

## THE CERTAINTY OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture Lesson: Genesis 1:1-5

Text: Revelation 21:1-5

Songs: PH327; F31; R371 1,4; F36;

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The Bible is much like an old-fashioned clock where the hands go round and round. There are only two seconds difference between one second to mid-night and one second after mid-night. Yet there can be a tremendous difference between those two seconds, especially when they divide a year as we just had happen this week. There can be a great difference in future consequences if something happens in 2008 or 2009 even though they are only separated by two seconds. The same is true of digital clocks, but it is not quite as dramatic as on the old-fashioned clocks we watched endlessly in school.

The reason we especially like the old-fashioned clock is that the face of that clock, especially the second hand, illustrates what we also discover in the Bible. The Bible was written in several different millenniums by a variety of human authors. Moses and John never met except briefly on the Mount of Transfiguration. Though the Bible's message transcends millenniums, the end and the beginning are amazingly alike. Bible scholars call this "The Full Circle of Revelation." This full circle is a primary witness to the certainty of Scripture.

We can understand this best by looking at four distinct areas: Creation and re-creation, darkness and light, death and life, God's curse levied and God's curse lifted. We will comprehend this better because we have the screen. So let's begin at the very beginning!

"Genesis 1:1." Those of us who remember the Apollo space voyage to the moon remember that on Christmas Eve 1978 the astronauts who were orbiting the moon turned their cameras to the earth rise. While we looked at our planet for the first time from the moon we heard the familiar words, "Genesis 1:1." It was impressive. This year they replayed the tape Christmas Eve when we saw the earth for the first time the way God has seen it for millenniums, and still sees it every day. No wonder the last verse of the chapter says, "Genesis 1:31a."

"Revelation 21:1." What is the new heaven and new earth like? God created the first from nothing. Now He will refashion and re-configure His first creation into something even more wonderful than we see today. The closing chapters of Revelation give us a picture beyond comprehension.

We each have a vision of what heaven is like. To try to explain that with words only gets us into trouble. Paul was correct when he wrote in I Corinthians 2:9, "I Corinthians 2:9." Paul was actually quoting from Isaiah 64 and 65. We have only an inkling of how wonderfully God created this world because it is scarred by sin. Romans 8 says, "Romans 8:19-22." Since we are seeing only a vestige of a once perfect world, think of the grandeur of the new heavens and new earth. This is the complete circle of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to re-creation.

Back to Genesis 1 we discover that on the first day God created light. "Genesis 1:5a." Notice the power of the darkness even before sin. "Genesis 1:2." Darkness is the natural state of all things before God intervened with light at creation. "Genesis 1:5b." Yet the evening darkness still gets top billing over the light of the day. The Bible records it this way because there was no day until darkness eclipsed the light. That is why Jews still count the days from sundown to sundown. That is the prevailing pattern for the rest of the creation account in Genesis 1. The light of day always precedes the darkness of night, but it is the darkness that defines each day. In the creation of this world light is the new element that intervenes and makes all life possible on the planet.

Then we turn to the re-creation of Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible. "Revelation 22:5a." There is a

powerful song we hear sung, “No more night.” I have heard it sung at funerals. The song is based on this verse. It captures the difference between creation from darkness with re-creation in which there is no darkness. The basic fabric of this world is darkness. Light breaks through at creation and at salvation, but the foundation of this creation is still darkness. In the new world the basic fabric is light. In fact, “Revelation 22:5a.” The darkness disappears. It is gone forever.

The Bible tells us why. “Revelation 22:5b.” “The Lord God will give them light.” This same John began his gospel, “John 1:1-9.” Jesus Himself said, “John 8:12.” The re-creation has the light of God as the basic illumination. In the full circle of the Scripture we move from darkness to light. We now live in a dark world where the light breaks through. We shall live in a new heavens and new earth in which darkness does not even exist. That is the full circle of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation on the subject of darkness and light.

Let’s go back to Genesis again. “Genesis 2:17.” Death is the lowest common denominator of this creation. Humankind could have been exempt from death if Adam had stayed with the light of God, but he chose the darkness. God says, “Genesis 2:17” because Adam, and later Eve, saw death all around them. They saw it in the plant world, in the animal world, and may have wondered when it was going to happen to them. That is why God says to Adam, “See all this death around you? You can escape it if you refrain from eating this fruit. That’s all you have to do to live.” Even before Eve and Adam ate the forbidden fruit, death was the lowest common denominator of this creation. Adam and Eve forced all humans into that same state when they sinned.

That is still that way with us. The basic event in every life is death. We all have different experiences. We all see life through different lenses. None of us are the same, even identical twins. Like snowflakes, we are all unique and individual. Like snowflakes that all melt in the spring, all people die. The only exceptions are Enoch and Elijah and all those who are alive when Jesus returns. Even Jesus died. Indeed Jesus died so that He could become the Light and Life forever. Without Jesus’ death there is no good news from God.

Revelation 21 puts it this way. “Revelation 21:4.” No more death! The lowest common denominator of this creation does not exist in the new heavens and the new earth. It is just gone. It disappears like the darkness. It is gone because Jesus’ death was not only to save sinners, but also to salvage this creation. Jesus’ resurrection was not only so that we could rise again at the last day, Jesus’ resurrection brought a new creation in which the lowest common denominator is life—and life forever more. That is the great good news from God. That is what the Bible is about: A whole new order, a whole new way of living, a whole new life that has a better bottom line: Life rather than death. That is what the full circle of Scripture from Genesis and Revelation reveals to us about life and death.

Let’s go back to Genesis again. “Genesis 3:17.” Since Adam listened to Eve rather than God, God levied a curse. We still live under that curse. The curse continues. “Genesis 3:18,19.” Genesis 3:17-19 is an accurate, but sad description of the human situation on this planet. It is not a pretty picture. Yet not one of us would disagree with the necessity of God levying this curse. We know from Scripture what it was like at the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden where God justifiably levied the curse against humankind.

Thanks be to God, Genesis is the beginning of the Bible, not the end. How does the Bible end? Look at Revelation 22:3. “Revelation 22:3a.” God levied the curse in Genesis 3 and God lifts the curse in Revelation 22:3. In these two chapters, Genesis 3 and Revelation 22, we see the full circle of Scripture from levying the curse to lifting the curse. Every page of the Bible in between is an account of how God turned the disaster of the curse into an eternal promise in which the curse evaporates as much as darkness and death.

Notice one more thing about the lifted curse. “Revelation 22:3b.” God is on the throne in full control. The victory of God is complete. The secret to success is in one word in this verse, “Lamb.” The capitalized “Lamb” indicates this is the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life so that you and I and this entire universe could move

from creation to re-creation, from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the curse to the abundant eternal blessing of life with God forever. That, my friends, is the full circle of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, the certainty that the Bible is God's divine word. Let's praise God in prayer.