

After our diversion into the subject of evil we now pick up the story again.

- ◆ Adam and Eve have been driven out of the Garden and have embarked on a journey through life without God's direction.
- ◆ By choosing to be their own gods, mankind has been left to learn for himself what was depicted by the tree from which they had eaten, what was "good" and what was "evil" through hard experience.
- ◆ God, because of His decision to grant humanity freewill, honoured their choice and basically said, "Okay, if you want to live your life without the involvement of your Creator and Father then I will reluctantly remove myself from your lives and allow you to discover for yourselves through experimentation what is good and what is evil. But I warn you, you won't like the consequences."
- ◆ This did not mean however that God was not involved behind the scenes.
- ◆ They might have been wayward children, but they were still His children and although they had rejected Him, not once in all that was about to unfold did God stop loving his children.
- ◆ And as God's actions demonstrated in "clothing" Adam and Eve after their sin, He had already planned the redemption of mankind through the shedding of blood.

This might seem an unusual place to talk about this subject as it is usually associated with "The Judgment," but we now return to the subject of "hell."

- ◆ Scripture identifies four types of hell, but at this stage we are only going to talk about two of them
- ◆ Most are familiar with the term "hell" used to identify the grave or the place of the dead - "Sheol"(Hebrew) or "Hades"(Greek).
- ◆ It's the hole in the ground into which dead bodies are placed.
- ◆ The second hell is the one we alluded to earlier.
- ◆ This is the forbidding place mankind found himself when he was ejected from the garden after rejecting God's offer of living in a faithful relationship with Him.
- ◆ Remember we talked about the parable of the prodigal son, how the difficulties and trials of the lifestyle he chose were used to reconcile him with his father.
- ◆ The story of the prodigal is really the story of mankind.
- ◆ All of us have rejected and turned away from our heavenly Father in the same way as the prodigal did with his father.
- ◆ But as discussed earlier, our heavenly Father has engineered an environment whereby there are consequences to the choices we make.
- ◆ God then uses negative consequences to bring his wayward children back to their senses with the goal of reconciling the two parties.
- ◆ It is through this prism that we should now view the human experience.
- ◆ When we sit back and contemplate the normal course of human existence one has to conclude this life is a type of "hell."
- ◆ We have to contend with moral evil, the evil we bring on ourselves through our own flawed choices.
- ◆ Then there is natural evil, events like the aging process, sickness, disease, famines, disasters such as earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, mudslides etc.
- ◆ When news crews ask victims what it was like after the latest natural disaster, they use phrases like, "It was like a war zone!" or "It was a living hell!"
- ◆ It would be foolhardy to think the majority of mankind who has ever lived enjoyed the quality of life we take for granted in our modern western societies.
- ◆ The reality of daily life for the vast majority of mankind has been one of "quiet desperation" – "Where does my next meal come from? How do I provide for my family?"
- ◆ It was only two centuries ago that 90 per cent of the global population lived in extreme poverty. Fortunately that statistic has dropped to less than ten per cent today even though the world population has increased from less than one billion to about 7.5 billion.
- ◆ In addition to poverty, history is littered with mind numbing statistics of man's inhumanity to his fellow man.
- ◆ 620,000 Americans died in the four-year American Civil War.
- ◆ Six million Jews died in WW2 along with the other 60 million who perished.
- ◆ 700,000 Tutsi's died in 100 days mostly at the hands of machete wielding Hutu's in the Rwandan Civil War.

- ◆ Then there are the millions who have died as a result of natural disasters.
- ◆ In the middle Ages, the Black Death killed an estimated 40-50 million people in Europe and the population of Western Europe did not again reach its pre-1348 level until the beginning of the 16th century, 150 years later.
- ◆ Suffering was inescapable as up until just over a 150 years ago pain was endured without aspirin, novocaine or anaesthetic.
- ◆ This is what human existence descends to when God is left out of the picture.
- ◆ While there are many positive and good aspects to enjoy about life, after all, it was the tree of the knowledge of both good and evil, the overall conclusion even for those not directly affected by the wretched events mentioned above, has to be one of revulsion and dismay.
- ◆ And it was designed this way to demonstrate to mankind what life is like when God is pushed out of our lives.
- ◆ In a sense, life without God could be described as a “living hell.”
- ◆ No one is excluded from this experience. Everyone, including Christians, goes through this experience because we all need to get a taste of what life is like without God.
- ◆ And the question has to be asked, “Why would God allow us to go through this process unless he had a very good why for allowing it?”
- ◆ We will see how all this ties together when we deal with the subject of the judgment at the end time.
- ◆ But for now all we will say is, there is a reason why humanity is being given a taste of “hell,” that is, what life is like without the involvement of our God.
- ◆ However, this is not how the story ends.
- ◆ We talked earlier about the prodigal son.
- ◆ In much the same way as the prodigal, to his chagrin, learned what it was like to live life without the assurance of having his loving father around, he did return home and experienced the love and concern of his father.
- ◆ The story ends with him getting a taste of heaven – life with his father.

