
Subject: For Whom the Bell Tolls

Posted by [william](#) on Thu, 14 Apr 2022 15:24:22 GMT

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I've been posting stuff on Facebook and in the process have neglected the forum so I'm going to re-post here. As I read the bible certain things pop out and while it may be old-hat to some there's a chance that some of it might generate new sparks of interest in your own studies! (I hope you too will be inspired to post your thoughts!)

For whom the bell tolls

What's on my mind? Facebook asks?

Well, I'll tell you... like most of you, in my spare time, which is just time when I'm not focused on something else more specific, I muse about where I might fit into this great plan called God's creation.

The specifics (i.e. not spare-time-musings) include all of the mechanical things we do during the course of the day--making coffee, job tasks required for work, eating, showering, etc.. Of course these are the things often referred to as the necessities of life. Life is a mixture of these mechanical ingredients and those things that occupy our attention outside of the pure necessities. I'm only trying to make a loose separation here because in reality our lives consists of all that we do--specifics and everything else.

At a base level we could say that breathing is necessary and what we think about while breathing is spare-time.

At this level one of our first thoughts would be, "Why are we breathing"? "What is the purpose of my life"?

Fortunately, God had the forethought and wisdom to anticipate our question and plotted out a way to communicate His answer to us in a clear and unmistakable format--the Bible.

I know what some of you are thinking, "What about those before that great King James Bible was printed? What about those people?"... as if merely asking the question is going to destroy all of my careful analysis, cultivated by my spare-time musing! Well! I'll answer these critics with my own question--"Are those folks still breathing?" "Do they now need answers from my Waterproof Bible?"

That should be enough to send those critics back to the ooze they slithered out from! Well, of course, I'm jesting. God's Word has been ringing in man's ears from the beginning in various forms, it's just that presently, for the whole English speaking world, the KJV happens to be the bell

that is chiming for us!

Okay, back to the subject at hand:

The message that you'd expect is the one that God endeavors to give us concerning the question of our purpose in being here but He starts with a revelation of Himself. Before we get to the multitude of benefits that go along with this knowledge we first must grasp the fact that our knowledge of Him is crucial. Without this understanding our own purpose is meaningless.

The creation account gives us some understanding of His great power and knowledge (He's Omnipotent--all powerful, He's Omniscient--all knowing).

Then, in His instructions to mankind (Adam & Eve) He establishes His Holiness.

I don't think it is possible to get, or to have any kind of understanding, about God or about His revelation to us, the Bible, unless our conception of this point is spot-on. Nothing will make sense--the reason for sacrifices, the idea of clean and unclean, the presentation of heaven and hell, good and evil, nothing will make sense unless we start here.

Looking for purpose in life? This passage puts the purpose of mankind front and center:

: And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:15-17

There's a lot expressed in these first words recorded from God to Adam (and by extension--all of mankind!).

I'm running out of "spare-time" today but I'd encourage those interested in these first instructions by God to us, to spend some of your spare-time thinking about these words. I've mentioned the concept of holiness, and while the actual word "holy" isn't used, it is expressed in this passage along with some other important truths.

Hey, since I believe that God's revelation concerning Himself and our purpose as it relates to Him is absolutely foundational to our existence it seems appropriate that His first words to us would address this most important concept.

Feel free to comment!

For Whom the Bell tolls - II

If you all will indulge me for a bit I'm going to continue where I left off in the last post.

I'm not a big fan of creeds, for one reason, they focus your eyes off of the Bible and, if you let them, they begin to slip into that place that should be only reserved for God. If you can avoid that danger though, creeds can be a source for a lot of thought-provoking fodder. I've found one statement in one of the Creeds of Christianity that absolutely attempts to sum up the whole plan for man. Now that's a large task but if somehow someone could do it with a sentence or two, we ought to at least take a look!

Alright, if you're interested, this is the claim (and what a claim it is!):

MAN'S CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD, AND TO ENJOY HIM FOR EVER.

Now keep in mind that this language is deeper than we're used to getting in our everyday lives especially since it deals with the whole purpose of man (every human being!) and attempts to boil that purpose down into a nifty little bumper-sticker-like placard that represents our whole reason for existence!

I'd say that it does a pretty good job of summarizing why we're here!

Last time I left off with the claim that the Bible is God's self-revelation to us in order that we might understand why, and for what purpose, we are here. You'd expect that God wouldn't leave His creation in the dark about His plan which is why we can be assured that we've been given a perfectly preserved owner's manual that, rightly understood, reveals His own excellent qualities and then shows His plan for us.

There are a number of "things" about God (theologians call them "attributes of God") set forth in the Bible's pages--remember, it's called God's Revelation to us!--and as you would expect, some of the revelation concerns Himself and some of it concerns us.

A few things about God can be seen from the creation account in Genesis 1:

- 1) He is ALL-POWERFUL
- 2) He is ALL-KNOWING
- 3) His Eternalness
- 4) His Self-Existence
- 5) His Transcendence (existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe.--Oxford Dictionary)
- 6) His Sovereignty (Obviously the Creator is the King of His Creation!)

Genesis 1--the creation account--clearly shows that He's all-powerful and all-knowing, two concepts that we're able to grasp and at least partially understand. His Eternalness, Self-Existence, Transcendence, Sovereignty also fall into this category, but some of the other attributes (qualities of God) would escape our knowledge were it not for what happened next, after creation. For instance, how would you, if you were God (HA!), explain to your perfectly created human beings--Your Justness? Your Mercy? Your Righteousness? How would you even begin to reveal to them the concept of your Love? Your Grace? What about Faithfulness?

