Man's Perfection in God's Plan

In order to carry out this extraordinary plan of making beings in His image, and to bring them to the perfection their standing as His sons requires, God made the heavens and the earth, and man received a body from the dust of the ground. (For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. Isaiah 45:18)

God did not choose the heavenly Kingdom as man's dwelling place, as He did with the angels. Instead, He made the earth and everything on it, because this is the place that meets every condition needed to bring man to the perfection He requires. It is not a place sheltered from danger, since the devil and his angels were cast down to the earth.

There are a few questions we can ask ourselves, and their answers stay hidden from the careless eye: Why, when God created man, did He not place him directly in His presence, as the angels were placed? Why did He set him where he would be in constant danger of being influenced by the devil and his angels?

Why did God have to cast Satan down to the earth and not somewhere else? Why did He allow him to tempt man? Why did man, in his state of innocence, have to be such easy prey for Satan and end up in the wretched condition in which billions of people find themselves today?

Life on Earth

We must notice that God's plan was perfect and had no flaws, and it is this plan that He is now carrying out. (His work is perfect. Deuteronomy 32:4)

If we read the Bible more carefully, we can easily see that man's fall was foreseen in His perfect plan. (According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world… having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:4) We can also see that His plan provided both for man's restoration (the new birth) and for his perfection.

So God created the perfect setting in which man, living on earth in Satan's presence, would go through all kinds of trials, without which no one can reach the stature the Kingdom of God requires. (Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21)

Man, the being created as the crown of His creation, in His image and after His likeness, was set to live in this visible world (the universe we see with our own eyes) in the presence of Satan. This was not a mistake on God's part; it was carefully foreseen in His eternal plan.

God created this visible universe, the earth and all the constellations of the sky, to fulfil His purpose for mankind: to bring us up to the stature of the Lord Jesus, His Firstborn, to the perfection of our character.

It is the ideal place for man to be raised, tried, tested and brought to the perfection God requires. It is amazing to see how perfect His plan is.

The Forerunner

We can see that the Lord Jesus, too, was made perfect through the things in which He was tempted by Satan and which He overcame. The Lord Jesus was made perfect through the suffering that came from Satan, whom He defeated through His death on the cross. (For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Hebrews 2:10)

When we look at natural human life, we notice that no one is born perfect. Perfection is reached only through hard, persistent work, by copying the one who teaches us down to the smallest detail. (Think of the path a pianist travels to master the piano.)

The perfection of our character is reached only through work. It is not a state we are born with, nor one that will be handed to us after we die.

Living Out the Word of Christ

If in no area of practical life can anyone reach perfection merely by studying, without practising what they study, how much less can anyone reach the perfection required of a son of God through a mental, passive faith, which Scripture compares to the faith of devils. (Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:19, 20)

When the rich young man asked the Lord Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, we see that the Lord Jesus answers his question and makes the inheritance of eternal life conditional on the perfection he has to attain.

The Lord Jesus answered him firmly: "If thou wilt be perfect… come and follow me." (Matthew 19:21) In other words: leave the cares of this life behind, come and live as I live, learn from Me, follow Me in all things, and you will become perfect and so inherit eternal life.

You cannot master the piano merely by studying sheet music in theory, without copying your teacher and giving a great deal of your life to actual practice. In the same way, the faith that we can be like Him can only be made perfect by practice, through the works of faith. (Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? James 2:22)

In spiritual things, **to perfect your character**, to become perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, you must believe it is possible. Then you must work, imitating, or copying, the Teacher in everything He does, and give time from your life to living out His teachings in practice, down to the smallest detail. (Just think how many hours a day a pianist works to reach perfection.)

It is easy to see that if man had been made perfect at creation, like the One who created him, there would have been no need to place him on earth in Satan's presence; he would have lived

directly in heaven, in God's presence.

But to come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, we must put in the persistent work of a disciple who copies his Teacher. Only in this way can we reach the perfection that the standard of the Kingdom of God requires.

Perfect in the Things Above

The perfection God requires is not perfection in music, in painting or in walking on water. It is perfection in longsuffering, in goodness, in meekness, in love… and it is reached only by going through His school, by imitating Him.

God's work in us is completed only as it was with the Lord Jesus: through victory over the trials that come upon us. (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4)

The perfection of our character is not reached merely through faith in the sacrifice on the cross, but through real work and real struggle in the temptations that come from Satan, which God allows for our growth.

To overcome these trials, man has God as his partner, who is faithful and will not allow a trial greater than his strength to come upon him. (God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13)

It is easy to see that the qualities of the Lord Jesus, namely love, meekness and longsuffering, can be gained only through work and perseverance… with the Lord Jesus as our model. (Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. Matthew 11:29)

No one who is born again is born with longsuffering, meekness and love. These qualities must be gained through God's work with each person. In this work we have at our disposal the school of Christ, where we find the Word that works in us, the Holy Spirit who urges and guides us, the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and our own work in obedience to the Word.

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