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Are We There Yet?

Genesis 1:6-10

April 29, 2007

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Genesis 1:6-10:

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven [sky]. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

God separates the waters above from the waters below. He judges between heaven and hell. And then God separates the waters below. He separates (*tahowm*), and dry land or ground appears (*yabbashah*). *Yabbashah* is a word that's used just fourteen times in Scripture but in critical places.

God calls the *yabbashah* "ereztz." Sometimes that's translated "earth," but usually it's translated "land." And the Hebrew mind thinks *Israel*: Eretz Israel.

Old Testament scholar John Sailhamer argues that this is the way early Jewish interpreters understood these verses, such that Genesis 1:1 states that God created all things, but Genesis 1:2-2:3 are not about the creation of all things so much as about the creation of the land of Israel.

Well, it seems from scriptures like Exodus 20:11 and Jeremiah 27:5-6 that *all* of the first chapter of Genesis refers to both:

- A. The creation of all things
- B. The creation of Eden (which we'll find has basically the same boundaries as the land of Israel)

You know, some of us just got back from Israel. We saw a sign as we approached the Wailing Wall. It read (in part):

Jewish tradition teaches that the Temple Mount is the focal point of Creation. In the center of the mountain lies the “Foundation Stone” of the world. Here Adam came into being. Here Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob served God. The First and Second Temples were built upon this mountain. The Ark of the Covenant was set upon the Foundation Stone itself.

Isn't that incredible?

Well, we had an incredible trip. About 35 from our church joined Susan and me. It's an experience that I hope you could all have one day, for it gives you an incredible perspective on Scripture.

This is a picture of the Sea of Galilee. In the distance is Capernaum where Jesus lived with Peter:

<Photo>

This is a picture of the Temple Mount where the temple once stood:

<Photo>

These are actual stones of the temple in Jesus' day:

<Photo>

They were pushed off the edge of the Temple Mount in 70 A.D. by Romans . . . pushed onto streets on which Jesus once walked. It was just as Jesus prophesied: In one generation not one stone left on top of another, and the Jews would be sent into exile.

This is the Dead Sea from Masada:

<Photo>

You can see that it has shrunk into really two seas now. That's due to industrial evaporation ponds in the south. Our tour guide explained that this was like a partial fulfillment of Ezekiel 47 in which Ezekiel sees water running from the Temple Mount into the Dead Sea, making it fresh and teeming with life rather than death (*tahowm*). Our guide said it was *partial* fulfillment, because Ezekiel says part will be left for salt. And that would be these evaporation ponds to the right.

The Old Testament foretells the return of the children of Israel to the land, and many think those prophecies were fulfilled or are being fulfilled since 1948. *Aliyah*: return to the "land flowing with milk and honey." Twelve times the Old Testament refers to "a land flowing with milk and honey":

<Photo>

"Peter at mini-mart with Hebrew milk and honey.

On the last day, I found it: milk and honey at a mini-mart. Now, people will say, "Flowing with milk and honey is a metaphor." Maybe it is, but maybe it isn't. Either way, the mini-mart was a disappointment next to the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah.

We call the land the Holy Land, and I did find some holy things. They were sold in the gift shop at the hotel:

- Olive wood Jesus heads
- Three types of anointing oil
- Light of Jerusalem candles
- Baby Jesus in a plastic bag
- Jesus and His disciples holy shot glass (I think it neutralizes whiskey)
- 100% kosher underwear (I'm giving them to Brian)
- Holy Rock Café
- Holy bagels
- Holy stairs where Jesus walked

Yet the stairs themselves didn't seem particularly holy. God's holiness is *hesed*—steadfast love—mercy. Psalm 37 and Matthew 5 both state, "The meek shall inherit the land."

But not everyone agrees with that philosophy. It seems that it's not the meek who inherit the land but the folks with the strongest Air Force:

<Photo> (T-Shirt: "America Don't Worry. Israel is behind you." Includes drawing of fighter plane.)

Now, please don't be mad. Just acknowledge a wee bit of irony. You know,

Jerusalem means City of Peace. These are Jerusalem City Gates:

<Photo>

They are absolutely riddled with bullet holes since 1948.

