

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding" Proverbs 1:2

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TEACHING BIBLE STORIES

By David Chilton

I listened to a cassette tape of "Bible stories" the other day, a tape purporting to be something of a historical synopsis of the early chapters of Genesis, on a child's level. It had been loaned to my four-year-old, and he happily plugged it in and sat down on the floor to listen, turning the pages and looking at the pictures in the accompanying book. Within a few minutes, the narrator had reached the creation of Adam, and this is what we heard: "Do you know why God made Adam? So He could have someone to talk to."

I shut off the tape. With my mind full of juicy retorts that shouldn't be printed here, I asked Nathan, "Is that really why God made Adam?" "No," he replied, "God made Adam for His own glory." He thought a minute, and continued: "That man on the tape doesn't know very much about the Bible, does he? He says bad things. Why is *he* a teacher?" Good question. Unfortunately, for too many schools and churches, the answer is: Because he's a nice guy.

Incredibly, some of my readers are thinking, "Oh, big deal. So the guy made a little mistake. Aren't you nit-picking? After all, the tape was designed for children, not for a seminary class. It doesn't have to be theologically deep." True enough. But it *does* have to be theologically *correct*. That little, innocent-looking sentence contains the fundamental basis of the most prevalent of all false doctrines, the foundation of all apostate religions: the notion that *God needs man*. It presents, in reality, a false God, a "God" who is lonely without man's companionship. Consider what Scripture tells us about the *true* God: "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isaiah 40:17). Could there be a greater contrast?

But the taped "Bible stories" contained another error which, though implicit rather than explicit, was just as serious, as far as the child's understanding of the Bible and the nature of salvation is concerned. I suppose one way to state my objection is that (as with so many books about the Bible) the stories are just *stories*. They seem to be a series of unconnected "just-so" tales, revealing neither the Christ nor the Covenant. The stories in the Bible are components of *one history*. They are not moralistic fables (which happen to be true) about the adventures of certain individuals who lived long ago. The Bible is about Jesus Christ. It is the history of the revelation of His Covenant, and the fulfillment of that Covenant in Him. Every story must be treated as *revelation* — not just something along the lines of "Hello, boys and girls! Did you ever hear the story of a great big ladder that went all the way up to heaven?" God didn't take the trouble to record the story of "Jacob's ladder" (*whose* ladder?) simply in order to give us an enjoyable and meaningless children's ditty. The revelation of the ladder took place in the context of the Abrahamic Covenant, and was a revelation of the Son of God (John 1:51). Stripped of its biblical meaning, the story could almost be replaced by "Jason and the Golden Fleece." If a story is ripped out of its biblical context and turned into an adventure story that centers on the individual who receives the revelation, its content as revelation is lost. Have you ever wondered why so many children — and adults — have virtually no concept of biblical chronology? Why they can't remember whether Abraham or Moses or Elijah came first? Well, let me ask *you* one: Who came first — Hercules or Jason? See what I mean? You know the stories of both, but it's hard to fit them together. (The reason is, of course, that they *don't* fit together

— not covenantally, anyway — and you learned them as "adventure stories," without the need to see them in a redemptive-historical context. In other words, you learned them the same way many kids "learn" Bible stories.)

How, then, *should* you teach Bible stories? The best way to learn is by seeing how a really excellent teacher does it. The most helpful example of covenantal teaching I've found is in the work of S. G. De Graaf, the great Dutch theologian who authored *Promise and Deliverance*, a four-volume set published by Paideia Press (P. O. Box 1000, Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada LOR 1S0). De Graaf wrote his book specifically for Sunday School and Christian school teachers, and it is a masterpiece. Some of the best theologians and preachers I know study it avidly, yet it is written in a very simple, easy-to-understand manner. De Graaf covers all the historical sections of the Bible — the stories — giving first a short discussion of the main points in each chapter, then a sentence summarizing the primary idea, and finally the actual narrative. In each chapter, the author forces us out of our sinful individualism and mysticism again and again, teaching the Bible as it should be taught — in terms of the Covenant. As De Graaf observes in his Introduction (which, I predict, could be one of the most significant essays you will ever read):

Our aim in telling Bible history ought to be the same as God's purpose in recording it for us in His Word. God had the stories recorded "in order that we might believe." Accordingly, even in grade school, this aim must be kept in mind when we are imparting knowledge. It makes no difference at all that the children in your classroom already believe. In their case, too, the story is told to evoke faith, to deepen and broaden it.

