

Saturday AM session – A Brief History of Time (and Eternity) – Part 1

-In your group, spend some time introducing yourself, sharing a little about your background and interests. What is your favorite place in the world, and why?

-In your mind, what would be 'the perfect world'? How does the world in which we live differ from your ideal, and why?

Read Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:31-2:25

How would you describe the world and life in the world, as originally created by God?

Read Genesis 3:1-24

-What effects did Man's sin have

-on the Creation? (3:17; see also Jeremiah 12:4, Romans 8:20-22)

-on mankind and his life in this world? (3:16-19)

-on mankind's relationship with God? (3:20-24; see also Colossians 1:21)

What are some ways that these effects are playing out in our world today?

Mankind's sin in the Garden of Eden estranged it from God and began Man's rebellion against God's reign that continues to this day. Thus, the world was divided into two camps at enmity with each other (Gen. 3:15), one submitting to God's rule and the other rejecting it, represented by two 'kingdoms' – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness – or two 'cities' – the city of God and the city of Man.

According to Genesis 3:1-5,

-What were the founding principles of the city of Man?

-Who is the ruler of the city of Man, and who are its citizens? (3:1-5; see also Revelation 12:9; 1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:1-3)

-What do Genesis 11:1-4 and Psalm 2:1-3 tell us about the attitudes that characterize the city of Man?

-What is the ultimate result of citizenship in the city of Man? (Ephesians 2:1-3, Philippians 3:18-20)

-Despite Man's rebellion, what hope did God in His mercy give to mankind, even in the midst of His judgment on their sin? (Gen. 3:15)

-How is this hope further revealed and expanded on over time, as seen in the following Old Testament Scriptures?

-Jeremiah 31:33-34

-Psalm 16:8-11

-Job 19:25-27

-Isaiah 35:1-10

-Isaiah 65:17-19

Aliens and strangers in the world...

The Bible is the account of God's unfolding work of redeeming fallen humanity and Creation from sin. Though God created all things "very good", Man's sin brought all of Mankind and the Creation under God's curse and consigned them to an existence of pain, suffering, sorrow, and futility. To this very day, we suffer under the effects of the Fall, toiling and laboring until we return to dust. Likewise, the Creation groans with us, longing to be liberated from its bondage to the decay caused by sin. At the same time, Man's rebellion against God brought him under the rulership of Satan; instead of the freedom promised by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, came bondage, wrath, and death. Thus, ironically, while the city of Man promises to exalt Man to the heavens so that he "will be like God", it in reality debases and degrades mankind, consigning him to slavery and ultimately, to everlasting destruction. And yet, in spite of Man's sin, God in His great love showed mercy even in the midst of His judgment, promising a Savior who would one day crush the head of the Serpent (that is, Satan) and set His people free from the bondage of the city of Man, from sin and death. Through the Old Testament, we see this promise unfolding, looking forward to a time when God would forgive His people of their sin, raise them from death to eternal life, and redeem the fallen Creation, providing a New Heaven and a New Earth in which God would delight in His people and they would rejoice in Him forever!

Spend some time today reflecting on the sin of mankind and the mercy of God. Reflect also on your own standing before God. Are you living in enmity towards Him, or is your life one responds to His mercy by seeking after Him?