Isaiah prophesies a return to the land in Isaiah 60. He says of Jerusalem, “Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut that people may bring you the wealth of the nations.” The gate above was open, but this next gate [below] was shut:

<Photo>

It was shut to people like this:

<Photo>

This man’s name is Bashira. He heads up the Bethlehem Bible College. He told us he can’t leave Bethlehem. It’s not the first time someone from Bethlehem was rejected by Jerusalem. He’s exiled from the land because of his race and religion. He’s a Palestinian Christian.

But don’t be judgmental. Israelites need this wall:

<Photo> Concrete border wall

. . . to protect themselves from suicide bombers and save their own lives.

<Photo>

Ezekiel 37:14: “I will put my breath into you and you shall live again. I will set you on your own soil.”

Ezekiel prophesies the return of the house of Israel to the land in Ezekiel 36:33. He writes that “on that day” —the day that God causes the cities to be inhabited, the waste places to be rebuilt, and the desolate land to be cultivated—“on that day” He will also give them a new heart . . . and take away their heart of stone. Then the nations will know He is the Lord. He says, “I will do it.”

Well, not everyone, indeed it seemed very few in the land, had what I would call a *new heart* . . . which made me doubt that this day is *that* day—that day that Ezekiel prophesied about.

Now listen, I’m certainly not just talking about Jews praying at dead stones in the Wailing Wall. And I’m not just talking about Moslems strapping bombs to their bodies. I’m talking about Christians with stone hearts.

This is a Roman Catholic Church built on stilts directly over the ruins of what is believed to be St. Peter’s house in Capernaum:

<Photo>

Get the message? “St. Peter belongs to *us*.”

Nearby is an Orthodox church version, for they think St. Peter belongs to *them*.

This is the Armenian Orthodox section of the Church of the Holy Nativity:

<Photo>

We took this picture in the Armenian wing for Aram. The church is divided into three parts: Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic. Amir, our Messianic Jewish tour guide, told us that once he walked in to see a chair flying across the room. The priests were fighting because one group prayed three minutes longer than their allotted time.

This is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

<Photo>

The ladder leaning against the outside window has been there for something like 200 years. To move it would be to break a peace treaty between the Orthodox and Catholic priests who occupy the building. Our tour guide told us that a Muslim family holds the only keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, because hundreds of years ago the fighting Orthodox and Catholic priests agreed to a truce and gave the keys of the church to Muslims . . . since neither Christian sect could trust the other.

So every morning a Muslim comes and unlocks the doors to the church so the Christians can go inside and worship.

And now, if you think those Old World Catholics and Orthodox are so carnal in their childish attempt to capture the Holy Land, check this out:

<Photo>

That is American graffiti on a stone pillar in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, directly across from the traditional tomb of Jesus.

Now, you may make the very biblical argument that the Church is the descendent of the twelve apostles—the true Israel. Yet this is not the way we, the Church, are to occupy the land with the Gospel.

A sign on the outside of the Church of All Nations adjacent to the Garden of Gethsemane reads:

<Photo> “Please: No Explanations Inside The Church”

We don't want any of those stones coming to life and telling a story: the Gospel story.

Ezekiel 36:26: "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you." Verse 33 says, "Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities"

Well, it just makes you wonder if *this* is *that* day
. . . or if this is the land Ezekiel was speaking of.

Some Orthodox Jews and certainly the ultra Orthodox Jews say it's *not* that day, and the secular state of Israel is really *not* that land. They argue that only the Messiah can establish the kingdom and bring the exiles, the pilgrims, and the sojourners home. "For it's not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord."

Well, you can agree or disagree with that. But I think we can all understand why so many Jews are so desperate for a homeland.

- For 2,000 years since 70 A.D., they have been exiled from the land.
- For much of that time, they've been persecuted, abused, and murdered by the *Church*—the Church that is called by the Jewish Messiah to love the Jews!
- Most recently, 6 million of Jewish descent (not necessarily faith but descent), defined by Adolph Hitler as a *race* rather than a faith, were murdered by the Nazis.

No wonder they're desperate for a homeland—a home! Can you relate to that?

When I was a young boy, I didn't fit in at school. I was an uncoordinated, preacher's kid who got picked on a lot. I was exiled a lot. Every day I couldn't wait to get home. I fit there; I belonged there; a place was prepared for me there: my own room, my drum light, my soldier lamp, my rock collection, and my metal dinosaurs from the Museum of Natural History; my sanctuary, my bed, my room, my home, my father's lap.

I remember I'd sit on my father's lap and everything was good. I experienced *shalom*—peace, and I could rest.