De Graaf points out that there are three requirements we must keep in mind whenever we tell Bible stories. First, "we are to view the entire Holy Scripture as nothing more or less than the self-revelation of God." This means that when we tell the story of Joseph, for instance, we must not focus on Joseph himself as the main figure in the story; for the story is, instead, the story of God's revelation to and preservation of His people. "Such an emphasis," says De Graaf, "teaches the children to fear the Lord instead of looking to Joseph as a moral example." And examples could be multiplied. How many times have you heard a series of sermons on the life of Moses or David, in which the center of attention is the personal psychology of the "hero" — rather than God providing salvation for His people? We can avoid this error if we discipline ourselves always to remember that the Bible is not a sort of Christianized version of pagan hero-sagas. *The Bible is Revelation*.

Second, God reveals Himself in the Mediator. De Graaf says: "We will always have a great deal of trouble explaining the history in Scripture — particularly the Old Testament — if we do not proceed from the Mediator's eager efforts to reveal Himself." But this is true of the New Testament as well, and he cites the case of Zacchaeus as an obvious example: "When we tell the story of Zacchaeus, let's make sure that the self-revelation of the Christ — and not Zacchaeus — is the main point." The point is not, of course, that we should disregard the various individuals in the particular stories. It is, rather, that we are to see these people in their proper context: their stories are told in God's word, and God's word is *God's* word — not man's — in which God reveals *Christ*.

Third, The Bible reveals God in His Covenant with His people.

Too often the emphasis in our teaching falls on God saving this or that individual, rather than on God's covenantal relationship with His people as a whole. As De Graaf says about the story of Joseph: "The main point of that story is not what God meant to Joseph but what He meant to His people through Joseph, a people whose development was just beginning in the tents of Jacob." We must remember that "in the covenant God always draws near to His people as a whole — never just to individuals." Another example is the story of God's care for Hagar in Genesis 16. The biblical emphasis is not that God was merciful to a certain woman; nor is it the story of that woman's personal psychology of faith. Why did God take care of Hagar? *Because she was in the Covenant.*

Now, having said all that is not to have said everything there is to say about teaching Bible stories. The basic perspectives given here must be fleshed out in terms of the particulars of the stories we are teaching. Moreover, the second most-common error among Bible teachers is the tendency to be a pedantic bore. Nothing I have said is meant to imply that we should treat our teaching of the stories as lectures in biblical theology. If anything, lectures in biblical theology ought to resemble a story-time! As the Dutch storyteller reminds us:

As we tell a story, it should come alive; it should draw the children in and get them involved. The children should get wrapped up not just in the adventures of certain people but especially in the historical unfolding of God's self-revelation and man's response to it. We must tell the children of God's great deeds.

EDEN AND SALVATION

By David Chilton

While I was in seminary, I attended a class that taught me more about the Bible than all my other courses combined. The class was taught by James Jordan. But Jim was not a *teacher* at the seminary; he was a *student*. And the class he taught was held at the adult Sunday School of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, in Jackson, Mississippi. The understanding of Scripture that I received from Jordan's insights has served as a basis for virtually all my subsequent Bible study and teaching; and I believe it will prove to be just as helpful to other Bible teachers.

In his class, Jim began at the beginning (or almost the beginning) — with the Garden of Eden. Essentially, he was teaching *biblical theology*, the study of God's progressive revelation of salvation. In principle, the whole of redemption is taught in the early chapters of the Bible: the chapters that follow simply build on the foundation laid there. This is why, as we shall see below, the later revelations depend so heavily on the theme of the Garden of Eden. The story of Eden contains the three basic motifs of all biblical revelation: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption in Christ. Unless you teach older students, I am not necessarily suggesting that you simply teach the following outline in the form in which I am giving it. Instead, I suggest that you study it for yourself, looking up the references, adding other ingredients from your own studies, and *internalizing* the principles so that they can inform the content of your Bible storytelling.

By beginning our study of the Bible where the Bible begins, we can more readily understand the rest of the Bible, and why the prophets said *what* they said in the *way* they said it. The basic concepts are easy to teach to any age group; and once they are grasped, the ideas of the Covenant, the Kingdom, the Law, Salvation, and (I give you fair warning!) Postmillennialism naturally flow forth from them. We will begin our study with a basic statement of the nature of biblical salvation and its relationship to the Edenic theme in general; and then we will consider, in more detail, the various characteristics of the Garden and their development throughout Scripture. Even though I will be giving only a bare-bones outline, the study is lengthy, and will be continued in next month's issue.

