessed are the meek, because they will inherit the Earth."²⁰ In this famous little verse, we have yet another classic case of why the Scriptures seem to be more a source of confusion than of clarity.

To begin with, we have the first half of this verse using a very misleading word, "meek," which has created all kinds of nonsense concerning what it means to be a real man or real woman of faith; then we have the second half, with the word "inherit," that's just as troublesome but for a completely different reason.

I mean, just consider how humanity has come to view the two keywords in this verse: "meek" and "inherit." Together they create an incredibly pathetic picture of what the God of *The Bible* seems to be looking for in populating His Kingdom. It's as though God put out a Help Wanted sign for eternity: "Calling all milquetoasts for Jesus, to do nothing all day long. Benefits, to inherit one Earth, to be discarded in favor of heavenly bliss."

¹⁶ Isaiah 9:6

¹⁷ Matthew 10:34

¹⁸ Ibid. 7:7

¹⁹ Luke 9:24; 17:33

²⁰ Matthew 5:5

To anyone who knows anything about what God is really looking for, what could be more irritating about the traditional interpretation of this verse?

Fortunately, as is the case with all biblical misconceptions, the antidote is as near as any Greek and Hebrew Dictionary. I prefer *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of The Bible*. Let's see what it helps us to see. This word "meek" is translated from the Greek word, *praus*, which doesn't at all describe someone who is timid or feeble, as we've been led to believe by any traditional view of this word. The word *praus* actually describes the taming of the wild horses that were used in the Roman Coliseum.

Prior to the Romans, the Greeks would capture wild horses that then needed to be trained for battle. Only those horses that would allow a master to control them were found suitable. Contrary to the modern idea of meekness, then, Jesus isn't talking about powder-puffs or doormats in this verse but powerful ones who are no longer rebellious or unruly; war horses that can now stride into battle without breaking rank or panicking under fire.

It is this type of man or woman, actually, who is destined to inherit the Earth, not by sitting around and praying to die so they can go to Heaven. It's this type who willingly accepts the proverbial "bit" in their mouth, under the guidance of their rider, and who wages war with the prince of this world and thereby reclaims the dominion forfeited so long ago in the Garden.

What's more, this word "inherit" gives the impression that this inheritance will be what we typically think of, in which the "meek" will be receiving the gift of the Earth as a mere by-product of someone else's death. In short, we do absolutely nothing but wait around until somebody dies and, poof, we get all the goodies. But not so when you look more closely at the Hebrew word used in this verse for this word "inherit."

In *The Old Testament*, the word is used in the context of the Israelites taking possession of the Promised Land, as in when they were told to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan and possess Palestine, now that the "fullness of the Amorites was complete." To those who appreciate biblical typology, the parallel is clear: Just as the Israelites in Moses' day had to dispossess the people who were already there, the people of Jesus' day were told they had to dispossess those who were under the devil's dominion and who had thus, from God's view, been squatters since the day Adam forfeited his gift of the Earth.

What I find most interesting in all of this is, as long as I can remember, this verse always gave me the impression that if these so-called "meek" ones had any hope of inheriting anything involving the Earth, it spoke more of the New Earth than of the present Earth. I say that because, again, the traditional view makes us believe there's nothing anyone can do to withstand the forces of Anti-Christ in the Last Days, so our only hope now is to be rescued via the Rapture thereby triggering the final march to Armageddon. In other words, so much credit is given to the enemies of God and His Church, there isn't much hope of inheriting anything but a scorched, post-apocalyptic Earth as depicted in so many sci-fi works of fiction.

At which point I'd suggest that perhaps we're investing way too much energy into something that Jesus isn't even talking about. After all, what can the Church possibly do to inherit the New Earth in the context just described as dispossessing the prior inhabitants thereof? Yes, the seven nations of Canaan were already there before Joshua led Israel into action; and yes, the nations of the New World were already there before the Great Commission of Christ compelled men like Columbus to act. But certainly no one believes there will be anyone occupying the New Earth who needs to be dispossessed, do they?

Bottom line: Only when we're willing to let the whole of God's word speak for itself can we finally embrace the truth of Scripture in spite of all the clamoring, haranguing voices that seek to refute the still, small voice of God.

As the Waters Cover the Sea

NOW, AS for the biblical misconceptions we'll be addressing in *On Earth as It is On Heaven*, we'll ask whether or not:

Christ asked us to honor Him by praying "The Lord's Prayer," repeatedly and publicly, until His return.

The disciples were on board with the simple prayer of Jesus, in regard to God's coming Kingdom upon the Earth, and to His gift of daily bread and forgiveness.

The goal of every Christian is to die and go to Heaven.

