

THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

By

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God created the earth before He created man, but it was not to be the center of man's attention. Man was not created for the earth, but the earth was created for man and his use, and man was created for God.

The life given to man was conditional. He was to recognize God as the center of the created order, and man as created to serve Him. When man seeks to be the center, he rejects God's plan and negates the purpose of his existence. Hence the death penalty pronounced at the beginning (Gen. 3:17–19).

Here we observe two amazing truths. (1) How noble and exalted man may become when he is careful to maintain his proper place. In striving to give God the glory that is due Him, man lives in humble submission to his will and eliminates crime and its related evils. As he works to please God he dignifies labor and sanctifies the material things he handles. He is blessed with peace of mind, obtains peace with his fellow man and overcomes the evil elements that prevail where God is denied.

Jesus gave a parable on humility, in which the man who had humbly chosen the lower seat was invited by the host to a higher position. "For every one that exalts himself shall be humbled; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Luke 12:11). Those who humbly recognize Yahweh God as the center of all creation and seek to serve Him will ultimately be granted immortality, changed into the glorious image of God, exalted, and given a home in the new creation "wherein dwells righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

(2) The more man seeks to rise above his place as servant and displace God as sovereign, the more his world becomes disorganized. He has no absolutes for a foundation or guiding rule, and must make his decisions based on changing situations and whims of his peers. The consequences are obvious: empty lives, broken homes, frustration, drugs, and hopes shattered by all the wrong turns. The growing dependency on drugs is to be expected of a people who have ceased to depend on the true source of life and have cut themselves off from the power to function properly.

Paul wrote that men who refuse to give thanks to God are on a downhill race to degeneracy that ends in changing the proper function of their own procreative powers by becoming homosexual (Rom. 1:21–32). People who want to justify this form of perverted human nature are themselves guilty of rejecting God. They might be under greater condemnation than the practicing homosexuals, as the latter have become subject to their perverted powers in a horrible addition-like grip (although it can be overcome through humble repentance and faith in God through Christ), but their defenders are deliberately denying God with a clear mind and without the pressure of the obsessive physical perversion.

Worst of all, when man makes himself the center of things, God is sidelined, leaving man with no ultimate goal for eternity and in fact, with no hope of eternity at all. "They that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36). One of the obvious results of the teaching of evolution in the schools is the absence of purpose in the lives of so many young people. Without a goal that reaches beyond death they see no reason to endure the rigors of

discipline and self-denial, and take the easy way that leads to drugs, liquor, and self-destruction.

At the center of God's purpose and man's failure is the solution which is made possible by Jesus, God's Son.

Each person is created to be in the image of the Creator. Before God he is an individual; he sins personally, and must give a personal account to the Creator. "The soul that sins, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son..." (Ezek. 18:20). Sins committed by society have their collective price in the deterioration of society, but each person is held accountable for his own part in such sin, and the final penalty is his death on judgment day (Rom. 6:23).

Christ is the only means of removing that penalty. "No man comes to the Father but by me," He said (John 14:6). He who was perfectly obedient to the Father, and had no sin of His own, bore our sin, took the death penalty for all repentant rebels, set us free, and made it possible for us to fulfill the purpose for which we are created — to bear the image of God (I Peter 1:21).

Strangely enough, this very remedy proves to be the greatest stumbling block to the patient. Man would return to God and attain the glory and immortality intended, but not on the merits and work of the humble and totally submissive servant, Jesus. Rather he would do it by his own power, by his own works, by his own merits. He still wants to be in charge, unwilling to humble himself and become truly submissive to God.

For this reason, in spite of all his knowledge and power, man continues to multiply confusion, tension, violence and sorrow. He will not accept God as the absolute center and power of the universe. He thinks of power and direction as originating in himself, and readily adopts "New Age" religion which makes man his own god, when in fact, power and direction (the right direction) is from outside of man, from the Creator (Acts 17:24–31).

Here is the test for every person, to humbly acknowledge that he is not the captain of his own fate nor master of his life, but that God is, and that he wants back into the circle of God's grace and purpose enough that he will return by the way God has provided — the blood of Christ.

The Creator's purpose has not changed. He still wants man in His own image. Paul explained that at Christ's coming in glory the dead will be raised and "we shall be changed" (I Cor. 15:51). John wrote: "We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). He doesn't leave it at that, but adds, "And every one that has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure" (Vs. 3).

John is saying that it isn't enough to be converted and have our sins forgiven. If it is our goal to be in God's image then we will be heading that way now. Paul wrote, "put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). When man sees himself as God's image he uses his abilities to do good things, to create beautiful music and art, in contrast to that which is labeled music and art by the world. He uses his energy for good works that bless other lives rather than merely to amass a fortune for his own pleasure. All of life becomes worship, not just that part spent in the church house on Sunday. The transformation to God's image is a full-time work.

While we are to purify ourselves from those things we know are contrary to God's purpose, it is not within our power to make the final change — that will happen at the sound of the voice of Jesus, when He "...shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21).

There are many noble purposes, but only this one is called "eternal," for the only people to whom God promises eternal life are the redeemed who are raised to receive immortality. The rest will "not see life" (John 3:36) but have only "a certain fearful expectation of judgment" and destruction (Heb. 10:26–27).

God will accomplish His purpose. It is man's part to walk humbly before Him in faith; it is His to transform us, and in the day of resurrection, to bring us forth in His image.

"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49).

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