The Nature Of Salvation

One of the basic themes of Scripture is that *salvation restores man to his original purpose*. In the beginning God created man in His own image, in order that man would have *dominion* (Gen.

1:26-28). That task of dominion began in the Garden of Eden, but it was not supposed to end there, for man was ordered to have dominion over the whole earth: Adam and Eve (and their children) were to extend the blessings of the Garden throughout the entire world. But when man rebelled, he lost the ability to have godly dominion, because he lost fellowship with his Creator. While fallen man is still the image of God (Gen. 9:6), he is a *naked* image (Gen. 3:7), for he has lost his original covering — the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The image of God remains, to some extent, in all men — but the image has become twisted, marred, disfigured and broken as a result of sin. And the earth, which was planned to become God's Garden-Temple, has instead become a wilderness of thorns, thistles, sweat, scarcity, pollution and death (Gen. 3:17-19; Isa. 24:1-6; Rom. 5:12). Man was banished from the Garden, and forbidden to enter it again.

But that is not the end of the story. On the very day that God pronounced judgment upon man and the earth, He pronounced a greater judgment upon the Tempter, declaring that the Redeemer would come someday to crush the Serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Accordingly, the Apostle John tells us that "*the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 Jn. 3:8). Christ came as the *Second Adam*, in order to undo the damage brought through the *First Adam* (1 Cor. 15:22, 45; Rom. 5:15-19). God had breathed into Adam the *breath* (= *Spirit*) of Life, but Adam's rebellion brought death into the world. In salvation, Christ again breathes into His people the Spirit of Life (Jn. 20:22) — Eternal Life, which sets us free from the curse of sin and death (Rom. 8:2), and which will ultimately result in the restoration of the entire creation (Rom. 8:19-21). In Christ we are a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17), because we have been *re-created* in God's image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), and clothed again with the glory of God (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:20-21). And, this time, the security of the restored image of God is guaranteed, because our standing is in the Christ who can never fail. In him we have *Eternal Life*.

Salvation, therefore, restores man to his original position and purpose, and guarantees that man's original mandate — to exercise dominion under God over the whole earth — will be fulfilled. Ultimately, biblical salvation turns back the Curse, brings back Edenic conditions, repairs personal and social relationships, and blesses the earth in every area. The whole earth will be saved, and made into the Garden of God. "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

In a very real sense (and progressively as the Gospel conquers the world) God's people have always lived in "the Garden." For example, the land of Egypt is described in Gen 13:10 as being "like the Garden of the LORD" — and when the Covenant people went there to live, they were given the area of Goshen, which was the *best* in all Egypt (Gen. 45:18; 47:5-6, 11, 27). In this Edenic location they were *fruitful*, and *multiplied* (Ex. 1:7) — the same expression as in God's original command to Adam and Eve in the Garden! The Promised Land also, as we would expect, was a land where much of the Curse had been reversed: it was "as the Garden of Eden" (Joel 2:3), and therefore "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8).

As we shall see below, the restoration of Eden is an essential aspect of the salvation that Christ provides. When the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Christ and the blessings He would bring, they often spoke in the language of Eden-restoration. Isaiah wrote: "For the LORD shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and *He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the LORD*; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isa. 51:3). And Ezekiel, many years later, prophesied: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And *the desolate land shall be tilled*, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, *This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden*; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited" (Ezek. 36:33-35).

But there is much more in these prophecies (and others) regarding the restoration of Eden than we might notice at first glance. In-

deed, there are many, many passages of Scripture which speak of the Eden-concept which do not mention Eden by name. The Edenic motif runs throughout the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation; but in order to recognize it we must first familiarize ourselves with what God's word says about the original Garden itself. God has come to the trouble to tell us some very specific information about

Garden, and Scripture refers to this information again and again. Note well: This study is *not* merely a collection of trivia, of "strange and interesting facts about the Bible" (e.g., the sort of irrelevant data that is often to be found in the "encyclopedia" sections of big family Bibles). It is, I repeat, a major biblical theme. And our reasons for studying it are that we may more fully understand God's word, trust in His promises, obey His law, and inherit His blessings. In the following sections we will examine the various characteristics of the Garden, taking special notice of how each of these becomes a "sub-theme" in itself, in terms of the general theme of Eden-restoration in salvation.