Despite Adam and Eve's fall from grace, humans are still—legally speaking—masters of creation.

Despite the Fall of Man, God is still—legally speaking—the master of humanity.

Ever since the final days of *The New Testament*, God is no longer in the business of performing miracles, choosing and guiding nations, or intervening in the lives of individuals.

America isn't special and therefore it's wrong to think of itself as being unique among nations, in the history of nations.

America can be deemed legitimate only if it was born in perfection—perfection in morality, perfection in liberty, and perfection in equality.

The New World, as epitomized in the land called America, was merely accidental and incidental in God's overall plan to evangelize the world with the Gospel of Christ.

America began in 1492, with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, or in 1620, with the landing at Plymouth Rock by the Pilgrims, or in 1776, with the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Founding Fathers.

The promise to Abraham and his descendants concerning their becoming like the stars of the sky, and their becoming a company of nations are to be interpreted in strictly spiritual terms, as opposed their being fulfilled in physical terms.

The promise to Abraham and his descendants that they would be a blessing to the whole world speaks only in regard to a heavenly blessing and not an earthly blessing.

The promise to David and his descendants about their sitting upon a perpetual throne that is to endure like the Sun and the Moon can only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God.

The promise to David through Nathan about God preparing a place where Israel might dwell without being attacked by her ancient enemies is not to be understood in historical terms but is really speaking of Christ's throne in eternity.

The Western technology that created a worldwide web of electronic-based telecommunications was merely accidental and incidental in God's overall plan to evangelize the world with the Gospel of Christ.

The Earth is alien to all things in Heaven.

The human body is alien to all things in Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is alien to all things on Earth.

And finally, the Stone Kingdom, described by the prophet Daniel, can only be fulfilled beyond history, and on the New Earth, as opposed to being fulfilled in history, and on the present Earth.

All this and more will be examined as we delve into the worldview that *The Bible* conveys. More often than not, though, traditions are so entrenched that even the most ardent believer has a difficult time separating what Scripture says from what it doesn't say.

If that's true, then by all means let us focus less on what would distract us from the context of God's word of truth, and focus more on the entire narrative of *The Bible*, from front to back. Let's focus less on escaping this "wheel of life," as is suggested by "otherworldly" philosophies, as though there's nothing of this life or this Earth worth salvaging. Instead, let's focus more on dispossessing the

personifications of evil who'd rather see God's magnificent creation turned over to the buzzards and hyenas. Let's carry on with the work that Jesus' disciples were charged with when Christ gave them the keys of God's Kingdom, and in turn were charged with gifting them to us. Let's take it to heart that God's Earth and all its fullness is never to be discarded in favor of "greener pastures" over yonder, and that all evil needs to win is for good people to do nothing.

And so with all of the preceding thoughts in mind, let's take aim at what the title of this work could mean, in spite of every human tradition that would confuse us about the true destiny of God's nation and the Earth, of which Isaiah, the prophet, spoke:

They won't hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain: for the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.²¹

CHAPTER TWO

A STILL SMALL VOICE

Then the Lord said, "Pay attention, Elijah, because the Lord is about to pass by." And a mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks, but the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the wind there came an earthquake, but the Lord wasn't in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord wasn't in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice.

First Kings 19:9-12

In His Wildest Dreams

AMERICA, technology, and the New Earth—three things that, at first glance, don't seem to have any direct connection. Granted, America and technology have intersected on more than one occasion, but what could they possibly have in common with the New Earth as it's described in *The Bible*? What's more, how have all three of these seemingly disconnected subjects found themselves clustered together under the main title of this work: *On Earth as It is On Heaven*?

"And pardon me for stating the obvious," you may add, "but isn't there a typo in your title? Don't you mean to say, on Earth as it is 'in' Heaven, and not 'on' Heaven?"

To which I'd reply: "Actually, no, I haven't erred in my intention when I speak of those things that are 'on' Heaven as opposed to their being 'in' Heaven. And to explain what I mean by that, let me offer the following explanation."

In weaving a story with multiple elements—of America, of technology, of the New Earth, and of being "on" Heaven instead of "in" it—we have to address a series of questions that depend on *The Bible* to adequately answer them. First ask yourself: When you think of how the God of *The Bible* acts, what do you usually think of?

Some people think of God parting the Red Sea with a blast of His nostrils, while others imagine Him creating Heaven and Earth from out of nothing. Some think of God raising Jesus from the dead, while others see Him swooping up Elijah in a whirlwind of fire and smoke. Still others think of God breathing life into Adam and creating a human being, while some picture Him raining fire and brimstone down upon Sodom and Gomorrah. In short, when we think of how God acts, we typically think of Him doing things that only God can do, either in terms of what He does or is said to be, such as His being omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

But the most overlooked aspect of how God acts is the way He sometimes does things quite differently from what we expect Him to do; sometimes God acts as though He isn't God at all. A prime

²¹ *Isaiah 11:9*

example of the contrast between how we expect God to act and how we don't expect Him to act is found in the nineteenth chapter of *The First Book of Kings*. There, Elijah, the prophet, is fleeing the wrath of Jezebel after Ahab told her how Elijah had killed all the prophets of Baal.

So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah: "May the gods deal with me, and ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I don't make your life like the lives of those you killed!"

And Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself traveled a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I've had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, because I'm no better than my fathers."²²

Then, trying to get as far away from Jezebel as he could, Elijah traveled a great distance where he found a nice cave to hide in. But no sooner had he settled in for the night than the Word of the Lord came and asked, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"

"I've been very zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts," he replied, "but the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they're seeking my life as well."

Then the Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. Pay attention, Elijah, because the Lord is about to pass by."

And a mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks, but the Lord wasn't in the wind.

After the wind there came an earthquake, but the Lord wasn't in the earthquake.

After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord wasn't in the fire.

And after the fire came a still, small voice.²³

It was then that God reassured Elijah that he wasn't alone in his fight with Ahab and Jezebel; there were yet 7,000 men whom God had reserved in Israel who hadn't pledged their allegiance to Baal.²⁴

The great irony of this scene, in which Elijah fled the wrath of Jezebel, is we'd expect that, after everything he saw God do up till then, Elijah would never have been so afraid of Jezebel's death threat. After all, in response to Elijah's faithfulness, God, just one chapter earlier in *First Kings*, had famously rained fire down from Heaven to consume his offering before all the people.

So Elijah said to everyone there, "Come near to me." And they all came closer to him... Elijah then took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the Word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel will be your name." And he built an altar with the stones, in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.

Then he arranged the wood and cut an ox in pieces as a burnt offering and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah, the prophet, came near and said, "Oh Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel, and that I'm Your servant and I've done all these things at Your word. Answer me, oh Lord, answer me, so this people may know that You, oh Lord, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back again."

²² *First Kings* 19:1-5

²³ *Ibid.* 19:9-12

²⁴ *Ibid.* 19:18

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.²⁵

Just when Elijah needed it most, God acted like only God could act. Strangely, though, it still did nothing to ensure that Elijah wouldn't doubt God's ability to protect him from Jezebel's subsequent lust for revenge. So what did God do when Elijah's faith wavered? He came to His rescue again, of course.

But this time, the Lord came not only to help him but also to teach him—and us—a unique lesson. The arrival of the Lord brought with it a mighty wind, an earthquake, and a fire. Naturally, having just seen God's fiery power rain down on his burnt offering, Elijah would've assumed that all these things might bring him the solution he required. But no, it was the still, small voice that he really needed, although he might never have thought so in his wildest dreams.

Now admittedly, it's easy to criticize such inconsistencies in the behavior of someone even as great as Elijah—in hindsight, that is—as no doubt none of us would've acted any differently than him. It could even be said this is why *The Bible* is such an enduring classic, because despite every criticism that it's flawed, by virtue of it being a written record of our distant past, it's never ceased in its ability to speak to our immediate present.

In short, *The Bible* provides us with a never-ending litmus test in our ongoing attempts to solve the riddle of why God acts the way He does. Again and again, the Scriptures declare that while many people saw God's actions, very few came to understand why He did what He did. As it written: "God made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel."²⁶ In other words, the people of Israel only saw God's actions and therefore understood God only on a surface level, like children who see what their parents do but never really understand why they do what they do. Moses, by contrast, came to know God's ways; he came to know why God did what He did, and therefore He understood God on a much deeper level. Unlike the other kids in the family, Moses came to know why God acts the way He does, and as a result, he was much better able to anticipate and predict how God would act in future situations.

Since the Curtain Fell

IT IS precisely this kind of awareness that I'm seeking to investigate in this present work. That's why I'm asking the question: When we think of how the God of *The Bible* acts, what do we usually think of? Whether we consider ourselves a believer or a skeptic, this question is of paramount importance. In either case, we can't help but be perplexed by the apparent inconsistencies we encounter in *The Bible*. But if we can come to a better way of interpreting God's actions, we may come to a clearer understanding of many of our most pressing issues as a society, such as: If we consider that nations endure while individuals come and go, does that mean God is more concerned with the destiny of nations than of individuals? And just how relevant are the actions of a single person in the overall scheme of God's plan? After all, while God obviously revealed Himself to men like Moses and Elijah, isn't it true that God was more concerned with the fate of nations like Israel and Judah?

