

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part VII

The End of Sin – The Beginning of Paradise

Last study we discussed the tension that exists in freedom when people use their freedom to act in such a way that it removes the freedom of others. When we see sinners continuing to abuse others and seeming to prosper in their wickedness while no one steps in to stop them, we cry out – UNFAIR, where is justice?! God feels our cry and takes the responsibility upon Himself for the delay. He answers our cry for justice by showing us instead a higher, more glorious answer – forgiveness. Upon the Cross, we see Jesus bearing the cost of forgiveness for all mankind that all might have the chance to be changed. The mercy and forbearance of God will melt the proud resistance of many hearts while at the same time it will harden some until sin finds its hopeless conclusion.

In this study we will see that in the end, justice has been answered by the wisdom of God. He has brought a permanent end to sin while at the same time changing as many hearts as possible. He has allowed sin to demonstrate its own end; proving itself incapable of eternal life. When it is finished, all will understand. Sin will never again reoccur throughout all eternity. Eternity will be both free and secure.

Sin – who takes responsibility for the loss incurred?

The Godhead – We have already seen that at the Cross, Jesus willingly suffered the loss resulting from sins committed against Him. And He was willing to step in as our Creator and take the responsibility for all the suffering caused by the inhumanity of man.

The sinner – We have seen in the establishment of the sacrificial system that the sinner was to bring his lamb and slay it there before the altar, representing his acknowledgement that his sin was to be forgiven at the expense of the promised Son of God. Recognition of sin and the need for healing is necessary if God's work of cleansing and restoration is to transform us into a character capable of eternal life.

The Devil – We have seen in the wilderness Tabernacle that God appointed the Day of Atonement as an annual event characterizing the events that would take place at the end of this world of sin. (a) In this service we see two judgments taking place. Both are represented by the two goats on which lots were cast.

- The one is the judgment of the sinner who has been changed by the grace of God. In this case the Lamb of God willingly takes the loss to forgive the sinner, and the sinner having accepted the forgiveness is restored to full friendship with God. He is accepted into the family that makes its way through this wilderness of sin and on to the Promised Land.

- The other is the judgment of Satan, the fallen angels, and all of mankind who have not accepted of the forgiveness given, whose hearts were hardened in the extension of God's grace until there was no more God could do to change them. They were cut off from the camp and led (unwillingly) into the desert wilderness and left to die in the dust of their own foolishness. (b)

Two groups:

- Jesus also likens the two groups that exist at the end to the judgments of Noah's day and the judgment of Sodom.

Luke 17:26-37 MKJV And as it was in the days of Noah, so it also shall be in the days of the Son of Man. (27) They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all. (28) So also as it was in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; (29) but the day Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the heaven and destroyed them all. (30) Even so it shall be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ... (34) I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. (35) Two shall be grinding together, one will be taken and the other left. (36) Two shall be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. (37) And they answered and said to Him, Where, Lord? And He said to them, Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together. (c)

What is the character of God's judgments?

Romans 2:2 MKJV But know that the judgment of God is according to truth on those who practice such things. (d)

1 Timothy 5:24-25 MKJV Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment. And some they also follow after. (25) Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and those who are otherwise cannot be hidden. (e)

(a) Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9

(b) Leviticus 16:8-10 KJV And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. [goat of departure – *Strong's*] (9) And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. (10) But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

- Leviticus 16:21-22 KJV And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: (22) And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities **unto a land not inhabited**: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

- Leviticus 23:28-30 MKJV And you shall do no work in that same day, for it is a day of atonement, in order to make an atonement for you before Jehovah your God. (29) For any soul who is not humbled [searching of soul] in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. (30) ... the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

(c) As it was on the Day of Atonement, so it will be when Jesus returns. Circumstances will have divided the people into two groups. Some will be taken by destruction while others will be left alive to see God's promise of salvation fulfilled.

(d) We tend to think of God as having the same character as we have – self-centered. The more upset we have made God, the worse His judgment will be. Truth is that we cannot upset God. He is not surprised at how far sin has taken us; that is what sin does. His judgment is simply a revelation of the truth.

(e) He has held off the full revelation of truth because we could not bear it. He reveals the truth about our sin in small measures that we can be made ready for the full revelation that will come at the end.

- God has been holding back the evil desires of men in order that more might come to the light and be changed. But the time will come when the circumstances on this Earth will be such that all men will be brought to a decision as to whether they will live for self or others. When every heart is sealed in its decision for or against the Spirit of God, then judgment will come and all will be seen in the full light of truth.

