

282 The Sabbath of Rest

Sadly and predictably there have been violent clashes on the Gaza-Israel border in the past few days, with each side blaming the other for what has occurred. We note in passing how the media tend to gather in Gaza rather than in Israel, so the “ Hamas narrative ” gains far more global coverage than that of Israel.

In view of current events in and around Israel, we noted last week the clear signs that “ the Lord is on the move ” in terms of the various scriptural prophecies concerning the Jews that are yet to be fulfilled. So in the midst of all the anguish in “ the Bible Lands ”, we look to the Lord and His Word for understanding and guidance. As far as we can tell, where is the Lord going with all this?

In our Weekly Reflection of two weeks ago, Number 280, “ An Imagined Paradise ”, we began to examine the widespread dismissal of early Genesis that has occurred in Christian circles in response to Darwinian evolution. Our title sprang from the assertion by an academic cleric that the pre-Fall Paradise of Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 is obviously only imagined because, in view of evolution, we now know that such a perfect state has never actually existed.

So it is clear why this is “ the crunch ”! Genesis, “ Beginnings ”, is the foundational book on which the rest of the Bible is built. Genesis Chapters 1–11 are crucial, and this is why our correct understanding of these chapters is of such critical importance. (The particular question before us just now serves as an excellent example of what is at stake: Did Paradise exist as we are told in the Bible? Or did it not?).

Yet what do we find? We find that Darwinism has “ swept the board ”. We find that most Christians are unconcerned, and unthinkingly accept that God simply used evolution as His method of creation. What is more, those who do stress the importance of a plain reading of early Genesis tend to be dismissed as freaks who “ fly in the face of science ”, who bring division and who waste everyone’s time on what is only a side issue anyway! (To which we reply with a hearty “ Not so ” which we aim to get on to next week).

The reality is that a plain reading of early Genesis is beautifully interwoven with all else that follows in Scripture, including the many scriptural prophecies. In Genesis 2.1-3 we read that after the six days of creation, God rested, blessed and sanctified the seventh day (KJV, see also Exodus 20.9-11 and 31.12-17). So we have at the start and at the heart of all creation this divinely-wrought framework: six days of work, and one day of sabbath rest.

Through the Bible we see this for each week, and for every 7 years, and, (related, but with a slightly different emphasis), every 49 years (7 x 7) regarding the Jubilee (eg., Leviticus 25). (Looking up “ sabbath(s) ” and “ rest ” in your Concordance will fill out the picture, especially see Leviticus 23 and 25).

It has also long been understood that the 6 days / 1 day of creation week are a “ type ” of the 6,000 years / 1,000 years span of this creation (eg., II Peter 3.8 / Revelation

20, in which the 1,000-year duration of Christ's millennial kingdom on the earth is referred to - six times).

So the answer to this week's question, "Where is the Lord going with all this?", is quite clear from His Word, once we take early Genesis as it stands: now close to the end of the 6,000 years, He is taking this creation through to its sabbath rest, its seventh day, its seventh thousand years (and then beyond, into the eternal state, Revelation 21-22).

Along the way Christ is first to come for His Church (I Thessalonians 4.13-18 and I Corinthians 15.51-58 – so we watch and keep ready). This is followed by the 7-year period of judgement and tribulation (Revelation Chapters 4-18), and the triumphant, public return of Christ in glory and victory (Revelation 19), when at last the Jews will "look on Him whom they have pierced (eg., Zechariah 12.10 / John 19.37 / Revelation 1.7).

Of course the Key to all these precious truths and wonderful blessings is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, "the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1.5).

We love Him, we serve Him, we proclaim Him, and we praise Him – "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 1.5b-6).

(Let us pray particularly this weekend for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, asking that Almighty God will indeed "bring them to His everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (from "A Prayer for the Royal Family", BCP Morning & Evening Prayer).

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