With Scripture as our reference point, it appears as though, while God is, and always will be, the Lord of the Nations, He understands all too well that nations can't respond to His still, small voice; only individuals can do that. Nations can't yearn for truth, freedom, and justice; only individuals can do that. Nations can't strive to live according to the rule of law and the liberty of conscience; only individuals can do that. And if that's true, then it turns out that, paradoxically, the individuals who comprise the nations—those puny individuals who come and go so swiftly—are, and always will be, the foundation upon which even the most enduring nation is built.

²⁵ *First Kings 18:30-38*

²⁶ *Psalms 103:7*

That's also why the technology of a nation is so critical in the overall scheme of God's plan—first, because the power of technology enables individuals to rise above the more mundane aspects of society that has characterized so much of world history; second, because each innovation in technology gives those individuals greater opportunity to spread their acquired knowledge to more people than ever before; and third, because technology is rarely the product of groupthink but, rather, is the brainchild of gifted individuals who bring to bear all that they've distilled from the society in which they've been nurtured and trained.

Be that as it may, while many who claim to believe in *The Bible* have no problem with God's still, small voice speaking to the prophets of old, they still can't help wondering: Is this method of divine communication still relevant in a modern setting? After all, it's been contended that since the curtain fell on the days described in *The Book of Acts*, God no longer takes an active part in the destiny of individuals or nations. Whereas God performed signs and wonders on behalf of biblical nations like Judah and Israel, those days are long gone, never to return again. Right?

Of course, if we believe in Scripture, we're forced to anticipate some kind of future manifestation of God's intervention on behalf of Judah and Israel because clearly they're major players in *The Book of Revelation*. Therefore, the question should be rephrased, and more importantly, rephrased in the context of this ebb and flow of God's way of doing things. Simply put: From those days described in *Acts* until the days in *Revelation*, has God "gone underground," as it were? After the nations of Judah and Israel failed so miserably to live up to God's call, did God stop guiding the destiny of individuals or nations? And if by chance He hasn't stopped, which individuals and nations is He still guiding? Ironically enough, if *The Bible* remains our touchstone, we have to agree that God has never abandoned His habit of choosing certain individuals or nations to fulfill His purposes on the stage of world history. The only questions that remain, then: Are there clues that point to such individuals or nations? And if there are clues, then how do we account for this interplay of God sometimes acting in obvious ways, while at other times acting inconspicuously?

CHAPTER THREE

OUTSIDERS LOOKING IN

"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I've chosen, so that you may consider and believe Me and understand that I am He... I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, and your King." So says the Lord Who makes a way in the sea and a path through the surging waters.

Isaiah 43:10, 15-16

Postcards From Heaven

EVER HEARD the saying: Some people are so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good? Just ask that sort: "What's the most important message in *The Bible*? I mean, sure, it's a book about faith, hope, and love, about Christ dying for our sins, about receiving forgiveness for those sins and finding the road to eternal life. I get that. But apart from that: What is it about *The Bible* that lets us know it's more than just a nice story with a happy ending? Isn't *The Bible* supposed to contain a message of *why* all the things like faith, forgiveness, and eternal life are possible? Isn't it supposed to demonstrate that God is in control, and that because He's in control, He can be trusted to keep His promises to humanity?"

If God is like the Deists tell us, then sure, He made the Universe, wound it up like a clock, and set all the laws of the Universe into motion. But after that, if He checked out and left the Universe to

mankind, then there's no evidence that He's in control of anything that's important to us, as in, the destiny of the nations of the world or the people who make up those nations. If He isn't in control of the nations or us, then all this talk of faith, hope, and love is out the window. It's meaningless, because even if God built into the Universe the free will of every living entity, it doesn't mean He's a God Who can be trusted.

"But of course God can be trusted," insist the sincere believers in Scripture. "Of course God is in control."

At which point, one quite naturally asks for some tangible proof of God's control over history, over the nations, over us.

But instead of hearing about this proof from Scripture itself, we're offered only platitudes, like: "Well, you just have to trust that He's in control; that's all there is to it. When you see nation rising up against nation, when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, when there are earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in many places, you're not supposed to see confusion and disarray in all that; you're supposed to see that God is in control. Right?"

To which I'd reply, "Oh, really, that's your proof? When we see disaster and chaos, we're supposed to see God's faithfulness to His word? Is that all there is to it, then?"

