

# IN THE BEGINNING

## GENESIS 1:1-3

- 1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים  
אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:
- 2 וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוֹ  
וַחֲשֹךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם  
וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת  
עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:
- 3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר  
וַיְהִי־אוֹר:
- JEREMIAH 28:1b, בְּרֵאשִׁית מְמַלְכֶת צְדָקָה,  
JEREMIAH 49:34d, בְּרֵאשִׁית מְלָכוֹת צְדָקָה,

## IN THE IN-BETWEEN TIMES

**Remember Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus**

**PSALM 145**, listen to this Psalmist sing about YHWH's Eternal Kingdom:

- 1 I will extol You, my God and King,  
and bless Your Name forever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will bless You  
and praise Your Name forever and ever.
- 3 Great is YHWH,  
and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.  
(Hubble and James Webb Telescopes are telling us more)
- 4 One generation shall commend Your works to another,  
and shall declare Your mighty acts.
- 5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- 6 They shall speak of the might of Your awesome deeds,  
and I will declare your greatness.

7 They shall pour forth the fame of Your abundant goodness  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.  
8 YHWH is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
9 The LORD is good to all,  
and His mercy is over all that He has made.  
10 All Your works shall give thanks to You, O YHWH,  
and all Your saints shall bless You!  
11 They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom  
and tell of Your power,  
12 to make known to the children of man  
Your mighty deeds,  
and the Glorious Splendor of Your Kingdom.  
13 Your Kingdom is an Everlasting Kingdom,  
and Your Dominion endures throughout all generations.  
*YHWH is faithful in all His Words  
and kind in all His works.*  
14 YHWH Upholds all who are falling  
and Raises Up all who are bowed down.  
15 The eyes of all look to You,  
and You give them their food in due season.  
16 You Open Your hand;  
You satisfy the desire of every living thing.  
17 YHWH is righteous in all His ways  
and kind in all His works.  
18 YHWH is near to all who call on Him,  
to all who call on Him in truth.  
19 He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him;  
He also hears their cry and saves them.  
20 YHWH preserves all who love Him,  
but all the wicked He will destroy.  
21 My mouth will speak the praise of YHWH,  
and let all flesh bless His holy Name forever and ever.

Yes, this loving God the Father, demands righteousness from all his People, His Children—and if they become wicked, and insist on continuing in their wicked ways, He Will Visit them with Punishment, even to the extent of Capital Punishment, putting them to death. But I believe that when we human beings die, that is not the end. No, our **Bible** teaches that the dead go to Sheol / Hades, where the wicked continue to be punished for their wickedness. Oftentimes that punishment is depicted as YHWH's Fire. But I tell you that YHWH's Fire is the Fire of His love, a Fire that He makes and controls. And I believe that what YHWH's Fire does is it burns up all the chaff, the evil, and brings out from that Fire pure silver and gold. It is a Purifying Fire, designed to get rid of all the evil and wickedness that exists in the human soul.

Look at **EZEKIEL 16**. Ezekiel, the notorious “Prophet of Doom,” tells of how YHWH was so disappointed in His three daughter cities—Sodom (whose very name speaks of sinfulness, and destruction through fire and brimstone), and Samaria (the capital City of Northern Israel, which constantly rejected YHWH’s Word through His Prophets—Amos and Hosea—and which was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E.), and then Jerusalem, the City YHWH loved, and took as His Wife; but who chose to become a Prostitute City, known throughout the world as the Whore Who paid lovers to come to get in bed with her, instead being paid like normal Whores, resulting in the fiery destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.). And now, according to Ezekiel, YHWH is asking Himself what He can do. He has a Reputation for Returning Slaves from Captivity, and Restoring Fortunes to those who have lost them. Dare He do such for these three wicked Daughter-cities that He has destroyed by His Fire and Brimstone? He decides what He Will Do. He Will Remarry His Whore Wife (and do the same for Sodom and Samaria!), and throughout Eternity She will always know that it is only by His matchless Grace and Forgiveness that She even exists! See the last paragraph of **Ezekiel 16** in your **Bible**. Do you believe in a God of Grace like that?

That Whore City of Jerusalem looks very much like the Samaritan Woman that Jesus met at Jacob’s well, just outside the City of Samaria. She has had five husbands, and is now living with a man who is not her husband—and Jesus offers her the Water of Life, and tells her how she can share in worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth, apart from the Mountain of Jerusalem and the Mountain of Samaria, the two places of holy temples where it was assumed the only place to worship YHWH was located. Jesus turned that woman into a preacher of the Gospel—who went to and converted her city of Sychar to Jesus Christ! What do you think? I’m telling you folks, That’s Pure Grace! Do our churches, does your church preach and practice Pure Grace like that?

