

Eden to Zion

*“Open ye the gates,
that the righteous
nation which
keepeth the truth
may enter in.”*

—Isaiah 26:2

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

once existed alone, “from everlasting to everlasting.”

(Ps. 90:2) As he is now, so was he always—perfect, complete, lacking nothing, suffi-

cient unto himself. So shall he ever be, unchanged and unchanging. All things that have been created, or will be created, are intended to express his perfect sufficiency. Whatever our Father does enhances all he has done before. Each creative act produces a deeper, richer blessing for the living. So will it continue throughout eternity. (Ps. 19:1) It is, therefore, incumbent upon all creatures of higher intelligence, whether flesh or spirit, to live in a manner that is beneficial to all other life for the glory of the Creator. Since its earliest inception, for its protection and benefit, the Creator continually covered, or overspread, his Creation with all good and perfect gifts through his various living agencies, principalities and powers. In a perfectly balanced state, he provided for a thriving Creation that, in turn, served him by living in mutual harmony for the benefit of all . . . until Eden.—James 1:17

THE COVERING CHERUB

Lucifer, a cherub of the spirit realm, later called ‘serpent’ and Satan, did not subscribe to the foregoing principle. He was a very powerful spirit being who was consumed by pride, and lust for more power. He wanted not to serve the living, but wanted the living to serve him. (Ezek. 28:12-14; Isa. 14:13,14) The creation of an earthly realm, particularly two human creatures in Eden—Adam and Eve—provided him an opportunity to challenge the Divine principle of ‘living to benefit the living.’ In effect, this was a direct challenge to the very sovereignty of the Creator, Author of that principle. (Gen. 1:26,27) Scheming to maneuver the Creator into a dilemma, Lucifer correctly reasoned that since Adam and Eve were free moral agents, God would not intervene even if they were tempted by him. Lucifer risked everything, and initiated his challenge through the man and woman whom he persuaded to disobey the single condition of their covenant with God. That condition is expressed as follows: “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”—Gen. 2:16,17; Hosea 6:7, *Marginal Translation*

ALLURE OF DISOBEDIENCE

Lucifer surmised that God had but two options if Adam and Eve transgressed that specified condition: (1) Terminate Adam and Eve’s access to the tree of life because of their corrupted state, or (2) grant them continued access to the tree of life in spite of their

corrupted state. Encouraged by Lucifer to ignore the Divine prohibition, the pair ate of the fruit of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' and were corrupted. They were intentionally corrupted to provoke the exercise of either option. From Lucifer's perspective, he had maneuvered the Creator into an indefensible position where the exercise of either option would bring his motives and abilities into question. Terminating Adam and Eve's access to the tree of life would constitute a hopeless death sentence, which would eventually bring into question God's omnipotence—his will and ability to protect his creatures from one determined to corrupt and, thereby, kill them. (John 8:44) On the other hand, allowing Adam and Eve continued access to the tree of life after their transgression would involve altering a stated Divine rule. Even a slight alteration would eventually bring all Divine principles, laws, judgments, and decisions rendered by God, based upon those principles, into doubt.

COSTLY KNOWLEDGE

Adam and Eve ate of that proscribed fruit and experienced sin thereby, which cost them everything. Had the man and woman resisted Lucifer's wiles and not disobeyed, they would have learned the difference between good and evil through Lucifer's inevitable exposure and condemnation as a lone conspirator. They would have seen that the difference between good and evil is obedience to the will of God. They would have understood it is not necessary for one to experience evil to know one should avoid evil. The man and woman tragically, and foolishly, paid with their lives for knowledge of good

and evil which, in due time, would have been theirs anyway.

Judgment, which Adam and Eve shared with Lucifer as coconspirators, was rendered for their transgression and the sentence was death for the man and his mate. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3:19) Lucifer was also condemned to death. “The LORD God said unto the serpent [Lucifer], Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” (Gen. 3:14) “Thou shalt be brought down to hell [grave], to the sides of the pit.” (Isa. 14:15) “Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.”—Ezek. 28:18

AN ENCOURAGING PROPHECY

In addition to these pronouncements, reference was made to the future dominance of the woman's seed over Lucifer's seed. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) The implication was that Adam and Eve would not die before other generations were born to them, and that some degree of relief from their plight might lie within one of those future generations. Encouraging as this prophecy surely was, and welcome as Lucifer's condemnation must have been, neither directly offered the man and woman hope that their ruined condition

would ever be altered. If ruin was, in fact, to be their permanent condition, Lucifer could have claimed a victory. A single victory would have disproved God's omnipotence. All things Divine, including Lucifer's condemnation, would have been questioned thereafter.

A RAY OF HOPE

The first intimation of hope for Adam and Eve came with God's response to Lucifer's challenge. Rather than terminating them forever, or granting them continued access to the tree of life, the infinitely wise Creator symbolically expressed great pity, love, and compassion by physically covering the nakedness of the defeated pair. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen. 3:21) The word coat in *Strong's Bible Concordance* is #3801. It means 'shirt, garment, robe.' But, more importantly, it means 'to cover.'

The garments were the first indications that God would address Adam and Eve's death sentence. They were the first hint that anything pertaining to the man and woman's circumstance would be, by some means, covered. The covering garments were symbolic references to the marvelous, and completely unforeseen, Divine idea of atonement.

