

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Redemption's Final Scene

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:24–28, KJV 1900)

Then cometh the end... When folks leave Scripture and attempt to describe the final chapter of God's work, volumes of muddled and confusing complexity result. Try making sense of a discussion between folks who hold to the various views of dispensationalism. Will the "Rapture" occur before, during, or after the "Great Tribulation"? You might as well try to make sense out of a discussion about how many angels can fit on the point of a needle. When God describes His final redemption chapter in Scripture, He simplifies the revelation. The most obvious difference between the complexity of human theories and God's revelation stands out in this passage. Human ideas focus on--humans. No surprise, God's revelation emphasizes God, just as it should.

Multiple passages reveal that the Father assigned the role of active dominion to Jesus. (Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35; as examples) This lesson tells us that Jesus returns to the Father what the Father assigned to Him, and He returns it with His seal of "Mission accomplished." Sometimes folks tend to mystify this passage, but it is no more mystical than those many passages that reveal the Father's commitment of present rule to His Son. The idea is one of function, not of any change in God's essence or being. God doesn't change. How many passages remind us? But the dynamic of the Son's present dominion over creation, including the Father's chosen spiritual "Creation," (2 Corinthians 5:17) is in fact "Dynamic" and active. In this present superintendence over His creation, both natural and spiritual, Jesus actively interacts with it, and especially with His chosen people and their needs, but in all of this interaction, He never alters His essential nature. He brings that nature to bear on His interaction, always to the benefit of His beloved people. God's essential unchangeableness always appears in Scripture as a supreme blessing to His people. (Malachi 3:6) Imagine a being all-powerful but void of a fixed moral character. All-powerful fickle gives no comfort! Occasionally folks who believe in an excessive, fatalistic view of God's sovereignty senselessly wrestle with the idea of answered prayer. If God is unchangeable, how can He

answer prayer, prayer that changes things in our lives, and remain unchangeable? The question is a classical example of logical fallacy thinking. It shifts the focus from God to God's creation and tries to impose change in God's creation back onto God. God remains the same while actively, graciously, and dynamically interacting with His people and His creation for the aid of His beloved children. Does God answering prayer according to His loving grace and mercy in any way alter His love and mercy? Not at all. In fact, answering prayer in this way is essential to the traits of His love and mercy. He would not fully manifest or employ those traits if He did not so use them. Too much fatalism needlessly complicates what Scripture simply declares for the comfort and peace of the Lord's beloved children. Fatalism is a trait that belongs to pagan false gods, not to the one true and living God whom we serve, the God whom Scripture reveals to us. Pagan gods are often carved of stone and are impersonal and not at all interactive in any way with their surroundings. Why degrade the God of the Bible into one more impersonal and non-interactive piece of stone? If Scripture categorically declares that God hears and answers the prayers of His people, what is the confusion or the debate? He does just what Scripture declares that He does, and His doing so in no way compromises Him or His attributes.

...he must reign till... Notice the obvious point in these words. Jesus reigns. He reigns right now. His reign is not presently suspended, awaiting Rapture or anything else. He reigns! And that present reign shall continue till every enemy, every being or thing in existence that opposes Him, has been defeated. That God reigns does not imply that God therefore actively causes and/or orchestrates every event that occurs. It means that there is none above Him, none to whom He must answer, and none who can supercede Him in what He does choose to do in His dominion. Consider a simple example. I grew up on a small farm where my family grew cows, pigs, and other farm animals. My father was the ruler over his farm. He chose which portions of the farm to fence off for the cows, which portion to fence off for the pigs, and the

chickens. Dad provided within these areas everything that the animals needed for their wellbeing. If one of his cows chose to eat green grass at 9:35 A. M. in the morning, Dad didn't step in and force the cow to do something else. And if another cow chose to go down to the brook and get a drink of water at exactly that same time, Dad didn't interfere. However, when one of our cows decided to break out of the fenced pasture and start eating the growing corn plants, Dad did interfere and put the cow back into her assigned place. Scripture teaches a similar role, though obviously far more complex, in God's governance of His universe. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further...." (Job 38:11) "...the **bounds** of their habitations." (Acts 17:26) When James reminds us to think of our plans for the future with "If the Lord will..." the point is the same. Typically, fatalists practice the logical fallacy of excluded middle or, in the older terminology, the horns of the dilemma. According to this flawed and illogical thinking, you must either believe that God actively causes everything that occurs, or you must believe that He causes nothing, making you "A virtual deist." Scripture refutes both errant ideas. God doesn't cause everything that occurs.

For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. (Job 23:14) In this one verse, God refutes the fatalist who claims that God causes everything that occurs, along with the fatalist's illogical fallacy that anyone who disagrees with him is a "Virtual deist." There are certain "things" that the Lord has graciously appointed for each of His beloved children. In those "things," the Lord faithfully performs what He has appointed. If God caused all things that occur, "many such things" would be insufficient to state the case; the language should have been "all things...." And the passage refutes the fatalist's false charge of "Virtual deist" against his detractors by "...many such things are with him." He did not write "...a few such things," but "many."

