

THE RETURN TO EDEN

Every year God's people keep the Feast of Tabernacles, which symbolises the Millennium, the coming 1000 years of Christ's reign on the earth, the start of which you can read about in Zechariah 14.

Almost six thousand years ago God planted a garden in Eden. Genesis 2:8-9 'And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Verse 15-17 '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.'

This was the role God had envisioned for mankind – living in a Garden of Eden, blessed with all good things, learning how to work with God's creation to sustain and increase mankind while growing in spiritual knowledge. In time they would develop spiritually and would be allowed to eat of the tree of life, which would give them eternal life Genesis 3:22 'And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'

It didn't work out of course -verse 24

'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' Ever since mankind has suffered the consequences of his sin, along with our beautiful blue planet, Earth.

So, like all good planners God fell back on contingency plan 2 Peter 3:8 'But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day'. He would give man six days (each a thousand years) to learn that walking their own way does not pay, and then He would once again re-establish His Plan Acts 3:21 'Whom the heaven must receive **until the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'

This would be the seventh one thousand year day Hebrews 4:8-11 'For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.'

This time, mankind would have experienced help to enable them to grow spiritually 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' These are those who have overcome Satan's temptations in the flesh through the power of the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God James 1:18 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.'

To inspire and encourage these people – the chosen elect of God, He sent His prophets with visions of the coming Kingdom of God which will eventually restore this ravaged, polluted planet to a worldwide Garden of Eden.

I wonder how many recognize how fortunate we have been in this regard in the nation of Ephraim. I have flown over many countries across the world. Never have I seen a land to compare with Britain. The barren lands of Asia and the Middle East, endless brown deserts of rock and sand, the vast emptiness of Australia, the snowy Alps, the featureless plains of America, even the grandeur of the Rockies, for me none can compare with the lush green, tamed fertility of Britain. This island gives us a hint of how the whole world will eventually look. Vast acres of land mean nothing. I have stood on empty acres without stock when I experienced drought that took every blade of grass on my land in Australia until the earth turned black. My garden died when the carefully collected dam water failed.

As I discussed with Colin Sutcliffe who wrote for the Plain Truth on Agricultural matters – vast acres are not the solution in farming, if the climate is right. In God's Kingdom, the climate will be temperate like Britains, but warmer and sunnier, with rain in due season Ezekiel 36:35 'And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited.' And Ezekiel 34:23-26 'And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.'

Each family will need no more than 6-8 acres of land to support themselves and have enough spare to trade, under such circumstances Micah 4:4 'But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*.' With land ownership comes the inspiration to 'dress and keep' that which God has given, and the result will be happy, prosperous families, working to restore the land of Israel. Amos 9:13-14 'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.'

The gardeners amongst us know that it is both creative and deeply satisfying to work with God's creation, but we know that it can be a struggle Genesis 3:17-18 'And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;' Year after year I work to wipe out the nettles that return in my fields, the brambles that try to take over in the wood – rather like our sins they just keep coming back. However we are in for a change -Isaiah 55:13 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.'

Under the guidance and help of the resurrected saints, now immortal and co-rulers with Christ, Revelation 20:4 (last part), these families will learn true values from their teachers. Isaiah 30:20-21 'And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.'

God's plan includes settling physical human beings in the land of their original forebears Ezekiel 36:1 'And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better *unto you* than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.' So it will be with the tribes of Israel Jeremiah 30:3 'For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'

Gradually the now arid land of Israel will undergo renewal, starting with the worldwide earthquake at Christ's return, which will re-structure the topography of the whole planet Zechariah 14:4-8 'And his feet

shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.’ Revelation 16:18, and 20 ‘And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.’ 20 ‘And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.’

The Dead Sea will be brought alive by fresh water which will both expand it and overflow south into the desert and eventually into the oceans. Ezekiel 47:8-9 ‘Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: *which being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.’ So Israel will be again clothed in green as it was long ago.

God and His spirit born family will help this process along. Isaiah 41:18-20 ‘I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, *and* the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it’. All these waters will be sparkling clean and the temperature will be warm enough for the people to enjoy them, but not too hot, for some of us from Ephraim are not used to the sun ! Isaiah 4:5-6 ‘And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.’

At last, after maybe one hundred years or so, Israel will be returned to the state it once was when it likely harboured the Garden of Eden. This process, at the request of all nations Zechariah 8:22 ‘Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD’, will be repeated worldwide. Isaiah 66:19 ‘And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.’ And Isaiah 11:9 ‘ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.’

God has set aside one thousand years for this planet to regain the perfection God created in the Garden of Eden. Only then will it be ready to receive the resurrection of all who have ever lived and not known Jesus Christ. This of course will be the 2nd resurrection.

What a vision, what a privilege to understand God’s plan for the restoration of this earth ! But wait – can we afford to anticipate this glorious future ? What happened that caused our first parents to lose the original garden ? Genesis 3:1-4 ‘Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:’

Along came Satan to tempt them into breaking God's words. Satan is subtle and effective. He was able to convince them that it would not matter if they ignored just one commandment. After all had not God taught them **ALL** they knew ? Surely they could risk this small sin without losing their chance to eat of the tree of life ?

Wrong ! And we are still paying the penalty for their sin !

Today God's church faces a similar risk. We hold the glorious vision of God's kingdom before us but all of us are spiritually asleep and only half of us will enter God's kingdom ! Matthew 25:1-5 'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.' Matthew 25:11-12 'Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.'

What distinguishes those that enter ? Revelation 14:1-5 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which **were not defiled with women**; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.'

They are not defiled with women. (In the bible 'women' pictures churches or even false religions) cf 2 Corinthians 11:2 'For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. Revelation 17:4-5 'And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'

The ones who make it have not polluted God's true religion by listening to those who say that it is OK to mix it with the religious traditions of men which Jesus often condemned, and which all in one way or another, contradict the word of God.

Unlike Adam and Eve, these could not be deceived into thinking that they could ignore even a small part of God's word. You see, they double checked that their understanding of God's law was correct by comparing it with the example of Jesus Christ's life 1 Peter 2:21 'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:' They followed what He did in every way Revelation 14:4 'These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which **follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth**. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.'

So they avoided the whispering of those who failed to understand this vital principle and were 'bought from the men' as the Greek for 'redeemed from among men' actually says. The bible plainly tells us that the traditions of men are simply not to be used instead of the written word of God. So Revelation 14:5 tells us 'And in their mouth was found no guile (deceit) for they are without fault before the throne of God.'

So here at the Feast of Tabernacles, lets cling to the inspiring vision of the coming Kingdom of God, and hold fast to the sword of the spirit, which is the written word of God, that no man take your crown.

This was a message given at the Feast of Tabernacles in Tenby, Wales in 2001.

