

Lessons of the Potter's House

Part Four

By John H. Essex

THE WORK COMPLETED

IN the hands of the potter, the clay is powerless, but in his hands it can be adapted for any use that the potter may determine. And humanity in the hand of God is equally impotent, yet can be used by Him to achieve the purpose for which it was created in His image and likeness.

NONE CREATED IN VAIN

At a first glance, so much of God's creation seems to have gone to waste. As Thomas Gray wrote in his well-known elegy,

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.*

Among humanity, many have died, and have seemingly lived in vain. Of all the millions who have lived since Adam, only One has been without sin. Of all the millions of deaths since Adam, only one is of real value, and that is the death of Christ, for with His death is associated the repudiation of sin and the end of the old humanity.

Yet, in reality, not one has died in vain, for all the universe is held within the hollow of God's hands, and all who have died will assuredly be restored, to be incorporated in that new vessel, the new humanity, which is being created in righteousness. "As, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified" (1 Cor.15:22). None of the clay is discarded as being of no value or concern to the Potter. Through Christ, all are to be reconciled to God, as we have already stressed several times.

FINAL THOUGHTS

One lesson that must be learned by all is that no creature, be he celestial or human, was brought into being just for himself. All were created for God's glory and delight. "Out of Him and through Him and for Him is all" (Rom.11:36). "Thou dost create all, and because of Thy will they were, and are, created" (Rev.4: 11).

When the work of the Divine Potter is completed, He will have on display a universe full of vessels in which He can find everlasting joy and satisfaction, for He will have put His all into each of them, and they will in turn rejoice in being His, without any possibility of them becoming marred again.

To sum up, the work of the Divine Potter is perceived in His forming of humanity out of the soil of the ground. The vessel, through its being made soulish, was predesignated to become marred, or ruined, in His hand, and He will not be satisfied until He has made it anew.

Israel, of course, is part of humanity, and the illustration given in Jeremiah 18, though related specifically to that nation, is in line with God's treatment of humanity as a whole. The principles are the same.

We can perhaps summarize the position as follows: The celestials (or at least a large number of them) sinned, and became estranged from God. Humanity was created to be the intermediary through which they could be reconciled to Him.

Humanity sinned, and in turn became estranged. It was unable to save itself, or even to provide a Saviour from its ranks, though eventually God would do this. In the meantime, Israel was chosen out of humanity to act as a kingdom of priests on humanity's behalf. Through Israel, and Israel alone, God was able to maintain communication with humanity, entrusting His oracles to them (Rom.3:2).

But Israel sinned, even while Moses was receiving the covenant, and became estranged because of her idolatry. She needed a priesthood herself to approach God with offerings on her behalf, and receive His blessings in return. The tribe of Levi was taken out of Israel to serve that nation in this capacity.

The priesthood failed (witness Aaron's participation in the building of the golden calf), and needed to offer sacrifices for itself before it could intercede on behalf of the people. If perfection could have been found in the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no need for a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb.7:11).

All this gives evidence of the marring of the old and the need for replacement by the new. All this, too, points to the One--the One not knowing sin, the "one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus"--the Head of the new humanity, and designated in God's purpose to be Head over all. In Him all has its cohesion. Through Him all is to be reconciled to God.

Christ Himself was crushed, though not because of any fault within Himself. It was prophesied of Him, in Isaiah 53:9, "For He does no wrong, and no deceit is in His mouth, yet Yahweh desires to crush Him." After His death and burial, He was roused by "the might of God's strength," which power is also operating in us, who were "designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will." We are to be seen as "His achievement" (Eph.1:11; 2:10).

It is on earth that God's purpose is, in the main, being enacted. All creation has to learn that it cannot exist of itself. All has need of God. This earth is, at present, the Potter's house, where the celestials, by studying His operations with and through humanity, can truly learn His ways. In the end, they, too, will rejoice in being part of His achievement, for His activities will extend to the ends of the universe, and He will be All in all.

THE POTTER'S HOUSE

"Go to the potter's house!" There comes a call,
And, like the prophet, I must needs obey.
Upon the wheel a shapeless mass of clay
Assumes at once a form symmetrical
Beneath the master's fingers. Slim and tall,
A lovely vase arises to display
Its maker's skill, as well it seems it may;
Till, with a suddenness, which must appall,
The potter crushes it in one sharp blow.
A hidden flaw has caused its swift return
To former state. Fresh turns the wheel, and lo!
A perfect bowl is formed. Thus I discern
The hand of God, Who only will destroy
To make anew for His transcendent joy.
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