



THE DIVINE RESOLUTION V:

Creation and Apocalyptic

JUDAISM GRADUALLY LOST the guidance of its ancestral laws over the last two centuries before the common era (beginning ca. 198 BCE). First the Seleucid emperors, and particularly Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175-164 BCE), compromised the traditional rulership. Five generations of Hasmoneans (166-38 BCE) brought further decay. Then Roman imperialism (37 BCE –) completed the destruction.

The devoted adherents to ancestral law recognized that only intervention through divine apocalypse (revelation) could resolve the ongoing crisis. While earlier prophets such as Isaiah (Isaiah 24-27) and Zechariah (Zechariah 9-14) anticipated this intervention, the unknown author of the book of Daniel (ca. 165 BCE) explicitly foresaw and foretold the final conflict between light and

darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell. Succeeding documents — such as 1 and 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 and 3 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and the Testament of Levi 2-5 — elaborated on the bitter struggle to come and the final, eschatological triumph of God. For over 2,000 years these biblical accounts have enthralled their diverse adherents. Apocalyptic imaginations have focused on the future “rapture,” the “tribulation,” the “Battle of Armageddon,” ad infinitum.

Nevertheless, what these “apocalyptists” have not heard, have not known, and/or have rejected is that God himself determined from the beginning to resolve the intrinsic problems associated with Creation. Thus, to the tempting serpent God declared, “. . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

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From the beginning the loving God understood the limitations of himself as the old, self-existent God, the limitations of his old, commanding, possessive and power-structured covenant, and the limitations of his old Creation, subject to disaster, disease, destruction and death. Thus, in his human manifestation, and throughout his life and ministry, Jesus Christ explicitly countered self-existence, legal imposition, possessive presence, dominating power structures, and terminal disease and death.

Finally, when the “powers that be” charged Jesus with blasphemy and treason and arrested, tried and condemned him to death, he was brought to the exact legendary site where Adam himself had been buried and where Adam’s skull allegedly remained. This was beside the Temple mount (*Har Moed*), at the very center of Paradise.

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary [“Place of the Skull”; Gr. *Calvaria*; Heb. *Golgotha*], there they crucified him . . .

. . . And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. — Luke 23:33, 44-46.

The questions that have lingered for nearly two millennia are: “What really happened in this critical moment at Calvary?” “What is its true significance?” “What difference does it make for mankind and all Creation?” The answers to these questions will be developed in subsequent material. However, let us here emphasize that Calvary was not merely exemplary, signifying the inevitable suffering of the righteous. Nor was Calvary merely a substitutionary death for mankind’s sins. No, Calvary was

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far more than these — far deeper and more profound. Very briefly, the death of Jesus Christ as the human manifestation of YHWH inaugurated the death of God as self-existent deity. It inaugurated the death of the old covenant of command and possession as well as the death of all possessive power structures that divinize themselves, claiming to be the legitimate surrogates of transcendent deity. It inaugurated the death of the old Creation, subject to the negative possibilities of disruption, domestication, disease and disability. Finally, it inaugurated the death of death itself. That is the meaning of Calvary.

God’s invasion of the present evil age involves warfare. . . . [T]his warfare has been commenced, not by the evil powers of the present age, but rather by the redemptive powers of the new creation. . . . [T]he motif of cosmic warfare is focused first of all on the cross, and it is from the cross that one perceives the contours of that warfare. There, in the thoroughly real event of Christ’s crucifixion, God’s war of liberation was commenced and decisively settled, making the cross the foundation of . . . apocalyptic theology.¹

Endnote

1. J. Louis Martyn, trans., *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 100, 101.

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