

A Little Taste of Heaven

This world of sickness and death, pain and tears, heartache and sorrow is not the world in its original form as God created it. In the beginning God created paradise; a place for God and man to dwell together and have a relationship. While it was God's plan for man to work – he was told to tend and keep the garden (Genesis 2:15) – it was to be a profitable labor. When man worked the ground, the ground was to produce. Man and woman were not even to understand shame. They walked about without clothes. So what happened? Sin.

We live in a fallen world of death and decay because sin entered the world. When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground. “In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...” (Genesis 3:17-19). God warned Adam and Eve that on the day they ate of the forbidden fruit – on the day they sinned – they would die. It is because of sin that death reigns. Paul said, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Paul explains this concept further in Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” This does not say what Calvinists think it says. They argue that because Adam sinned we inherit his sin. This passage clearly says Adam's sin brought death and we all die because WE ALL sin.

When Jesus began His public ministry heartache, death, and decay was the norm. It was all around. The lame, the blind, the demon-possessed, the sick, and lepers cover the pages of the Gospels. Then, in Luke 4, we see Jesus enter a synagogue and read from Isaiah 61 – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Through the rest of the chapter Jesus cast out a demon, healed Peter's mother-in-law, healed many with various diseases, and cast demons out of many. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to confirm that He was the one Jesus said, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preacher to them” (Matthew 11:4-5).

We understand that Jesus' miracles were signs – they pointed to something greater. Jesus' miracles showed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30f). But there seems to be something else going on as well. It appears that Jesus was undoing the effects of sin. He was ridding the people of their illnesses, their trouble, their demons, and (in some cases) death! These are normal things in our world because we live in a fallen world where sin reigns. (John 8 teaches the not all illness is a result of sin. But the Bible does imply that we have sickness and sorrow because we live in a fallen world of sin.) As Jesus reversed those conditions, He was

providing the people a little taste of Paradise. In a world absent sickness and sorrow, the people around Jesus experienced what it was like to live in the garden with God.

But what is most interesting is that Jesus did not just perform miracles continuously. The end of Luke 4 says He was sent in order to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. Those miracles were simply a momentary taste of heaven. The Gospel would provide a permanent place in heaven. By healing the people, Jesus merely whet their appetites for something more, something permanent. And He made that something possible on the cross.

That is the power of the Gospel. That is why it is “good news.” This fallen world with its sickness and sorrow, death and decay is not all there is. God is going to undo all of that which has fallen apart because of sin. And in eternity, as we worship our heavenly Father, there will be no more sin, no more tears, no more death, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4, 8).

So what whets our appetite? Shouldn't our collective worship of God cause us to long for heaven? Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” In many of the Gospel stories, the mere presence of Jesus provided a little taste of Heaven. As we worship together reminding, teaching, and encouraging one another of Whom we serve and why we serve Him, we experience a little bit of paradise. A little taste of heaven in the middle of this fallen and broken world is enough to let me know heaven will surely be worth it all.