"Well, yes," comes the befuddled response. "I'm sorry I don't have a better answer for you, but that's all I've got, friend. But fear not, the Lord will restore all things someday, when He splits the sky and returns in all His glory. Till then, we have the hope of being made worthy in God's sight, the hope of eternal life, the hope of being received into Heaven after we die. Isn't that enough?"

To which I'd reply, "I suppose so, sure. The only problem with your train of thought is: If *The Bible* doesn't reveal the way in which God is in control, then what's the point of looking to it? What good is it if the tales of Scripture are nothing more than cheery postcards from Heaven, telling us to keep a stiff upper lip until God makes it all better someday? If *The Bible* doesn't provide us with evidence of God's control over history, then how do we know He controls our lives as individuals? If God isn't in control of our lives—in this mess of a world we call 'life'—then how can we trust Him? And if we can't trust Him, then how can we inherit this eternal life you speak of? Without trust, what are we to make of this thing you call hope?"

But what if there really is tangible evidence of God's control over history? What if that evidence involves more than a series of sporadic moments and disconnected events, as traditionally understood, in Scripture? What if it speaks of more than Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden? More than the Flood of Noah, and the Tower of Babel? The call and blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, and the building of a Temple? The rise and fall of two mighty nations—Israel, to the north, and Judah, to the south? The life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth?

And what if there is evidence that God never ceased controlling human history just because we're told the curtain dropped after those final acts in the days of *The New Testament*? That He's involved with more than the history of the Jewish people, as we've been led to believe? Or that there's more to biblical prophecy than what we're expecting in the pages of *The Book of Revelation*?

What if that evidence involves more than convincing people to pray so they can go to Heaven one day? What if it involves more nations of this world than tradition tells us? What if it involves the role that America has played, and is now playing, in history? Or how the technology of a world power like America has played, and is now playing? And what if *The Bible* provides evidence that the New World of yesterday is actually a shadow of things to come, of the New Earth that's said will one day appear as a beautiful bride adorned for her awaiting groom?

God the Outsider

NOW, in addressing the issue of God's intermittent actions, in which He sometimes acts in obvious ways, while at other times inconspicuously, we can't help but ask the most obvious question of all: If God is God, then why would there be any discrepancy in His actions in the first place? Doesn't *The Bible* tell us that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever? How, then, can we reconcile what is clearly a change in His behavior from age to age, year to year, and moment to moment?

Fortunately for us, we do have God's written answer to such questions, and in answering these questions, I'd first remind us of the most overlooked aspect of our present predicament. I'd suggest that it's not God Who is changing. Rather, the element of change has everything to do with us and our worldview. The confusion arises because, in searching the Scriptures for clues to our existence, we're incredibly prone to glossing over the most important clues that are there to help us understand how God and His ways impact that existence.

Take, for example, what I'd describe as one of the greatest cases of mistaken identity in the history of the human species. Take, for example, the opening book of *The Bible*, where God is said to have created humanity as His crowning achievement, and where it's said we're to rule and reign over the whole of creation. As such, God is to rule over the humans; humans are to rule over the animals; men are to rule over the women, etc., etc., etc. And ever since, we've seen a steady stream of chaos, in which one bunch is claiming they've been ordained to rule over the other bunch with all sorts of mixed results, generally not nearly as good as we'd expect if God was the One Who ordained it all.

So while skeptics and believers alike question God for the ensuing anarchy, the one to blame, I'd contend, isn't God but, rather, the humans who are incapable of thinking things through ever since that event *The Bible* calls the Fall of Man. And when I say this, I'm not trying to affirm the Calvinistic doctrine of the depravity of mankind, or the Catholic doctrine of original sin. Apart from the genuine implications of such thinking, I'm talking about an utter lack of logic when it comes to interpreting the message contained in the most foundational book of Scripture. In short, if humanity would accept the record of *Genesis* at face value, in the simple explanation it gives, many of the greatest misconceptions of *The Bible* would simply dissolve away into nothingness.

To reiterate: Why do God's various actions indicate that He's both everywhere and nowhere at the exact same time? The most obvious answer we obtain from *Genesis* is that while Adam and Eve were created in the image of the Divine, and so were possessors of freedom and self-determination, the choice that the first couple made in eating from the Tree of Knowledge severed the relationship that then existed between the natural and supernatural realms. As such, the shift from how the primordial world existed before the Fall of Man and what it became after that cataclysmic event can never in a million years be overstated. Though God was still God—still omniscient, still omnipotent, still omnipresent—humankind from that point on no longer partook of the same relationship.