With that background, we now return to the story of mankind living without God.

- ◆ Adam and Eve were driven from the garden and left to their own devices.
- ◆ It wasn't very long before man's now fallen nature began to manifest itself in its most violent form.
- ◆ Cain was jealous of his brother Abel's sacrifice and Cain took Abel's life (Genesis 4:1-8).
- ◆ And the sorry tale of man's inhumanity to his fellowman begins.
- ◆ History shows that civilizations go through stages of development.
- ◆ It begins with families, families grow into tribes and tribes eventually grow into nations.
- ◆ We can witness this progression even in today's world.
- ◆ Afghanistan is a present-day example of a nation grappling to move from a tribal stage to a nation stage.
- ◆ But this progression is usually associated with extreme violence as one tribe tries to dominate the others.
- ◆ Without the institutions of the state to maintain law and order, man reverts to the law of the jungle. It becomes the Wild West as individuals, families and tribes take matters into their own hands.
- ◆ That's why our western governments have devoted so much time and resources into building a functioning police force and army in Afghanistan, not only to protect from outside threats, but also to control tribal infighting.
- ◆ But they're finding it is very difficult to overcome tribal loyalties.
- ◆ Despite their good intentions, it was quite naïve for our western leaders to think they can breeze into a tribal situation and in a few short years institute democratic reforms and unite a nation.
- ◆ Even our own Westminster experience shows this process can take hundreds of years to develop.
- ◆ In much of today's world we still live with the violent leftovers of European Colonial powers drawing political boundaries on maps without taking into consideration tribal matters on the ground.

Now the reason we mention all this is to give you some idea of the chaos the world had descended into prior to Noah's Flood.

- ◆ Usually when discussing the Flood, the question usually focuses on God's actions rather than man's.
- ◆ The question is asked, “Why would God do such a thing?”

- ◆ Rarely however is the question asked, to what level of depravity had man descended in order for God to take such drastic action?
- ◆ Well let's read how things had deteriorated without any type of restraint on humanity's actions
- ◆ **Genesis 6:5-8** *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.⁶ The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*
- ◆ Notice this was not an easy decision for God to make.
- ◆ **V.7** *So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them."⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*
- ◆ Remember, his was an age of anarchy, with no recognised government, laws, army or police force to regulate human behaviour.
- ◆ We are in the early stages of society's development where families and tribes vied for control.
- ◆ It was the Wild West, Hatfields vs. McCoys, only everyone is doing it.
- ◆ For emphasis, the same sad conclusion is repeated in verses 11-13.
- ◆ **Genesis 6:11-13** *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.¹³ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.*
- ◆ Before we judge God too harshly, we need to remember how we as civilised people have reacted to terrorist groups in our own time.
- ◆ There wouldn't be too many people who would say the world isn't better off without the likes of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaida, the Taliban or ISIS.
- ◆ We expect our governments to take action against these crazies who go around chopping off their victim's heads, blowing up innocent people or flying planes into high-rise buildings.
- ◆ It was only a few short decades ago we saw one of our most civilised societies massacre six million Jews along with the other 60 million who died in the conflict.
- ◆ No one in their right minds reacted in moral outrage as the Allies fought to destroy this source of wickedness.
- ◆ And one could make a good argument about getting rid of the Nazi hierarchy rather than letting 60 million people perish.
- ◆ Yet when it comes to God taking the appropriate action to prevent similar evils, we, sitting in our safe and secure leafy suburbs question His judgment.
- ◆ But imagine for a moment if the atrocities we recently observed with ISIS was the norm in pre-flood society.
- ◆ Mankind had become so wicked and depraved they were acting like wild beasts. It would have been a living hell especially for the weak and vulnerable.
- ◆ God just cannot stand by and let wickedness continue until it reaches its ultimate conclusion, destruction!
- ◆ Destruction is the devil's goal (Revelation 9:11).
- ◆ We have Jesus' statement from the New Testament that confirms He will intervene to stop humanity from destroying itself at the end time.
- ◆ **Mark 13:20** *"If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.*
- ◆ God's purpose will stand, even if it means taking drastic action such as the flood and starting over with Noah's family.
- ◆ In the biblical record we have other examples when cities or nations became so depraved that God had to take drastic action to bring the wickedness to an end.
- ◆ This was the case of the inhabitants who lived in the Land of Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham's descendants.
- ◆ It is another instance where God is criticised for aiding the Israelites in wiping out these inhabitants.
- ◆ But we get an insight into why this occurred in God's promise to Abraham.
- ◆ **Genesis 15:16** *In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*