## IN THE END

I’ve been working night and day on a commentary on the entire **Book of Revelation**. It isn’t like I am just starting to work on **Revelation**—I wrote a full commentary on the Book some 30 years ago. But what a blessing it has been for me to renew my study of **Revelation**, especially after having spent the intervening years working on **Amos**, and **Hosea**, and **Isaiah** (some ten years of constant work on **Isaiah** alone!) and **Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel**. So I come to **Revelation** with these Israeli Prophets of Doom and Hope ringing in my ears—and what I am finding is that **Revelation** is literally packed with absolutely valid references to those Prophets! It is like I am coming home as I read **Revelation**. I think I have found over 150 references to the **Book of Isaiah** in **Revelation**, and some 80 references to the **Book of Ezekiel**.

I will begin by telling you of my first experience in **Revelation 1:7**: The verse says, “Behold, He Is Coming With The Clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him...”

Now I have a long-time friend by the name of M. Eugene Boring, Professor Em-

eritus of New Testament at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, in Fort Worth, Texas. He has written a **Commentary on the Book of Revelation** in "The New Interpreter's Study Bible," 2003, Abingdon Press, in which he states that "John sees the events of his own time as the occasion to reassert the earliest Christian expectation that the end was, indeed, near...History has shown that this form of the Christian hope was mistaken, and should not continue to be repeated." (P. 2215)

And Oh!, I thought as I read those words, has my friend, Eugene Boring, never read the **Hebrew Bible**, especially the **Book of Exodus**? There is it said over and over again that YHWH "is coming with the clouds"--and that had nothing to do with "the end of the world," or the "Second Coming of Jesus Christ," but meant that YHWH was Coming to Israel, to Guide Her Through the Wilderness, in the cloud by day, and in a pillar of Fire by night. It meant that YHWH Would Always Be With His People, seeing their needs (and their failures), protecting them, delivering them, again and again, leading them into the Promised Land, and then expelling them from it because of their lack of faith--always with them, still with them even when He expelled them, then brought them back, filling them with hope.

And so it is with the **Book of Revelation**, Jesus Comes with the Clouds to be near and with His believers, even with those who are in danger of losing their faith in Him. He is outside their door, knocking at the door, seeking for them to let Him in! **Revelation** depicts the Risen Lord Jesus as Present with the Seven Churches of Asia, and then depicts Him as "The Lord of History," just as the **Hebrew Bible** has depicted YHWH as "The Lord of History." Jesus is pictured as seated on the Divine Throne of the Universe at the Right Hand of YHWH God, Exercising Total Control Over History, Blessing those who have genuine faith in Him, punishing those who reject Him--just as YHWH is depicted as doing in the Prophets of Israel.

But now let me just read some of the statements made in the last chapter of **Revelation, chapter 22**, statements so beautiful and filled with hope that they blow our minds:

Then the angel showed me the River of the Water of Life,  
bright as crystal,  
flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb  
    <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the City;  
also, on either side of the river,  
    the Tree of Life with its Twelve Kinds of Fruit,  
yielding its fruit each month.  
    The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(No lover of the **Hebrew Bible** can read those words without thinking of **Ezekiel 47**, with its picture of the River of Life that flows from the New Temple of Israel, getting deeper and wider, deeper and wider as it goes, until it become a Great River that no one can cross. It is flowing downhill, into the Dead Sea, the "Deadest Place on Earth." No fish, or any other living creature has been able to live in

that salty water—but now, every kind of fish found in the Mediterranean Ocean is there—and people are gathered on the banks of the Dead Sea—banks on which the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located—with their fishing rods, hauling in fish so filled with protein and good for human consumption. And all along the banks of the former Dead Sea are growing the “Trees of Life,” producing their fruits every month! Can you imagine that? That’s the picture Ezekiel has drawn, and probably acted out, as his Message changed from Doom, to Hope!

That River of the Water of Life will be there, in the New Jerusalem, with the Trees of Life growing on its banks. And where Ezekiel said the leaves of the Tree would be “for healing,” John adds that they will be “for healing of the nations.” Yes, indeed! “Healing of the nations”—that means, universally! The leaves of the Trees of Life will enable the nations to become what YHWH wants them to become—those who hear Him and obey His Word!)