Location Of The Garden

Although we commonly use the terms *Eden* and *Garden of Eden* synonymously (as the Bible occasionally does also), Gen. 2:8 tells us that the Garden was planted by God on the *east* side of the area known as Eden — a land which originally lay to the *north* of Palestine (cf. Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13; Ezek. 28:14; and the discussion of the rivers, below). When man lost fellowship with God and was driven out of the Garden, he evidently went out from the *east* side, since that was where God stationed the cherubim who guarded the Garden from intruders (Gen. 3:24). Apparently, the godly tended to stay near the eastern entrance of the Garden for some time — perhaps bringing their sacrifices to the "gate" — for when Cain fled from "the presence of the LORD," he headed for parts *farther* east (Gen. 4:16), away from God and godly men. It is thus significant that the entrance to the Tabernacle was from the *east* side (Ex. 27:13-16): to enter God's presence through redemption is a gracious re-admittance to Eden. Ezekiel's vision of the universal triumph of

Gospel shows the healing River of Life flowing out from the doors of the restored Temple (the Church, Eph. 2:19-22) *toward the east* (Ezek. 47:1-12); and, as a precursor of the day when the wealth of all the nations will be brought into the household of God (Isa. 60:4-16; Hag. 2:6-9; Ps. 72:10-11; Rev. 21:24-26), the birth of the King of kings was honored by wise men bringing gifts *from the east* (Matt. 2:1-2, 11).

A major key to the location of the original Garden of Eden is the fact that the four great rivers which watered the earth derived from the one river in Eden (Gen. 2:10-14). The Flood drastically altered the geography of the world, and two of these rivers (the Pishon and the Gihon) no longer exist. The other two rivers are the Tigris ("Hiddekel") and the Euphrates, which do not now originate from the same source, as they did then. But the Bible does tell us where these rivers were located: The Pishon flowed through the land of Havilah (Arabia); the Gihon flowed through Cush (Ethiopia); the Tigris flowed through Assyria; and the Euphrates flowed through Syria and Babylon (from whence it now meets up with the Euphrates, about 40 miles above the Persian Gulf). The common source for these four rivers was, of course, north of Palestine, and probably *due* north, in the area of Armenia and the Black Sea — which is also the place where the human race began again after the Flood (Gen. 8:4). Eden, as the source of water for the earth, was the source of blessing for all life, dispensing the basis for existence, health, and prosperity to all God's creatures.

For this reason, *water* becomes an important symbol in Scripture for the blessings of salvation. In the individual believer, salvation is a well of water springing up into eternal life (Jn. 4:14); but just as the river of Eden was fed by a multitude of *springs* (Gen. 2:6; rendered a *river* in most translations, but the NIV rendering is more likely), the *river* of life becomes a *river* of living water, flowing out of from the Church to all the world (Jn. 7:37-39; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zec. 14:8), healing and restoring the whole earth, so that even the desert lands become transformed into a Garden (Isa. 32:13-17; 35:12). As the spirit is poured out, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6).

Finally, a very important aspect of Eden's location is that it was on a *mountain* (Eden itself was probably a plateau on the mountain-top). This follows from the fact that the source of water for the world was in Eden (since water flows *downhill*, not up). Furthermore, when God speaks to Satan (the evil angel who was behind the king of Tyre; cf. Dan. 10:13, 20), He says: "Thou hast been in *Eden, the Garden of God* . . . thou wast upon *the holy mountain of God*" (Ezek. 28:13-14). That Eden was the original "holy mountain" explains the significance of God's choice of *mountains* as sites for His redemptive acts and revelations. The substitutionary atonement in place of Abraham's seed took place on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2). It was also on Mount Moriah that David saw the Angel of the LORD ready to destroy Jerusalem, until David built an altar there and made atonement through sacrifice (1 Chron. 21:15-17). And on Mount Moriah Solomon built the Temple (2 Chron. 3:1). God's gracious revelation of His presence, His Covenant, and His law was made on Mount Sinai. The people were forbidden to approach the holy mountain, on pain of death (Ex. 19:12; cf. Gen. 3:24). But Moses (the Mediator of the Old Covenant, Gal. 3:19), the priests, and the 70 elders of the people were allowed to meet God on the mountain (after making an atoning sacrifice), and there they ate and drank Communion before the Lord (Ex. 24:1-11).