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:16) John categorically refutes that everything in the world, specifically sin and sinful things, originated with God.

Scripture ignores both the fatalist and his false charge, firmly occupying the ignored middle ground in the fatalist's logical fallacy. God is intimately involved in the lives of His children. When we face trials or needs beyond our ability, He is present to comfort, to guide, and to strengthen us in our weakness.

Based on Scripture's consistent teaching, God governs His universe as its Moral Governor, not as its cosmic puppeteer. When God created Adam,

He gave Adam a moral commandment, including a warning of consequences should Adam chose to ignore His moral commandment and eat the forbidden fruit. As He prepared His people for their life outside of Egypt, He gave Moses a code of Ten Commandments to govern and to enlighten their conduct. In Scripture, God gives His Law, His commandments, and He "Commands" His people to obey. He always informs us with knowledge of both blessings in obedience and judgments or consequences in disobedience. We choose the blessing or the judgment when we choose to either obey or disobey.

Fatalists have a problem with their idea that God causes all things, so they occasionally try to also claim they deny that He causes sin. Simply, He can't cause all things and not cause sin. When challenged to explain sin in the life of a child of God, they typically plead that "When left to ourselves, we can only sin..." claiming that God occasionally "Leaves us to ourselves" to teach us a greater lesson. In this claim, the fatalist violates multiple Biblical truths. First, Scripture repeatedly affirms that the Lord does not leave us to ourselves, but that He is always present, "...never leave thee...." Secondly, Scripture affirms that God in the new birth alters our being so that we now possess His Law in our hearts and minds, and that we now possess the ability to believe and to obey Him, abilities that we did not formerly possess. In effect, the fatalist denies any change whatever in the new birth. Thirdly, the fatalist's false idea that God either causes or allows our sin to accomplish a greater good is directly contradicted by Paul in Romans 3:1-8. Paul repeatedly affirms that imputing the orchestration notion of a greater good imposes direct complicity onto God for sin, leaving God in the seat of accused, and not in the seat of righteous Judge. Paul assesses this idea as a slander against his teaching, not as a right explanation of his teaching. Scripture affirms that God is the Moral Governor of His universe, and that He always governs His universe according to His revealed and stated moral Law. His moral governance also teaches that He holds man accountable for his conduct, so the notion that man merely acts out what God causes, puppeteer-like, contradicts Scripture's holding man personally accountable to God and responsible himself for his sins.

...then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. This expression often causes much discussion. The first step to eliminate the confusion is to take note of what the passage states--and what it does not state. I earlier cited some passages that indicate that the Father has assigned present dominion to the Son. When the Father so assigned this dominion to the Son, neither the Father nor the Son were in any way personally or essentially altered. God remained God, unchanged and unchangeable. So why do we ignore this point

and impose a dilemma onto this passage that the passage doesn't require? If neither Father nor Son were altered when the Father made the assignment to the Son, why think that either Father or Son will be altered when the Son returns what was assigned to Him back to the Father? The point of the passage deals with a specific function that the Father assigned to the Son, and now the Son returns to the Father. The idea of "Function" deals with what God does, not with His personal and essential Being. He functions as loving, and sometimes chastening Father to His children. He functions as Judge against the wicked. These various functions in no way alter who God is. They deal with what He does. And this is the point of the passage before us.

The careful and deliberate use of "Son" in this verse leads our thinking. Even though Scripture uses the term in a way that far exceeds the Incarnation, it uses the term to identify a certain function or work. When Scripture refers to Him in His deity, it uses the term Word. When Scripture uses "Son" to refer to Jesus' deity, you will find "...of God" associated with "Son." A simple observation that this verse in no way indicates that the "Word" shall be subject to the Father should resolve our self-imposed dilemma. God, expressed in Scripture as God or Father, Word, and Holy Spirit, remains unchanged and unchangeable after the "Son" returns the dominion assigned to Him to the Father. The function of Son, the assignment of redemption and atonement being fully completed, and the purchased possession being fully restored to the Father's loving embrace, the function is fulfilled. That function then is subjected. God (God, Word, and Holy Spirit) is all in all, victorious, praised for endless eternity, and immutable in His Being, is then fully seen as--as God! Consider 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Since the role of Mediator has been fully completed successfully at the Second Coming and the bodily resurrection to glory of all the elect is accomplished, that function unique to Mediator, to "...*the man* Christ Jesus," is accomplished. Therefore, that function shall cease in full harmony with and declared to be so by His success, God shall be "...all in all."

It is significant that this final punctuating note of completion does not occur until after the resurrection. In fact, Scripture associates "Redemption" with the resurrection. (Hosea 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:55-56; Ephesians 1:14) God's work of redemption remains unfinished until He has fully claimed the bodies of His beloved children that He purchased when He paid the price of our redemption. When He raises our bodies and glorifies them in the likeness of His beloved Son, only then shall redemption be completed. Redemption's price was fully paid in Jesus' death. It will be completed when God fully claims and takes possession of the last vestige of His

"...purchased possession." He paid for this possession, and He shall not punctuate the final chapter of redemption till He claims what He purchased and takes it to Himself in eternal glory. What a Savior!

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor