



June 28, 2024

The 4 P's (A Purpose, a Plan, a Provider, and Paradise)
Part 4, A Paradise

This month we've been exploring God's "Plan for Man" using 4 P's: His **purpose**, then His **plan**, which showcased His **provision**, and finally in this installment, His all-in-all end goal, **paradise!**

Almost every historical religion (except now for Atheism/Humanism/Secularism) has taught a concept of a conscious paradise, a final abode for the eternal human spirit and soul. The Norsemen had their Valhalla, Buddhists have their Nirvana, Hindus have the Moksha (the liberation from the endless chain of deaths and rebirths) and Christians, Jews, and Muslims have their own versions of "Heaven" or "Paradise".

Biblical Christianity presents man as an eternal physical being with only two possible end states: Heaven (a.k.a. Paradise) and Hell/The Lake of Fire, with no intermediary, second-chance, abodes (such as the Catholic doctrines of Purgatory and Limbo). In Luke 18 Jesus gave humanity the only glimpse into the afterlife. An unbelieving (lost) rich man died, and immediately opened his eyes in a place of torment and anguished regret. A believing (saved) beggar died and was escorted by holy angels into a place Jesus called Paradise, where (in contrast) he was comforted. Their final eternal destinations were not mitigated by any second chances, by any post-life efforts of loved ones or supposed church authorities. In the state they died, they will spend their eternity.

And if you want the Big Picture presented in a "nutshell" version, it is this: God's Purpose was revealed in a Divine Plan, which involved the Provision of a Savior, to the end that fallen humanity might be redeemed back to a relationship and fellowship with the Trinity God, in a place called "Heaven" or "Paradise". And so, the Bible speaks much about how to gain Heaven and avoid Hell, for the Lord is, *...not willing that any should perish* (2 Peter 3:9). God's purpose, plan, and Provision (Jesus the Substitutionary Sacrifice for man's sin), will climax, *...in bringing many sons* (and daughters of course) *unto glory...* (Hebrews 2:10).

In Jesus' Revelation to humanity, He describes redeemed mankind's final glorious abode: a recreated planet Earth. These new creations were prophesied by the Jewish prophet Isaiah, some 700 years before Jesus came. The prophet wrote, *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall*

not be remembered, nor come into mind (Isaiah 65:17). Peter referred back to this prophecy, ...we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness in (2 Peter 3:13). And John was given a glimpse into the future of the God's redeemed. He wrote, *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...* (Revelation 21:1).

Yes, friends, God's entire purpose, plan, and provision is to redeem mankind and provide a Paradise for you and me. But He doesn't force anyone into His plan. IF Heaven is to be our eternal home, it doesn't happen by chance, or by pre-determination, or by being "good", or by religious works. It happens on purpose when we REPENT,

- 1) we must ADMIT that we are LOST sinners, estranged from God, and in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23), and
- 2) we must BELIEVE (have absolute faith in the fact that...) the Savior was and is Jesus Christ, Emmanuel (God with us), the Incarnated Eternal Son, and that He came and took our place on that Cross so that we might have eternal life with Him (John 3:16), and finally
- 3) we appropriate God's salvation ONLY by grace, not of works, but by CALLING OUT or CONFESSION. Just as the publican in the parable and just as the dying thief on a cross, we must cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" When from convicted hearts we cry out to God in contrition and faith, we become born-again, citizens of God's Kingdom, which will one day be manifested in an eternal New Heaven and New Earth.

So, is God's abode your guaranteed destination? It takes more than, "Well, I hope so". It takes a change of mind and heart from self-reliance to Christ-reliance (this admission of sin and need is called repentance). It takes absolute faith (belief) in Christ's death/burial/and resurrection alone (and not any religious works). And then we appropriate God's forgiveness and the new birth by calling out to him! *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Romans 10:13).

God bless and consider!