In His first major sermon, the Mediator of the New Covenant delivered the law again, from a mountain (Matt. 5:1). His official appointment of His apostles was made on a mountain (Mk. 3:13-19). On a mountain He was transfigured before His disciples in a blinding revelation of His glory (Matt. 17:1-2; called "the holy mountain" in 2 Pet. 1:16-18). On a mountain he gave His final announcement of judgment upon the faithless Covenant people (Matt. 24:3). After the Last Supper, the Lord ascended a mountain with His disciples, and proceeded from there to a Garden, where as the Last Adam He prevailed over temptation (Matt. 26:30, 36; cf. Matt. 4:8-11, at the beginning of His ministry). Finally, He commanded His disciples to meet Him on a mountain, where He commissioned them to conquer the nations with the Gospel, and promised to send the Holy Spirit; and from there He ascended into the Cloud (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-19; and we'll see more about that Cloud in a future study).

I have by no means exhausted the list that might be given of biblical references to God's redemptive activities on mountains; but enough have been mentioned here to demonstrate the fact that in redemption God is calling us to return to Eden: *We have access to the Holy Mountain of the Lord through the shed blood of Christ*. We have come to Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22), and may boldly approach the holy place (Heb. 10:19), granted by God's grace to partake again of the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7). Christ has built His Church as a City on a Hill, to give light to the world (Matt. 5:14), and the nations will come to the light (Isa. 60:3). The prophets are full of this mountain-imagery, testifying that the world will be turned into Eden: "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it*" (Isa. 2:2; cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9; 25:6-9; 56:3-8; 65:25; Mic. 4:1-4). And the day will come when God's Kingdom, His Holy Mountain, will fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45), as God's original mandate is fulfilled by the Last Adam.

Minerals In The Garden

The Pishon river, originating in Eden, traversed "the land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone" (Gen. 2:11-12). The intent of these verses is clearly to connect in our minds the Garden of Eden with precious stones and minerals; and this point is made in other biblical passages which speak of Eden. The most obvious reference is in God's statement to Satan (part of which was quoted above): "Thou hast been in Eden the Garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold" (Ezek. 28:13). The ground seems to have been fairly littered with jewelry of all sorts: "Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" — that is, stones with a fiery, radiant appearance (Ezek. 28:14). The abundance of jewelry is regarded here

as a *blessing*: fellowship with God in Eden meant being surrounded with beauty. Moses tells us that the gold of that land was *good* (i.e. in its native state, unmixed with other minerals). The fact that gold must now be mined from the earth by costly methods is a result of the Curse, particularly in the judgment of the Flood.

The stone that is called *onyx* in Scripture may be identical to the stone of that name today, but no one knows for sure; and there is even less certainty regarding the nature of *bdellium*. But some very interesting things about these stones appear as we study the biblical history of salvation. When God redeemed His people from Egypt, He ordered the High Priest to wear special garments (we will more closely examine those garments in a later section). On his shoulders, the High Priest was to wear two *onyx* stones, with the names of the 12 tribes written upon them; and God declares these stones to be "stones of memorial" (Ex. 25:7; 28:9-12). A *memorial of what?* The only mention of the *onyx* prior to the Exodus is in Gen. 2:12, having to do with the Garden of Eden. God wanted His people to look at the High Priest — who was in many ways a symbol of man fully restored in God's image — and thus to *remember* the blessings of the Garden, when man was in communion with God. The stones were to serve as reminders to the people that in saving them God was restoring His People to Eden.

An even more striking example of this is in what we are told about God's provision of manna. In itself, manna was a reminder of Eden: for even while God's people were in the wilderness (on their way to the promised land of abundance), food was plentiful, good-tasting, and easy to find — as, of course, it had been in the Garden. But just in case they might miss the point, Moses recorded that manna was the color of *bdellium* (Num. 11:7) — the *only* occurrence of that word apart from its original mention in Genesis! And this, by the way, tells us the color of *bdellium*, since we are told elsewhere (Ex. 16:31), that manna was *white*. In our Lord's messages to the Church in the Book of Revelation, Edenic imagery is used again and again to describe the nature of salvation (see Rev. 2-3), and on one occasion He promises: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden *manna*, and will give him a *white stone*..." (Rev. 2:17).