I still wish I could go home to 6875 South Prince Circle and sit on my father's lap and tell him my struggles. But we sold the house long ago, the dinosaurs are in a box in my basement, mom's in a nursing home, and my dad is dead.

They say you can never go home, and I think that would mean you can never rest—*shabot*—sabbath.

Well, 3,500 years ago an entire nation of slaves wandering in the wilderness wanted to *go home* . . . but they weren't sure where home was. When things got tough, they wanted to go back to Egypt, and if not that, just stay where they were—it was good enough. Stay on the east side of the Jordan, settle down in the wilderness, and pretend it's home. But unless they surrendered their wilderness home of illusions and lies, they could

never occupy their true home flowing with milk and honey.

Genesis is first addressed to those pilgrims, exiles, and sojourners . . . homeless ex-slaves wandering in the wilderness, longing for a homeland where “everything is very good” and they can rest, have deep rest, shabot, stop, Sabbath.

You’ll remember that for several weeks we preached on the seventh day of creation wherein “everything is very good.” The seventh day—shabot. We realized that we haven’t gotten there yet, that, in fact, according to modern physicists and the ancient biblical texts, the universe is not quite or just barely seven days old.

- Therefore, we are, in fact, on a journey toward the seventh day (the kingdom of heaven).
- And so we, in fact, are still *being made* in the image of God.
- And therefore, we are, in fact, pilgrims, exiles, and sojourners . . . not *staying* here but traveling through on our way toward our promised land—the new heaven and new earth, wherein righteousness dwells and “everything is very good.”

So Moses tells them that on the third day God said:

“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land [yabbashah] appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground [yabbashah] Land And God saw that [the land] was good.

You see, it was where they were going: “the land.” God was speaking to their hearts, “We’re not there yet. Have faith and keep going. I will do it—I will judge tahowm and make a way. Be still and see the salvation of the Lord.”

You’ll remember that they had just seen the waters part at the Red Sea. You can read about it in Exodus 14. God had led the Israelites to a place on the bank of the Red Sea where they had no direction to look but up. And God said, “The Lord will fight for you and you have only to be still. Be still and see.” That night God parted the waters, and they walked through on yabbashah—dry ground.

In I Corinthians 10, Paul writes that as they were baptized into Moses at the Red Sea, so we are baptized into Christ. He is the way through the waters and out of tahowm to the Promised Land. He is the rock, the foundation stone. He moves to wherever we are. Yet we must stand on the rock. And we must let go of the old land to enter the new.

Moses also told those Israelites about Noah. You can read about him in Genesis 6. You’ll remember God judged the wicked land with a flood of water. But God saved Noah in an ark, and forty days later the ark rested on dry ground.

In I Peter and II Peter, Peter argues that Christ is like that ark. And baptism corresponds to this:

- We’re baptized with water and fire.
- God once judged the earth with water, and He will judge it with a flood of fire.

Jesus is the ark that carries us through and cleanses us of all that is unholy. He takes us from an old earth to the new, bearing us through judgment, tahowm, and the fire.

But you have to get on the boat! You have to die to the old earth to inherit the new. Baptism means you're on a journey through troubled waters to dry ground—Promised Land.

You may also remember that after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, God separated the water once again. As the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat (you'll remember Jesus *is* the covenant and the revelation of God's mercy), entered the Jordan River, God separated the waters and the children of Israel crossed over on yabbashah—dry ground. God made a way, but they had to leave the east side to occupy the west. They had to let go of the wilderness to enter the land.

Now, the important thing is, fifteen hundred years later John came baptizing in the Jordan, and get this: Jesus is baptized in the Jordan. Yet they both are already in the land. Where are they going? They're already in the land

. . . or are they?

In Matthew 28, Jesus tells His disciples to go baptize, because all authority is His. So this is a bunch of us getting baptized at the Jordan River [Exhibit A]. We're getting baptized . . . but where do we think we're going? We're already on the west side; we're already in the land

. . . or are we?

You know, Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But you have to lose your life in order to find it. You have to take up a cross and follow. People said, "No thanks. We'd rather stay here and pretend we're already there." In fact, they crucified Jesus

[Exhibit A]

<Photo> Everyone dressed in white robes ready to be baptized in the Jordan.

a week after they tried to make Him king. They crucified Him because He would not lead a military revolt against Rome, establishing an independent, worldly kingdom.

