

Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



THE BIG PICTURE

Introduction

Today we're going to examine the big picture. We just did a study on the spiritual armor called Assessing Your Spiritual Defenses. In that study I described that the spiritual armor is not put on in a conventional sense. How could it be? The armor is spiritual, not physical. I describe that the armor is grown. Like seeds of blessings, think of your armor as seeds as well. The big picture involves one piece of our spiritual armor: the helmet of salvation. When we discuss the helmet of salvation we're talking about how grounded we are in the foundational truths of our salvation. The less grounded we are, the more prone we are to getting hit in the head. Get hit in the head and you're riddled with confusion and uncertainty. You will hold onto things you shouldn't. You will believe things that are detrimental to your spiritual development. You view trivial things with greater importance than warranted. You can get all messed up.

Today's study is all about firming up this helmet. And I want to do this with a big picture teaching. Today I want to discuss the purpose of man. If you think you've got this down, please indulge me for a bit. This is a bit of a different take on things, and it may help us put a few things together that we thought we knew.

I am going to make a statement that may sound a little simplistic and may be different from what you are used to. However, this being the Internet, someone may have already said this by the time of this writing. If this is an understanding triggered by God, then I wouldn't be surprised to hear others talking about the same thing, if not now then very soon. That's how God is when he wants to get the message out. Okay are you ready? After I make the statement, we will proceed to examine a little scripture to prove it. Here goes.

The purpose of man is to be complete.

Please think about this. It is quite intriguing and fun to ponder. Okay, hold on one minute, you may ask. What the heck are you talking about? I'm not trying to be cute or even tricky. I am saying it as straightforward as possible.

The purpose of man is to be complete.

I guess you want me to prove it in some way. I will need to reason with you a little and show you a bit of scripture as well. Most will be scripture that you should be familiar with, but we'll look at it in a different light.

Getting Started

The place we'll start is Genesis.

**So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.**

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:27-28 NIV

God made man in his own image and then gave man his marching orders of being fruitful and subduing the earth. That must be the original purpose of man right? Wrong. Here's a bit of the reasoning. God never told man his purpose directly. God just told him what to do. Isn't that right? If you tell a child to clean his room, would that be his purpose? Maybe you would say that cleaning a room is too insignificant for someone's purpose. However, what if you tell a child to get a good education, get a good job, find a good spouse, have children and be good to your kids, would that be a suitable purpose?

Now let me propose this. God gave man instructions directly, and purpose indirectly. Understand that purpose is all about God's intent. It's really not about us at all, if you think about it. He's the creator. He created us. He had a purpose for us in mind. Even though he told us what he wanted us to do, we can't just assume those instructions represent his purpose for us. God is much smarter than that. He possesses all knowledge. He understands all potentials. He is the source of everything that can be known or discovered throughout eternity.

We're just frail beings that couldn't survive being dropped off in the middle of the ocean or in the middle of the desert or in the middle of the arctic. And I'm not even talking about being dropped off on the moon or other planets. We can't survive being without food for a few months or going without water for a few days or going without oxygen for a few minutes. We can't even live for much more than 120 years. What do we know anyway?

We shouldn't get God's instructions confused with purpose. So where do we go? We still go back to the garden and investigate a bit more. God created man and gave him instructions. He also told him this:

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

Genesis 1:29-30 NIV

He told him what he could eat. People were originally intended to be strict vegetarians or "vegans" as we call it today. There were no carnivores at the time. But I digress.

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:8-9 NIV

There were several trees in the garden but God identified two very important trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God highlighted to us that there were two trees. This is key to understanding man's purpose or God's purpose for man. Do you get it yet?

Setting the Stage

Next this is what happened:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17 NIV

God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Did you get that? Man was allowed to eat from **any** tree except one. And there were two important trees in the garden. There it is. That's my study. The rest is just a bit of unraveling. I hope it was as intriguing to you as it was to me.

The first concept to understand is this:

God created Adam in a state that was not complete.

This seems kind of like a strange statement, but this is an important point that we need to remember as we move forward. Man was not perfect now was he? I'm not trying to be clever. Man obviously wasn't perfect. We know the story and perfect does not make mistakes. What do I mean by not complete. I mean that God left man in an incomplete state. That would mean that man was not finished. This was not an accident. This was God's intention. God's intention has nothing to do with his ability. That Adam was not made complete was God's design. Please stay with me because this is really cool.

Second is:

God created a way for Adam to become complete.

God in his infinite wisdom gave Adam free will. This would be the vehicle in which Adam would become complete. God presented Adam with a choice of life and death without

maybe Adam even realizing it. It was a choice nonetheless. Adam had the opportunity to eat from the tree of life and become complete having chosen life over death.

This is because Adam had been granted the right to eat from the tree of life. It would have made him perfect or complete. Again, God in his infinite coolness created a test of Adam's free will. God set the two most important trees in the middle of the garden and he told Adam that he could not eat from only one of them. God did not create any obstacles before Adam. Adam had the choice. God allowed Adam to use his free will and choose.

On a side note, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could have easily been named after what it would produce – death. I think of this tree as the tree of death. God could have called it the tree of death. Why do you think he gave it a more neutral name? Maybe God didn't want to skew Adam's choice in any way. However he called the tree, I want you to understand clearly that this was a choice between life and death.