Stop and think for a moment, if you will, what it might have been like living before the Fall, still living in the fullness of God's image, in a world still untainted by sadness or pain, slavery or suffering, darkness or death. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were living in the same world as the Divine, but afterward, they were suddenly outsiders looking in, suddenly spiritual vagabonds dispossessed of freedom and self-determination. And so, just as Adam and Eve had become outsiders of God's world after the Fall, God likewise had become an outsider to their world—and ours—ever since. Again, the implications of this ontological truth have such immense ramifications that the human mind can barely grasp them without a great deal of contemplation and struggle.

Before the Fall, God was bound by a covenant that endued Adam and Eve with the divine presence which enveloped their very being. But after the Fall, God was equally bound by a covenant that revoked all that the divine presence bestowed upon them. That meant not only would disease, pain, and death enter into this new world of theirs, all of God's promises to them that they would rule and reign over

the creation were revoked. Living in our modern age, in a world dominated by the scientific mastery of the elemental forces that surround us, this is something almost impossible for us to comprehend.

What's more, many believers of *The Bible* confuse the issue even further because they incorrectly insist humans are still lords and masters of creation by God's decree, despite the alteration of that decree as a result of the Fall. What we see, then, is that anyone who claims humanity still maintains the condition they possessed before the Fall is twisting history to fit their pet view of Scripture. That's because an honest appraisal of both the written record of *The Bible* and human history clearly demonstrates that after their expulsion from the Garden, Adam and Eve were no longer rulers over the elements of creation but slaves to them. No longer would they command the creation, the animals, and themselves; they were ever after prisoners of darkness and death, subject to the power and fear of the animals, and slaves and property of the devil to whom they submitted themselves when they defied God's command.

Worse still, it also meant that because God's covenant was voided by Adam and Eve's disobedience, God, the Outsider, was no longer the *legal* Lord and Master of humanity. No longer was God free to bestow His blessings upon them, not because He despised the apple of His eye or ceased to love them with an everlasting love, but because He is by nature a God of covenant—a God bound by His own honor and integrity, bound by His word of promise. That's why, from the moment the first couple was expelled from the Garden, they would be bound by a new covenant, and therefore their new *legal* lord and master was the devil himself, Satan.

Now keep in mind, when I say this, I'm not saying that this same God of covenant did not still have the power and desire to establish a new covenant for the sake of Adam and his descendants. Naturally, this is precisely what the story contained in Scripture was written to convey; the biblical record, then, is nothing less than the long and arduous road back to the presence of God, which road God alone provided the signposts in the various covenants that He's instituted by the mouth of His prophets. What I am saying, though, by all the authority contained in *The Bible* itself, is that what people have claimed about the exalted status of the human race is negated by a correct understanding of the difference between what God said about our status in the Universe before the Fall of Man, and what it has been ever since the days of Adam.

Unless this foundational truth is fully appreciated, we will never be able to understand why God acts the way He does in terms of the ages-long history of human redemption as depicted in Scripture. Unless we first settle this primary fact of human existence, we'll never come to appreciate that from the days of Adam to the time of the Great Flood, from the days of Noah until the time of the call of Abraham, and from the days of the Children of Israel until the days of the Advent of Christ, God has, by His own judicial decree, related to humanity as an outsider, outlier, and alien. This more than anything else explains why God sometimes acts in such godlike manner that no one dares question the divine nature of said actions, while at other times acts so inconspicuously that events can easily be dismissed as though no God at all was necessary for their occurrence.

It also explains why those chosen ones of God were, like Adam before them, the greatest outsiders of human history—men like Seth, Enoch, and Noah before the Flood, followed by the likes of Shem, Eber, and Abraham. The great constant running through the lives of the patriarchs was that all of them were never more alive than when they were embracing this peculiar sense of being “on the outside,” while everyone else was content with being “on the inside.” And in following the divine call, every one of them blazed a trail that enlarged God's expanding Empire and led the way for future generations to follow. Without the path uniquely cut by these lone wolves, there in turn could have been no Isaac or Israel or Judah; no Levi or Dan or Joseph; no Moses or Joshua or Caleb.

But long before men like Elijah stood outside the status quo, which led a chosen nation to turn its back on God, Adam set the stage for all the outsiders who would follow in his footsteps.

Turned Inside Out

HERE WE COME face to face with some of the greatest mysteries of all time: What was God thinking to even allow the devil an opportunity to deceive Adam and Eve? Could events have turned out differently? And considering the tragic results that humanity has experienced ever since, are we correct in assuming the Fall of Man is a failure in terms of the overall plan of God?

Fortunately, for all involved, what humans fear most, from our finite point of view, isn't the same thing at all from God's infinite point of view. From our temporal perspective, death and disease are abhorrent to us because we suffer at their hands on a personal level; however, from an eternal perspective, they achieve in the long run a much different end than we're capable of apprehending from our limited perspective.