- ◆ God could see where the depravity and wickedness of the Amorites was heading and He would have to take drastic action to rid the land of this evil, which included sacrificing their children to idols (Leviticus 20:1-3; Deuteronomy 9:5-6).
- ◆ It's a similar situation with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- ◆ The male inhabitants of these two cities had become so sexually depraved that heterosexuals were no longer safe and were targets of violent gang rape (Genesis 19:1-10; Jude 1:7).
- ◆ Only three were considered righteous enough in this whole region to escape the destruction, Lot and his two daughters (Genesis 18:20-33).
- ◆ Paul uses similar language to describe the resistance of the Jews to the acceptance of Jesus Christ and the Gospel message.
- ◆ ***1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, ¹⁶forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.***
- ◆ God will only tolerate wickedness to a certain extent, before stepping in to prevent it from going any further or when it is contrary to His divine purposes.
- ◆ But those who perished in Noah's flood, the Amorites, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even the Jews who rejected Jesus will take with them the evil record of their time on earth and as we will see when we come to the subject of the Judgment this experience will not be wasted (Matthew 11:23-24).
- ◆ So it is with great reluctance and regret, that God initiates the destruction of the wicked, but He only does so after giving the evil inhabitants a significant period of time to change their ways (Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5).
- ◆ This is a pattern that will repeat itself before God launches subsequent attacks on wickedness in the future.
- ◆ He sends Moses and Aaron to warn Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21-23); prophets to both Israel and Judah (2 Kings 17:13); Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1); John the Baptist to the Jews (Matthew 3:6-8); and the two witnesses before the destruction of Babylon prior to Christ's return (Revelation 11:1-6).

But this episode was just the first of a long series of man's futile attempt to rule himself.

- ◆ Depravity was the result when anarchy ruled prior to the flood.
- ◆ Down through the millennia, humanity has experimented with many different forms of government only to see each one of them end up in the same place – in "Babel" or confusion (Genesis 11:9).
- ◆ Hence the biblical term "Babylon."
- ◆ Babylon is the biblical term used to describe any form of authority that opposes God (Revelation 18:1-3).
- ◆ The first mention of organised government in opposition to God was formed by Nimrod who built the Tower of Babel on the Plains of Shinar (Genesis 11).
- ◆ God confused their language to prevent another descent into wickedness.
- ◆ ***Genesis 11:5-7 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.⁶ The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.***
- ◆ Since then humanity has developed a whole series of "isms" to describe these different forms of human inspired governments – Despotism, Fascism, Imperialism, Socialism, Communism, Capitalism.
- ◆ To the "isms" we can add, Dictatorship, Democracy, Monarchy, and Theocracy.
- ◆ Even democracy, which Winston Churchill famously described as the worst form of government, except for all the others, will also end in chaos.
- ◆ We are presently witnessing the unravelling of our democratic institutions as corruption, nepotism, and greed reign in the corridors of power.
- ◆ History unfortunately is not a story of gradual human improvement; rather it is the story of the past, present and future power of evil that manifests itself in opposition to God's good purpose for humanity.

But again, this process has to be viewed from the perspective of what life is like without God.

- ◆ When it is all said and done, no one will ever be able to stand up and contend with God and say, "Well if only you had allowed us a little more time we could have come up with a better system of government and managed to rule ourselves."

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 14 – A LIVING HELL]

- ◆ No, the record is very clear. Mankind is incapable of ruling himself, of being his own god, and we have a host of witnesses down through the ages that can testify to that fact.
- ◆ Life without God is a “living Hell.”