<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed,  
but the Throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it,  
and His servants will worship Him.

<sup>4</sup> They will see His Face,  
and His Name will be on their foreheads.

<sup>5</sup> And night will be no more.  
They will need no light of lamp or sun,  
for the Lord God will be their light,  
and they will Reign forever and ever.

(Do you dare to believe that? We who believe, who have been saved by Pure Grace, will “see His Face.” Yes, we will see the Invisible God, and He Will Write His Name on our foreheads, and we will live and walk in His Light! What a Promise! But it goes on—we who have no merit of our own, who claim no “right to Heaven,” will be used by YHWH and Jesus Messiah to “Reign.” Some say that there be nothing to do but sit around on clouds, playing harps, or drinking coffee with our long-time friends on earth whom we have met again. But No—the Triune God has a definite job for us to do—we will share in His Reign, His Rule, His Kingdom, that reaches out to the farthest galaxy, forever and ever! Think about that! There’s plenty of room for each of us; there’s more than enough challenging work for us to do!)

Hear the Divine Invitation that follows:

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."  
And let the one who hears say, "Come."  
And let the one who is thirsty come;  
let the one who desires take the Water of Life without price.

That’s the Divine Invitation to Life, which we must offer to all others!

Now, you will say to me, But Isn't there also a "Lake of Fire" there? Oh Yes, There is. A "Lake of Fire," which is described as being "The Second Death." Into that Fire and Sulfur the Devil and his angels, and the wicked people of the earth will be cast. **Chapter 21, verse 8**, says,:

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable,  
as for murderers, the sexually immoral,  
sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars,  
their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur,  
which is the second death.

Yes, there is punishment awaiting those who turn away from the Life, the Way, the Truth, as it is in Jesus. They think that if they follow Jesus, they will have to have honest faith in God, rather than walking the way they want to walk, by faith in money, or in power, or in unrestrained pleasure. They will have to live by love rather than hatred, they will have to control their sexuality, to be true to their covenants; they will have to worship only the Triune God—YHWH, Jesus Messiah, and the Holy Spirit. That's just too much for them, and so they go the other way. They will be thrown into that Lake of Fire which is the Second Death.

But I ask you, Whose Fire is that, Whose Sulfur is that? And you know the answer. It is God the Creator's Fire and Sulfur. He made the Fire and the Sulfur, and as **Genesis 1:31** tells us, everything that He had made was "very good," yes, "very good!" Yes, our God is humanity's Creator and Father, Who loves all His children, even His most rebellious children. His love is thousands of times greater than His punishment—the Old Covenant assured us of that—see **Exodus 20:5-6**, where God's steadfast-love is said to be at least 666 and 2/3 times greater than His punishment. That's good odds! And in that light, I believe that Sodom, and Samaria, and Whore City Jerusalem, having been sent into Sheol / Hades, and being punished there, will by then be purged by YHWH's / Jesus Messiah's Fire of Love, a Fire that burns out all of the bad, all of the evil, and Purifies, Purges folks like Hitler, and Stalin, and Saddam Hussein, and my beloved son David Dwight, who took his own life with acute alcoholism, and my daughter, Krista Elaine, who has disowned me for marrying Edith, accusing me of being a terrible father who never loved her, but put the damned church above her desires.

What do you think? Do you think God's Love and Grace end with the death of the sinner? Or can you imagine with me a Love and a Grace much deeper than that, a Love and Grace that enter into Sheol and Hades, into the very "Gates of Death," to Proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of Forgiveness to the worst of sinners, as Peter says in **1 Peter 3-4**? That's what I believe, and it thrills my heart to think of it. I remember the words of **Isaiah 25:6-9**, which my first wife, Sarah and I read together on the day of her death:

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain [that's Mount Zion, the City of the Living God, where we believers live]  
YHWH of Armies will make for all peoples,

a feast of rich food,  
a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow,  
of aged wine well refined.

<sup>7</sup> And He will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations. [That's the "death shroud"]

<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever [I believe that includes the Second Death];  
and YHWH GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,  
and the reproach of His people  
He will take away from all the earth,  
for YHWH has spoken!

<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day,  
"Behold, this is our God;  
we have waited for Him,  
that He might save us.  
This is YHWH;  
we have waited for Him;  
let us be glad and rejoice in His Salvation."