Instead, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." He said to the thief on the cross next to Him, "Today you will be with me in paradise." That word means *paradise garden* . . . like Eden yet even better than Eden, for "everything is very good."

- The book of the Revelation calls it the New Jerusalem. But to get to the New Jerusalem, you have to surrender the old.
- To get to the new creation, you have to surrender your own creation.
- To receive the city "whose builder and maker is God," you have to surrender the city whose builder and maker is you.
- To enter the Promised Land you have to surrender the land you occupy.

Why?

Because Jesus is the way, and you are not.

In John 14 at the last supper, Jesus tells His disciples:

“ . . . I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way”

“The way” is not the United Nations, the United States, or F-16s. “The way” is Jesus. And in case you’re thinking, “That’s nuts! Jesus could get us all killed!” you’re right. Crosses have a tendency to do that. Yet the moment you lose your life for His sake and the Gospel, you enter the land: the seventh day.

The book of Hebrews makes it clear in chapter 11 that we’re bankrupt. We’re exiles. In fact, all the Old Testament saints were exiles, pilgrims, and sojourners, including David, the greatest Israelite king. For “they did not receive what was promised” (v. 39). In v. 16, “they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” They were seeking a homeland.

I Peter 2:9:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

In other words, we’re not there yet. We’re not home yet. And unless you believe that, your flesh will hang onto this hell of a world, this wilderness world, and lie to your soul that you’re already home. Home in lust, pride, greed, possessions, violence, and competition. Already home . . . so you’ll never seek the Promised Land, a promised rest, the seventh day.

If you think this world *is* your home, the Evil One can control you with the fear of death . . . steal your courage and drain your joy. But if you believe you’re an *exile*, this world loses its grip on your soul. This world no longer changes you; *you* change the world.

In the 4th century, when Christians were still crucified and the Church changed the world, Eusebius wrote to the Roman Emperor who was threatening him with death:

He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.

Years ago a missionary sat in sorrow on the dock at South Hampton, England. He’d just gotten off a ship from Africa. On board the same ship was Teddy Roosevelt. When they arrived, there was a band and a huge parade for Roosevelt. But no one had

come to greet this missionary.

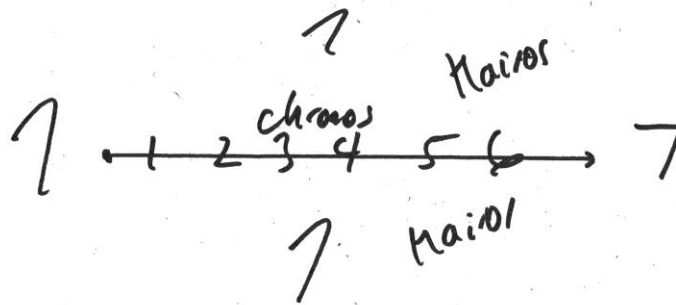
Discouraged, he buried his head in his hands and moaned, “God, I didn’t expect a band or a parade. But you could have seen to it that somebody came to welcome me home!” At that the missionary heard God speak. He heard, “My child, you’re not home yet.”

We’re not home yet. We think we are, but we aren’t. Maybe we don’t have much confidence in *home* or the way that gets us there. We think that heaven will be some sort of a timeless, nebulous, unfamiliar ooze.

So when we read the Old Testament prophecies that seem so solid and real, in which old men fill out their days and folks go fishing in the Dead Sea, we think to ourselves, “This can’t be heaven. Heaven is clouds, harps, and choir robes; timeless, nebulous, and unfamiliar.”

But that’s not the biblical idea of our final destination. Heaven is the seventh day, the finished creation, the paradise garden, the new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells. I think it’s just the opposite of a timeless, nebulous, unfamiliar ooze.

Do you remember this picture?



The six days of creation, and then the seventh day. The six days are *chronos* time; the seventh is *kairos* time (outside our time). Yet I don’t think the seventh day is timeless so much as *time-full*. In this world, we can only go one direction in time. Time is the fourth dimension. In this world, time is our master, but in the next world perhaps we will be the master of time. And you will have all the time you want.

I have a friend who lost several of her children years ago. It has been an incredible sorrow to her that she has not been able to raise them. In visions, Jesus showed her that He has her children. Yet whenever He showed her her children, they were always young, even though they died decades ago.