The True Goal of the Garden Experience

Is this clearer? The goal of the garden experience is not to simply avoid the bad tree. There's a name for dedicating your life to avoiding the bad tree. It's called religion. The goal of the garden experience was for man to choose the good tree. The goal was to choose life. It was kind of like when Moses delivered the law of God to the people of Israel and then announced this:

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live. Deuteronomy 30:19 NIV

Poor Adam; poor us. We know what happened. Adam failed God's purpose. He chooses wrongly and went from a state of incompleteness to a brand new state: a state of death. Do you see this? I don't think I'm breaking any rules here, do you?

We know what happens next. God set some new plans in motion to accomplish his original purpose. Think of it this way. This is another important statement to consider closely:

Jesus did not die just to restore us to a state of incompleteness.

Jesus did not come to put us back into the position just before Adam fell. Can you handle that? Think about that for a moment. And then contemplate this:

Jesus came to fulfill the original purpose of God, which was to make us complete.

Jesus came to set us in a place at least equivalent to but maybe greater than if Adam had actually chosen life by eating from the tree of life. Let that one sink in for a while.

Putting it all together

Let this concept of completeness be an anchor for your understanding of salvation. Let it strengthen your helmet. We can then use this concept to understand a few other things. For example what about the law? God introduced the law to make us aware of our state of death. For those of us who put our trust in the law to achieve God's purpose, there is a problem. The writer of Hebrews explains it nicely:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Hebrews 10:1 NIV

The problem with the law was it couldn't make anyone "perfect." Now the word used for perfect means complete. In fact you could say that complete and perfect are synonymous. The reason I don't like perfect is because it introduces negative connotations in these modern times, such that the meaning of the verse can get obscured. Again the problem of the law was that it could not make anyone "complete." The law could not be used to accomplish God's original intent for man. Doesn't that make better sense to you?

Jesus is a whole different story. Jesus on the other hand was able to accomplish God's original purpose for man. Now watch this closely because it is very cool. Hebrews, when talking about the priesthood of Jesus says this:

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12 NIV

Jesus offered to God one sacrifice for sins for all time. No dispute here, but let's look at the very next couple of verses.

Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Hebrews 10:13-14 NIV

Remember the word "perfect" means "complete." Jesus' death on the cross will accomplish God's original purpose by making us complete – one day. The work has already been done though. The rest is waiting.

What was God's original purpose for man: that he would be complete. How was God's purpose finally realized: through the death of his son. When I say that Jesus' death and

resurrection is the most important event in human history that is what I mean. In no other event has the original purpose of man's existence been fulfilled. That's why the writer of Revelation saw in a vision, every angelic being in heaven worshiping Jesus as follows:

In a loud voice they sang, worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Revelation 5:12 NIV

Levels of God's Will

Let's look at one more key verse that helps put everything into perspective. This is the verse that helped me understand this. It is in the letter Paul wrote to the church in Rome. Many of you know this verse, but let me put a major twist on it and see if you can agree with me.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2 NIV

Now watch this because it is interesting. This verse is a roadmap of the levels of God's will. The levels are good, pleasing and perfect. Once again perfect means complete, so I'll say the three levels of God's will are good, pleasing and complete. Let's map out these three levels.

If I asked what level Adam operated on, what would you say? Hopefully you wouldn't say complete because he failed. The only choices are good or pleasing. Let me give you a verse that describes where Adam operated. This is from Genesis 1.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Genesis 1:31 NIV

The first level of God's will is good. This is the level Adam operated on as part of God's creation. Make sense? Good is the level Adam was originally created. Good is good but not complete or perfect. This is where humanity was before Adam fell.

Now if I asked you what level Jesus operated on when he walked the earth, what would you say? Jesus was superior to Adam. Was Jesus perfect? We'll discuss that shortly. Do you remember an event in Jesus' life when God stated how he felt about Jesus?

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

Jesus gets baptized, the Holy Spirit comes upon him and then God announces that he is pleased with him. Is that clear enough? Jesus with the Holy Spirit operates on the pleasing level of God's will. Jesus is not only superior to Adam but superior to all the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs. But is Jesus perfect?

Well what does the bible say? Does the bible say that Jesus went from pleasing to complete? Does it actually say that Jesus became complete? He was God wasn't he? How could he be made complete? Well here is the verse:

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Hebrews 2:10 NIV

The word of God states it plainly. Jesus was made perfect or complete through suffering. His death on the cross made him complete and thus fulfilled the purposes of God for man. He sits on the right hand of God in this complete state and is the first of a new creation of "completed" beings.

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45 NIV

He is the new and final prototype of man. He is our destiny.

What level do we operate on?

So those are the three levels of God's will: Good, Pleasing and Complete. So where do we operate? Which of these? Can you see that we are like Jesus while he walked the earth? For those of us who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior and who have received the Holy Spirit of God, we operate in a state that is pleasing to God. The final state will be reached when Jesus returns, as it says

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NIV

One of the things I want you to do, as well as me, is to get comfortable in this state - that we are pleasing to God. This is where we live and are to live. Our completeness is in Christ and from Christ. Yearn for that. There is nothing in this world that can complete you outside of Christ. There is nothing that you need to do. There is no special additional rule you need to follow. There are no secret codes. Keeping the Sabbath, witnessing,

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abstaining from certain foods, taking pledges, fasting, sacrificing of any kind, tithing – nothing you do on this earth can complete you. Understand this and you become harder to fool. Understand this and your helmet becomes much stronger. That's the big picture. Amen.

Notes

For Questions or Comments please respond to lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com and visit www.lostandfoundcenter.org for additional information.

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