As the story goes: God freely gave Adam dominion over the Earth and clearly outlined the prohibitions that were involved in that kingship. But rather than cooperate with God, Adam wasn't content with all that he'd been given. He wanted more, which was exactly what the devil was counting on, because it was this same attitude that had caused his downfall. Understanding this all too well, Satan masterfully exploited this fatal flaw, and by preying upon this weakness, he managed to entice Adam to follow his advice, thus beginning an entirely new chapter in humanity's existence.

But fortunately for us, God is capable of transcending any problem this Universe can throw at Him. In this case, God was faced with the outcome of Adam's disobedience, which resulted in him and his descendants being doomed to perpetual slavery to the world, the flesh, and the devil. But rather than spell the end of all of God's hopes for His created ones, God took the very thing with which Satan connived to thwart the divine plan and "turned it inside out," as it were.

Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve knew only life and freedom in the Garden, but sadly, because of that peculiar condition, it also meant they were ignorant of the truth of what God warned them about when He said they'd die if they chose knowledge over trust. It was, therefore, only after the Fall that they'd ever learn the difference between the life that God had given them and the life they were confronted with after they forfeited it through their disobedience.

In short, the thing that God required of Adam and Eve was that they trust His word of promise, which they failed to do while yet in the Garden, primarily because, in their state of innocence, they had no way of knowing what disobedience would bring. Only afterward, then, could they begin the real journey of trusting God. But now, instead of trusting His word that spoke of death, while everything around them spoke only of life, they found themselves living in a mirror image of that first world. Whereas before they were ignorant of the consequences of not trusting God, they were suddenly in the unenviable position of knowing exactly why they needed to trust Him, though ironically it was because they presently lived as exiles from the direct presence of God as slaves of Satan—and, I might add, legally owned slaves at that.

However, though a life of servitude came as the price of freedom, the one redeeming aspect of this new existence was that God, as always, provided a unique way of transcending their dismal state. Whereas in that previous life of perpetual bliss, where God warned of death, the couple now faced death all around them, even as God spoke of eternal life—if, that is, they'd act in accordance with the same kind of trust that was required of them before they were exiled.

In the end, then, the thing they could never have learned while still happily ensconced in their garden home would only become possible outside of it. Needless to say, this new life wasn't nearly as cozy and safe as their old life. But what it did bring them, which is to say, an everlasting connection to God, would eventually outweigh all that they'd temporarily lost in their fall from grace. So, just as the sacrifice of Christ turned death into something different from the way it began, so also the slavery of Adam was turned inside out. Only by facing one's own mortality can we discern our need of trusting God in a way that could never be achieved had such a state of existence not been allowed to overtake

us. In this way, the slave status of the human race exists as a bittersweet condition, which works both against us and for us at the same time, much to the chagrin of the devil, I'm sure.

So, ironically, it would seem subterfuge is as much a tactic for God as it is for the devil. Just think of how many centuries rolled by before Satan even had a clue that darkness, disease, and death might not be fulfilling his plan to destroy humanity. And even now, because the forces of Hell are incapable of seeing things the way God sees things, the devil and his minions are still by and large convinced they're winning the war against God's human creation.

A Hidden Path in the Sea

WHAT DO WE have so far, then? We began by asking: What connects America, technology, and the New Earth, en route to explaining how all three fall under the heading of things said to be "on" Heaven rather than "in" Heaven? To answer that we introduced the idea that, while God typically acts as only God can act, His preferred method of acting is by way of His still, small voice, as demonstrated in the case of Elijah. That's because while the spectacular nature of God's miraculous deeds, like the parting of the Red Sea, can inspire awe and respect, it doesn't always communicate the same depth of awareness as does the articulate nature of God's word itself. This seems to explain why, although God often seems more interested in the destiny of nations, He acts on a more personal level than most might assume. Then when investigating the question of why God's actions ebb and flow in and out of view, we asked if this happens because God Himself is somehow changing, and so came to see this didn't happen because God was changing but, rather, because of the changing relationship humans have in relation to the God of covenants. In this way, we determined how God and humans now both exist, from a purely legal perspective, as outsiders looking into a world they once related to in a far different manner prior to the Fall of Man. And so it was that this more than anything else explains why God sometimes acts in conspicuous ways that are obvious to everyone, while at other times He acts inconspicuously and "under the radar," so to speak.