- Revelation 7:1-3 KJV ... I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, **holding** the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. (2) And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, (3) Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part VII

The End of Sin – The Beginning of Paradise

John 5:22 KJV The **Father judges no man**, but has **committed all judgment to the Son**

Referring to Christ, Matthew quotes from Isaiah 24:

Matthew 12:18-20 MKJV "Behold My Child whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit on Him, and **He shall declare judgment to the nations**. (19) He shall not strive, nor cry, nor shall any one hear His voice in the streets. (20) He will not break a bruised reed, and He will not quench a smoking wick, until He sends out judgment to victory. (a)

John 12:46-48 MKJV I have come as a Light into the world, so that whoever believes on Me should not remain in darkness. (47) And if any one hears My Words and does not believe, I do not judge him, for **I do not come to judge the world**, but to save the world. (48) He who rejects Me and does not receive My Words has one who judges him; **the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him** in the last day. (b)

An investigative judgment of those who claim to be God's people:

1 Peter 4:16-17 MKJV But if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God because of this. (17) For the time has come for the judgment to begin from the house of God. And if it first begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (c)

Matthew 25:31-40 MKJV But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory. (32) And all nations shall be gathered before Him. And He shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. (33) And indeed He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King shall say to those on His right hand, **Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**. (35) For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; (36) I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. (37) Then the righteous shall answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? Or thirsty, and gave You drink? ... (40) And the King shall answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you have done it to Me. (d)

Matthew 22:1-14 MKJV And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables, and said, (2) The kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who made a marriage for his son. (3) And he sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and **they would not come**. (4) Again he sent out other servants, saying, Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the marriage. (5) But not caring, they went their ways, one to his field, another to his trading. (6) And the rest **took his servants and treated them spitefully, and killed them**. (7) But when the king heard, he was angry. And he sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (8) Then he said to his servants, The wedding is ready, but **they who were invited were not worthy**. (9) Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite them to the marriage. (10) So the servants went out into the highways and gathered as many as they found, both bad and good. And the wedding was filled with guests. (11) And when the king came in to see the guests, **he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment**. (12) And he said to him, **Friend, how did you come in here without having a wedding garment?** And he was speechless. (13) Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (14) For many are called, but few chosen.

(a) God has sent His Son to Earth to demonstrate to all of His intelligent creatures how it is that He judges.

(b) Jesus said of Himself that He came not to judge but to save. It is the rejection of His words of truth that condemns them.

- John 3:20-21 NKJV For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

(c) God's judgments have always begun by marking off those who have demonstrated their faith in Him. He begins with those who have had the most light. We saw this in the judgment of Egypt when those who marked their doorposts with the blood of the Lamb were passed over. In Ezekiel 9 the Lord said, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." To the others He said ... "Go after him through the city and ... Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary."

- God knows those who have accepted of His love and though their characters may not have been perfected in this life, they have been moved by His Spirit and changed toward His likeness. He knows that they will develop characters capable of eternal life. As is typical with God, He wants all of His intelligent creatures to see and understand the truth. So, before He comes to receive them into the Heavenly realms, an investigation is necessary that the angels and creatures of Heaven can know and accept that it is okay to bring us up. This is where we see Jesus pleading with the Father on our account. That is, Jesus and the Father pleading together, united in the Spirit.

(d) As always, the lessons of the New Testament call us to a higher standard. Notice that the evidence of those who will inherit the Kingdom is their "other-centered" hearts of love.

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part VII

The End of Sin – The Beginning of Paradise

Here is the patience of the saints: (Revelation 14:12)

2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 MKJV Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians ... (3) We are bound to thank God always for you, ... because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you abounds toward one another; (4) so much so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure. (5) For **this is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God,** that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 NKJV Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled... 3 ... for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 **And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed** in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.** 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and **destroy with the brightness of His coming.**

Isaiah 25:4-9 MKJV For You are a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the fearful ones is like a storm against the wall ... (7) And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering which covers all people, and the veil that is woven over all nations. (8) He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from all faces. And He shall take away from all the earth the rebuke of His people ... (9) And one shall say in that day, **Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him, and He will save us.** This is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

Isaiah 26:8-11 MKJV Yea, **in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You** ... (9) With ... my spirit within me I will seek You early; for **when Your judgments are in the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.** (10) **Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.** (11) LORD, Your hand is lifted up and they will not see; but **they shall see and be ashamed** for their envy toward Your people. Yes, **the fire of Your enemies shall devour them.**

The wedding supper:

Revelation 19:7-9 MKJV Let us be glad and rejoice and we will give glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself. (8) And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. (9) And he said to me, Write, Blessed are those who have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.