One night in a vision, she asked Jesus, “Why are my children still young?” She heard Him answer, “They’re waiting for you to raise them.” You see, she lacks for nothing, including time.

So maybe you can go home.

She then asked, “Am I a single mother?” The answer was no. She’s the Bride of Christ. And the Promised Land is not timeless or nebulous.

My father never had visions, but before he died the Lord gave him several. He would describe them to me with such hope and joy. In these visions, he met his grandson who died in the womb. He’d go walking through the beautiful, Pennsylvania woods and a town where everyone was happy. He visited the church he grew up in.

Maybe you can go home.

Maybe you can go back to Old Jerusalem.

But Old Jerusalem is forever new.

Jesus said, “I make all things new.” Wouldn’t that include my drum light, soldier lamp, and the lap of my father? You see, I will be home again . . . but more home than I ever was before.

My dad said, “Peter I visited the church I grew up in, and I visited *your* church . . . *our* church. I stood watching in the balcony.”

After Hebrews 11, the author of Hebrews tells us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. You see, I think my father sometimes visits, standing in our balcony. But he’s not a phantom or a shadow. In fact, he’s more solid than anything you can see. *We* are the phantoms; *we* are the shadows.

The seventh day isn’t *less* real than us; it’s *more* real than us. It’s not timeless, not nebulous, and not some unfamiliar ooze.

When Julian of Norwich had her incredible visions, she spoke of how truly awesome Jesus was and yet how incredibly familiar. The word she used in the Old English was *homeliness*. She felt so incredibly *at home* in His presence.

In 1957, a father took his ten-year-old son, blind from birth, on a pilgrimage to the Shrine in Lourdes, France. The father prayed that his son would see, and instantly the boy could see. He saw flowers, trees, green grass, and the open sky. Then he looked into his father’s face . . . saw the eyes that went with the only voice he had known during ten, long years of darkness. When he saw his father, this is what he said: “Oh boy! Everybody’s here!”

Did you know that “every good and perfect gift comes down from your Father in heaven”? And did you know every gift comes through His Word, who is Jesus? So one day you’ll receive *all things* and say, “Oh boy!

Everybody’s here!” And God will be all things to all men. You’ll be home.

You see, we’re not there yet. Yet *there* is *here* . . . if we only have eyes to see.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And He said, “Whatever you do to the least of these, my brethren, you do to me.”

By the way, that’s how He judges the nations . . . what we do to the least of these. But His brethren are not defined by genetics. They are defined by faith, and we do not yet know who they all are. Tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, and Roman centurions are

all His brethren . . . even bitter, old Pharisees like Saul of Tarsus. They are His brethren, His temple, His city, His holy nation, even His land—His cultivated land (I Corinthians 3:9).

- So countries go to war over the Temple Mount. But the temple is born in Bethlehem. (We build walls around Bethlehem just to keep Him from the Temple Mount.)
- Countries go to war over the stones in the Holy City. And they murder the living stones that make up the Holy City.
- People travel around the world to see the Holy Land, and they *are* the Holy Land: God's field; God's building.

Our bus driver was an Arab believer named Munire. Our tour guide was a wonderful Jewish believer named Amir:

<Photo>

Our host was a Lebanese Boulderite Evangelist named George Housney:

<Photo>

Some on the trip from Lookout were of Hebrew descent. Some on the trip from Lookout were of German descent. But all are one body, one city, one traveling temple. So get on the bus.

<Photo> Susan, Karen, and Eunice on the bus.

Surrender your heart of stone; receive a heart of flesh; become a living stone. You see, the ground isn't holy. But *these people* are holy. Just one of these people is more holy than all the ancient stones in Israel. These are living stones.

When each one was baptized, the water separated and the holy land appeared. This earth will pass away, but these people will last forever. They are the edge of the kingdom, the doors to the eternal city. Seek first the kingdom and so surrender your own kingdom.

So we're not there yet. However, *there is here* . . . hiding and waiting:

- in "the last and least of these, His brethren"
- in the people in this room
- in body broken and blood shed

You see, His kingdom is the kingdom of love. And even now it is invading our world. He is parting the troubled waters. And the Promised Land is appearing. So surrender your kingdom and receive His.

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "This is my

body broken for you.” In the same manner, after supper He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” And He said, “I am the way.” This is the way: body broken, blood shed, mercy, the love of God poured out.

Your home has come to get you and take you home.