It is noteworthy that these statements regarding *onyx* and *bdellium* were made as Israel was traveling through the land of Havilah! As they journeyed, they could observe the terrible effects of the Curse, which had turned this beautiful and well-watered land into a "waste and howling wilderness" — while they, through grace, were able to enjoy the blessings of the Garden of Eden. This theme of Eden-restoration was also evident in the abundant use of *gold* for the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25) and the Temple (1 Ki. 6), and for the garments of the High Priest (Ex. 28). The forfeited privileges of the First Adam are restored to us by the Last Adam, as we once again come into God's presence through our High Priest.

In their prophecies of the coming Messiah and His blessings, the Old Testament prophets concentrated on this Edenic imagery of jewelry, describing salvation in terms of God's adorning of His people with stones:

Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and all thy borders of pleasant stones (Isa. 54:11-12). The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee.... They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD.... Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee.... Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the nations, and that their kings may be brought (Isa. 60:5-6, 9, 11).

In line with this theme, the Bible describes us (Mal. 3:17) and our work for God's Kingdom (1 Cor. 3:11-15) in terms of jewelry: the whole City of God is a dazzling, brilliant display of precious stones (Rev. 21:18-21). This, too, is why Scripture always measures money by *weight*, by hard currency (Lev. 19:35-37), and condemns all

forms of inflation as a debasement of currency (Prov. 11:1; 20:10, 23; Isa. 1:22; Amos 8:5-6; Mic. 6:10-12). *Money originated in the Garden of Eden*. God has imputed value to precious metals and stones, and built in us an attraction to them; but He has also made it clear that these things cannot be permanently owned or enjoyed apart from fellowship with Him. The ungodly are allowed to mine for these materials, and to own them for a time, in order that their wealth may be ultimately possessed by the restored people of God: "*Though he [the wicked man] heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver*" (Job 27:16-17). "*To the sinner He giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God*" (Ecc. 2:26). "*He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor*" (Prov. 28:8). Indeed, throughout history "*the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*" (Prov. 13:22), "*for evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth*" (Ps. 37:9). A God-fearing nation will be blessed with abundance, while apostate nations will eventually lose their resources. Twenty years ago, the USA had two *billion ounces* of silver; since then we have been losing it at the rate of 100 million ounces per year, as the Curse has been inflicted upon our rebellious land.

Animals In The Garden

In Eden, before the Fall, there was no death (Rom. 5:12). Animals were not "wild," and Adam was able to name (i.e. *classify*) the animals without fear (Gen. 2:19-20). But man's rebellion resulted in terrible changes throughout the world. The nature of animals was altered, so that they became a threat to the peace and safety of man. The dominion over them that Adam had exercised was lost.

In Christ, however, man's dominion has been restored (Ps. 8:5-8 with Heb. 2:6-9). Thus, when God saved His people, this effect of the Curse began to be reversed. He led them through a dangerous wilderness, protecting them from the snakes and scorpions (Deut. 8:15), and He promised that their life in the Promised Land would be Eden-like in its freedom from the ravages of wild animals: "And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will rid evil beasts out of the land" (Lev. 26:6). In fact, this is why God did not allow Israel to exterminate the Canaanites all at once: *the heathen served as a buffer between the Covenant people and the wild animals* (Ex. 23:29-30; Deut. 7:22)!

Accordingly, when the prophets foretold the coming salvation in Christ, they described it in the same terms of Edenic blessing: "And I will make a Covenant of peace with them, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezek. 34:25). "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" (Isa. 35:9). In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that through the Gospel's permeation of the world the wild nature of the animals will be transformed into its Edenic condition: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6-9; cf. 65:25).

On the other hand, God warned, the Curse would reappear if the people turned away from God's law: "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number" (Lev. 26:22; cf. Num. 21:6; Deut. 28:26; 2 Ki. 2:24; 17:25; Ezek. 5:17; 14:15; 32:4; Rev. 6:8). When a culture departs from God, He surrenders its people to the dominion of wild animals, in order to prevent them from having ungodly dominion over the earth. But in a godly culture this threat against life and property will progressively disappear; and ultimately, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, the animals will be tamed, and harnessed again to the service of God's Kingdom.

(to be continued)

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