Simply put: The spectacular power of God, which is thus hidden away within the articulate power of a still, small voice, becomes the perfect vehicle to activate and guide God's chosen ones, which in turn localizes the presence of God via these individuals. These individuals then communicate what God has made known to them, which is either believed and embraced or disbelieved and rejected by others in their group who in turn create communities of belief or disbelief. This in turn sets the stage for the spawning of societies that in time create towns and cities, which mirror the beliefs of those individuals who founded them. These towns and cities then go on to provide the basis for what are called nation-states. Thus, the key to understanding world history depends on a correct view of who among the various nations is most effectively co-opting in the overall plan of God as it's described in the biblical record.

However, what we should never lose sight of is that the original building blocks for these larger national units are those smaller individual units which are themselves the receptacles for what is communicated by the still, small voice of God. As such, the more we come to appreciate the role of the individual in God's redemptive plan, the more we come to appreciate the role of a nation's technology to transmit the message communicated by the still, small voice. This in turn spawns the broadcasting of God's message, whether that message is communicated to a given nation where it presently exists or where that message is, for some specific reason, taken from its original recipients and rebroadcast somewhere else to another nation of God's choice. Upon closer inspection, then, the invention of new modes of transportation and communication will take on new meaning in the context of whom God assigns His stewardship, in terms of both His choice He's made presently clear, and His choice He's purposely hidden until some future date.

It is therefore within the context of these various elements that the story of the promise of America, technology, and the New Earth will next be told. More specifically, it's a story that involves a God Who

is more concerned with those who cooperate with His still, small voice than those who expect Him to split the sea at every turn with a blast of His nostrils. So, while the Israelites of old saw the parting of the Red Sea yet failed to trust God ever after, in the case of America, the New World would be established by a people who were content with God's word guiding them, with neither fanfare nor notoriety, by way of a hidden path in the sea.

For Christopher Columbus that guidance came to him in 1492 when, on his first voyage of discovery, his crew warned him that if they continued one more day on their present course, he'd have a mutiny on his hands. But nothing could change Columbus' sense of destiny, nothing could erase the knowledge of God's inspired words that kept him on course. As he recorded in his journal on more than one occasion, the words of Scripture beckoned him onward:

Listen to me, oh coastlands, and pay attention, you distant peoples. The Lord called me from the womb; from the body of my mother He named me...

He said to me, "You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will display My glory... I will also make you a light for the nations, to bring My salvation to the ends of the Earth."²⁷

And for the Puritans, who were being increasingly targeted by the Anglican Church in England, which relentlessly sought to destroy their growing movement, God's word shined a light of hope on their predicament that they couldn't help but apply to themselves.

"Don't be afraid, because I'm with you; I'll bring your offspring from the east and gather you from the west. I'll say to the north: Give them up! and to the south: Don't hold them back! Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the Earth...

"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe Me and understand that I am He...

"I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, and your King." So says the Lord Who makes a way in the sea and a path through the surging waters...

"Forget the former things; pay no attention to the things of old. Watch as I do something new; even now it's coming. Don't you see it? Indeed, I'll make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert."²⁸

What's more, the technological advances that occurred in Europe leading up to the discovery of America—particularly with Gutenberg's printing press in 1440—were such that all the forces occurring at the time would set the stage for all that followed. First came the Protestant Reformation, followed by the Renaissance, which both occurred when many smaller European states were morphing into larger states, and all of them with a greater degree of centralized power.

More importantly, though, in the context of this work, that meant with the Reformation and Renaissance there came a greater sense of individualism just as a number of other societal forces came together to empower those individuals who previously could never hope to break free from centuries of collectivist, institutional control.

At the same time, nation-states like England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands were suddenly able to take full advantage of several technological advances in shipbuilding, most notably with the caravel, a light sailing ship developed by the Portuguese in the late 1400s, which incorporated the use of a triangular sail, called a lateen, enabling ships to sail into the wind more effectively than any before in history. And that meant not only could a handful of European monarchs finance a series of ambitious oversea excursions, but a group of bold voyagers could also rise to new levels of exploration with the aid of navigational devices like the astrolabe, the quadrant, the magnetic compass, and the sextant, which in turn opened up new horizons of the sea.

It also meant that at just the right moment in history this newfound sense of individuality, which

²⁷ *Isaiah 49:1, 3, 6*

²⁸ *Ibid. 43:5-6, 15-16, 18-19*

had been percolating for many centuries, would intersect with another personality trait so germane to biblical history, that of the outsider, as it pertains to the life of every chosen one of God. And that meant the world no longer consisted of a scattered, disarrayed band of outsiders but, rather, consisted of a whole generation of outsiders who were, all at once, ready to make their mark in the world—a world that was never the same again in the wake of their response to the call of God.

So ends this preview of *On Earth as It is On Heaven*. To read further, please get the whole book, which is available on this website.