Lucifer had badly miscalculated. He had risked his entire existence on the erroneous assumption that the Creator had but two options. God, in fact, had the stupendous and completely unsuspected third option of Christ, his beloved Son. He was a miracle of righteousness and obedience through whom, in due time, the impure could be returned to purity, neither ignoring the sin, nor altering the

principles of God to accommodate the sin. No being below the Divine plane of existence could have conceived the solution to Adam and Eve's desperate situation—atonement through the blood of an acceptable sacrificial substitute (Jesus, the man), and the application of that blood by a qualified High Priest (Jesus, the anointed) on behalf of the transgressor who desires reconciliation with God. Atonement through Christ was Adam and Eve's only hope, though they knew it not. It was to Christ that the aforementioned 'seed' and 'coats' had referred. Little did Lucifer realize they were symbolic references to the instrument of his eventual demise.

THE GUARDIAN CHERUBIM

Having covered our first parents both literally and symbolically, God sent them forth from the garden. "He drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."—Gen. 3:24

The stated mission of the 'Cherubims' was on behalf of the 'tree of life.' It was not a further pursuit against Adam and Eve. The cherubim were to 'keep' or preserve the 'way' of the tree of life. The 'flaming sword' did not turn toward Adam and Eve exclusively, but turned in every direction; the implication being that access to the fruit of that tree, and the blessing of everlasting life, would be utterly denied to all under all circumstances for an indefinite period of time. The word way in the phrase 'keep the way of the tree of life' is defined by *Strong's Bible Concordance* #1870 as 'a road (trodden); a course of action or mode of action, often adverse.' The intended way,

or course of action, of the tree of life was that it bless Adam and Eve and their progeny with everlasting life, by yielding to them its fruit indefinitely. Had Adam and Eve retained their purity, everlasting life would have continued to be a blessing to them. However, with sin abroad after the fall of Adam, the fruit of the tree of life could no longer offer endless life as a blessing. It could offer only an eternity of adversity in sin. Therefore, the cherubim and the flaming sword were employed in Eden to preserve the intended way of the tree of life, until sin and death could be destroyed through him who was symbolized by the seed and the coats. Until Christ declares the fruit of that tree once more beneficial to mankind, the vigil of the cherubim will continue.

BEHOLD THE LAMB

What, then, of Christ? Let us recall the familiar words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) We see the universal import of his words, for to whom was he speaking if not all the earth; even the dead and yet unborn? For whom was he speaking if not heaven? It was incumbent upon John to proclaim the arrival of Christ and what he had come to do. Through him came the heavenly announcement that the fruit of the tree of life would be made available to mankind, but not before its stain of sin is removed by the blood of the man Jesus—the Lamb of God. The blood of the Lamb is capable of removing the Adamic condemnation from man, of undoing the moral harm done to Adam and his race by his fall, and repairing the damaged relationship between them and the Creator. The tree

of life was powerless to do that. It was never part of its way.

THE HOLY WAY

Let us recall that *Strong's Concordance* literal definition of the word way is 'a road trodden.' In due time, when the church is complete, the merit of the sacrificial blood of the ransom will be applied in heaven on behalf of the world, thereby redeeming it from its condemnation in Adam. A road, or way, by which the ransomed can return to all that was lost in Adam, will then be open. Isaiah calls that road "the way of holiness," and he foretells the marvelous time of its opening. "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:8-10

NEW JERUSALEM

There is a city described in Revelation very much as the city of Zion is described in Isaiah. "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . . And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in

the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”—Rev. 21:2,4,24,25

ALL THINGS NEW

It is apparent that the ‘Zion’ of Isaiah and the ‘new Jerusalem’ of Revelation, both populated by ‘the redeemed,’ ‘the ransomed,’ ‘the saved,’ are the same city. In each account, the city is a symbol for the Divine administrative principles of God’s new order to which all must eventually submit to attain life. Revelation twenty-one states the matter most directly, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; . . . And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” (vss. 1,5) That new order is characterized by the bride of the Lamb. “There came unto me one . . . saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”—Rev. 21:9,10

“There shall in no wise enter into it [the city] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Rev. 21:27) Having lost life in Eden, mankind must journey to Zion to regain it. When redeemed, man must thereafter come to the Lamb and his bride to be written into the book of life, and thereby gain entrance to the city. A thousand years of treading the way of holiness will be required for that to be accomplished.

During that long journey, mankind will learn righteousness and obedience. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have [a] right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (chap. 22:14) These are the same ‘gates’ that were referenced in Revelation 21:25—the gates to the New Jerusalem; to Zion.

THE KEY

Doing the commandments of God is the key to unlocking the gates to the city wherein resides the tree of life. After being redeemed, after a journey of a thousand years upon the way of holiness, after fully embracing the laws of the new order, and after a “little season” demonstrating its ability to do them, mankind will be written into the “book of life.” (Rev. 20:3,15) With that, the cherubim of Genesis, characterized as gates in Revelation, will, after thousands of years, step aside and admit mankind unto the city, the new order, and grant it access to the tree of life. Adam and his progeny will regain the covenant relationship with God lost in Eden and, as privileges of that renewed relationship, regain sovereignty of the Earth, direct communion with God, and everlasting life. Until they are able to do God’s commandments, the cherubim and the flaming sword will continue to keep the way of the tree of life. Mankind, enabled by its journey to do in Zion that which it was unable to do in Eden, will have, by the grace of God, profited mightily while Lucifer will have lost all. ■