Revelation 21:1-5 MKJV And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer is. (2) And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband. (3) And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. (4) And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there will be no more death, nor mourning, nor crying out, nor will there be any more pain; for the first things passed away. (5) And He sitting on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

Matthew 26:29 MKJV But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.

- Psalms 130:4-8 KJV But **there is forgiveness with You,** That You may be feared. 5 I **wait** for the LORD, my soul **waits**, and in His word I do hope. 6 My soul **waits** for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning — yes, more than those who watch for the morning. 7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. 8 And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

- Psalms 25:2-10 NKJV O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. 3 Indeed, let no one who **waits** on You be ashamed; ... 8 Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore **He teaches sinners in the way.** 9 **The humble He guides in justice,** And the humble He teaches His way. 10 **All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,** To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. ... 21 **Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You.**

- Psalms 27:12-14 KJV Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. (13) I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. (14) **Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.**

- When at last Christ has received His kingdom and all those who have been redeemed by His love are safe in the city of God, He will be the one who serves them at the great marriage supper of the Lamb. God Himself wants to thank those who have endured such hardship while God delayed justice to save a few more. And we who were hopelessly entangled in our own web of self-concern want to thank Him for revealing to us His Love that leads to life. Again is found the ebb and flow of giving and receiving, loving and being loved that filled all Heaven before sin began.

Luke 13:28-30 NKJV There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. 29 They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. 30 And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part VII

The End of Sin – The Beginning of Paradise

The Millennium:

John 5:28-30 MKJV ... the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, (29) and shall come forth, **those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil to the resurrection of condemnation.** (a)

Revelation 20:1-15 NKJV Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. (b) 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 **(But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.)** This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (c) 7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 **The devil, who deceived them,** was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever ... 14 **Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Matthew 25:41-46 MKJV) Then He also shall say to those on the left hand, **Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.** (42) For I was hungry, and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; (43) I was a stranger and you did not take Me in; I was naked, and you did not clothe Me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me. (44) Then they will also answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You? (45) Then He shall answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. (46) **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.** (d)

Philippians 2:5-11 KJV Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;** (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- In the end it will be seen that Love has triumphed over sin. God has exceeded our cry for justice in bringing a complete and everlasting end to sin and transgressors without having destroyed their freedom. "The smoke of her torment," which is the memory of what sin has cost, will rise up forever throughout eternity, preventing the worm of stubborn pride from ever taking root again. "What do ye imagine against the LORD? He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." *Nahum 1:9*

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their un-shadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that **God is love.**

(a) At the end there will be two groups of people: those who have accepted God's forgiveness and been healed by His Love; and those who have rejected His forgiveness and find themselves in hopeless despair, wishing for death. There will be two resurrections each preceded by two judgments.

(b) Remember what was said of the guest who tried to get into the wedding without a wedding garment?

- Matthew 22:13 MKJV Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and **cast him into outer darkness.** There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Remember the goat of **departure** that was led into the desert to die in the wilderness? Here we have the Devil left on earth for a thousand years with the unrepentant in the graves and the righteous all in Heaven. There is no one here for Him to reign over—only time to reflect upon how foolish his course had been.

(c) The scene changes, and we have judgment committed to the righteous who reign with Christ in Heaven for the thousand years. After the thousand years, God has determined that He will no longer hide his glory from the Earth. Upon their resurrection, they will see and bear their shame in light of the full truth of God's Love. The scene will cause their destruction. But before God does so, He wants all of the redeemed to understand why they could not be saved, and during the thousand years in Heaven the books are open that we may see that God had done all that He could do to persuade them while leaving their freedoms intact.

- 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 MKJV Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? ... Do you not know that we shall judge angels?

(d) **The destruction of the wicked will be complete. They would rather die than to live in the presence of God. Their own choices had brought them to where they are and God gives them what they desire.**

- Revelation 6:15-17 KJV And the kings of the earth, and the great men ... hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; (16) And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (17) For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

- 2 Peter 3:10 KJV But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

- **The Devil's lie which he said in the garden "Surely you will not die"; will be unmasked as the second death passes upon them.**

- Luke 13:3 MKJV I tell you, No. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

- 2 Peter 2:12 KJV But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

- Malachi 4:1-3 MKJV For behold, the day is coming, burning like a fire pot; and all the proud, and every doer of wickedness, **shall be chaff.** And the coming day will set them ablaze, says the LORD of Hosts, which **will not leave root or branches to them.** (2) But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, and healing will be on His wings. And you shall go out and frisk like calves of the stall. (3) And you shall trample the wicked, for **they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet** in the day which I am preparing, says the LORD of Hosts.