[Communion]

[Peter singing:]

I looked over Jordan and what did I see,
Comin' for to carry me home!
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' for to carry me home!

Have you ever noticed slaves sing the best songs? That's because they are least committed to this world.

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!

[Benediction:]

Prayer: Father, we worship you for who you are. You are our *home*. Your lap is our home. And you have made us *your* home. You are good. You are love and steadfast mercy that will not end. May we always worship you. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you feel like you *fit* in this world; if you feel like this world really works for you; if you feel like this world is your home, I'm sorry. I John 2:15 says the love of the Father is not in you.

However, if you feel like you really *don't* fit in this world; if you feel like an exile here, like this world really isn't working for you, kind of like this world is not your home, then *good news*: It's *not*! And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, you'll be changed. And you'll be home. And “everything will be very good.”

So believe the Gospel and stop letting this world drag you down. In Jesus' name, amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

~ *Genesis 1:6-10*

Moses thus wants us to see God as both the Creator of the universe (Genesis 1:1) and the Giver of "the land" (Genesis 1:2-2:4). He is the One who created and prepared the land, and He will give it to whomever He pleases. Such a view of God is central to the theology of the Pentateuch and its focus on the Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19:5). . . . God told Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, "I made the land [*eretš*], mankind, and the animals upon the land with my great and powerful outstretched hand, and I will give it to whomever I please" (Jeremiah 27:5). As the passage then says, God was about to give the "land" to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (27:6). In fact, God was about to give "all the lands" (*ertzoth*, plural) to Nebuchadnezzar. God was about to give Israel's land and the lands of her neighbors to the Babylonian king. . . . It is already clear within the Pentateuch that the messianic King will one day come to this land. He will arise from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12) and establish His kingdom in this land (Numbers 24:5-9, 16-24). He, like Melchizedek, the king of Jerusalem, will bless Abraham and his seed in this land (Genesis 14:18-20), and through Him, all the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The fact that the account of creation focuses on the promised land in no way limits its universal scope. . . . The narrative of the separation of the waters and the preparation of the land is to be read in light of the subsequent accounts of the flood (Genesis 6-9) and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). In all three accounts, the waters are cast as an obstacle to man's inhabiting and enjoying "the good land." In each case, the water must be removed before God's people can enjoy His gift of the land. But as we learn in the account of the flood and of the Red Sea, the waters were also God's instrument of judgment upon those who did not walk in His way.

~ *Dr. John Sailbamer, Genesis Unbound*

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. . . . Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.

~ *Genesis 6:5-8; 8:12-14*

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

~ *1 Peter 3:18-22*

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. . . ." Then Moses stretched out his

hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

~ *Exodus 14:10-14, 21-22*

I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

~ *1 Corinthians 10:1-6*

So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

~ *Joshua 3:14-17*

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. . . ." Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. . .

~ *Matthew 3:11-17; 28:19*

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

~ *John 14:1-6*

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. . . . By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. . . . And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. . . . Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

~ *Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16, 29, 32-33, 39-12:2*

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. . . . Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

~ *1 Peter 1:1; 2:11*

I had often called myself an optimist, to avoid the too evident blasphemy of pessimism. But all the optimism of the age had been false and disheartening for this reason, that it had always been trying to prove that we fit in to the world. The

Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do not fit in to the world. I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity. I had been right in feeling all things as odd, for I myself was at once worse and better than all things. The optimist's pleasure was prosaic, for it dwelt on the naturalness of everything; the Christian pleasure was poetic, for it dwelt on the unnaturalness of everything in light of the supernatural. The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring. The knowledge found out and illuminated forgotten chambers in the dark house of infancy. I knew now why grass had always seemed to me as queer as the green beard of a giant, and why I could feel homesick at home.

~ G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

~ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. . . . It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. "Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it. . . ."

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel."

~ *Ezekiel 36:24-28, 32-36; 37:11-12*

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

~ *Romans 9:6-8*

See also Genesis 12:1-3 and Galatians 3:16; Psalm 37:11 and Matthew 5:5; Deuteronomy 30:5-6 and Colossians 2:11-12; Isaiah 60:10-12, 66:20-21 and Revelation 21:1-3, 22-25; Joel 3:1-2 and Matthew 25:31-32,40, 45; Exodus 19:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.

He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.

~ *Eusebius to Emperor Valens, 4th Century*

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field [*georgion*: literally "cultivated land"], God's building.

~ *1 Corinthians 3:9*