So, to begin to tie some of these ramblings together, i.e. God's Self-Revelation and His Plan for us, I quoted in the last note Genesis 2:15-17, which happens to be the first recorded instructions that God gave to mankind:

: And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:15-17

Have you ever wondered why THAT tree is called: The knowledge of good and evil? Well, I'm not saying that I have all of the answers but if you've been following along you've no-doubt leaped to the conclusion that without this "knowledge" one could never conceive some of those Attributes of God mentioned above: Justice, Mercy, Righteousness, Love, Grace, Faithfulness.

Now before anyone charges God with creating evil in order to reveal Himself to His creation you might want to wait a bit and consider some of the rest of His revelation before jumping to such conclusions. Let me just say, that in His instructions to mankind, He commanded them sternly--NOT to eat of that tree.

I can see that this is taking a lot longer than anticipated so a third part is going to be necessary--my apologies!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itUNSwS4q9E>

For Whom the Bell Tolls - III

So far, it seems, I've managed to chase about six or seven rabbits. If you've been reading the last two posts one thing is obvious--I'm torn between going in one direction and then, about the time I get started, wham! there's Mr. Br'er Rabbit over yonder in the briar patch shifting my attention to his location. What's a person to do? I can't just "cut to the chase" cause there's too many to follow!

I think I'm going to leave those other fruitful areas of study to someone else and get back to my original point which is--Why am I breathing? What's my purpose in God's plan? Others have attempted to answer this question and I think that the best summation was found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism which stated:

MAN'S CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD, AND TO ENJOY HIM FOR EVER.

To glorify Him and enjoy Him we first must know Him. This knowledge is impossible without an introduction. His Word, recorded for us in the Bible, is His introduction. (This was where the rabbit chasing started because God begin to reveal a bunch of things about Himself in the first verse!)

Adam, (mankind's first representative) didn't have a good English KJV to peruse so he got his first introduction from God Himself. We don't know exactly how much was said to Adam concerning the creation of the world (Genesis 1) but if we can assume that God was as generous to Adam as He has been to us, his knowledge surely mirrors what we know from the Genesis account.

Then we're told:

: And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:15-17

Throughout the Bible there is one thing that stands supreme--God's Holiness. Over and over we are reminded that God is Holy. Not only that, we will never see the Lord unless we are holy!

: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Hebrews 12:14

: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; I Peter 1:15

It's no surprise then that Genesis 2:15-17 would reveal the concept of Holiness since this is the first recorded instructions to the first man, Adam.

The word holy at its base level simply means apartness, or separateness. So for something to be holy it has to have a contrast, or something that is by definition--not holy. That contrast is seen in the words good (holy) and evil (not holy).

For there to be a contrast there first must be some sort of division. Kinda like the division that we see in Genesis 1 where God divided the light from the darkness (1:4), the firmament being the dividing line between the waters (1:6), then the lights in the firmament dividing night from day

(1:14).

Not surprisingly, in our passage (2:17) there is an implied distinction between good and evil. This division can only be made by one thing--God's command. Every division that occurred with the waters, the lights, the firmament, were pronounced to be good so the only thing that would be considered "not good" was to disobey His command.

Right here a sidebar about the "free will" of man is a rabbit trail we'll avoid but let's just say that free-will seems to fall into the "good" category even if it did become the vehicle that brought about the fall of mankind! Anyway, what fun would there be in a bunch of robots programmed to glorify (remember the chief end of man--to Glorify God...) their creator?

So, now that we have a contrast (God's command not to eat of this one tree) the revelation of God's Holiness can be established.

The holiness of mankind depended on Adam's obedience to God's command to not eat of that tree! Adam would have remained holy if the command had been obeyed but his knowledge about holiness (both his and God's) might have been a bit more on the academic side!

We know how it turned out for Adam, and by extension all of us, but consider this: the rest of the Bible seems devoted to establishing the knowledge we need to understand this distinction between the holy and profane; the clean and unclean; good and evil. The Mosaic Law seems almost obsessive in its attempts to physically represent the concept of holiness even down to designating distinctions between one vessel as being clean and the other unclean. Some animals were declared clean and others unclean.

The purpose, I believe, was to establish in the minds of His people this idea of holiness. The particulars (meats, holy days, washings, etc.) became the main message in the minds of those inclined to outward religious observations but Jesus gets the message back on track by showing them that they were missing the very foundation of the OT revelation and upbraided them for their lack of understanding!

I've only mentioned "sin" in its original context--disobeying God's command to Adam--but when he did disobey that one commandment we're told that "sin entered the world"

: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Romans 5:12

The Genesis 2:17 passage states clearly the consequence of man's disobedience: ...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:17

This highlights the necessary contrast to holiness which is, of course, the unholy, the evil--death

being its result.

If the Bible spends so much of its time revealing this idea of the Holiness of God you'd expect the counterpoint of evil/sin/death to be prominent too. Well, we're not to be disappointed! It's all there--in all its fragrance! But if our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, the way forward is as clearly revealed as God Himself is revealed in its pages!

But don't despair, death has entered the world but God has other things to reveal about Himself. There's mercy, there's grace, there's love, to go along with His justice. If our chief end is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever then there's more to be told!

: For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Leviticus 17:11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhU-Omwig2rU>

Blessings,
William