

1:1



Chapter 8

Now, But Not Yet

by Ken Ham [<http://answersingenesis.org/bios/ken-ham/>] on June 19, 2008

Featured in *How Could A Loving God...?* [<http://answersingenesis.org/answers/books/how-could-loving-god/>]

When we understand the beauty and perfection of Eden, and how sin changed everything, we are forced to be consistent when we talk about good and bad, and right and wrong.

I had been listening to Rob's sermon tape for about 40 minutes . . . and he was still on a roll. The fervency and the certainty with which he spoke painted an audible image of the brother I once had. It was very surreal. He sounded like the Rob that I knew; he sounded real, but I had to remind myself that the disease had by now taken almost everything that he had been when the sermon was recorded.

Rob had covered a lot of material in this one tape, and the message was saturated with vibrant passion, solid content, and practical application. He had covered the issues of sin, answering with solid biblical support the question that asked, "Why does **suffering and death**

[\[http://answersingenesis.org/suffering/\]](http://answersingenesis.org/suffering/) exist in a world with a good and loving **God** [\[http://answersingenesis.org/god/\]](http://answersingenesis.org/god/) ?” He had investigated the issues of physical healing and the “normal” course of human life in a fallen world . . . a course that included the inevitability of sickness, suffering, and death. He had expounded on the implications of Christ and the Cross, illuminating how that perfect sacrifice of God had paid the price for **sin** [\[http://answersingenesis.org/sin/\]](http://answersingenesis.org/sin/) .

What a big difference when you can stand back and give people a big picture of history, I thought. When we understand the beauty and perfection of Eden, and how sin changed everything, we are forced to be consistent when we talk about good and bad, and right and wrong. Biblical history clearly brings each individual to a point where he or she must accept or reject the **gospel** [\[http://answersingenesis.org/good-news/\]](http://answersingenesis.org/good-news/) . Each must either receive Christ’s sacrifice and forgiveness, or turn away from Him for eternity. Wow. What a difference a truthful perspective makes. Rather than leading to fatalism and despair, believing in the history of Genesis gives us the foundation on which to build answers to these most probing of human issues.

I have seen many Christian leaders on television who have no solid answers to the questions surrounding death and suffering. They’ve said things like, “You just have to trust,” or “You just have to have faith. We don’t know why these things occurred.” But you know why I believe that they can’t give answers? It’s because they don’t believe the Book of Genesis. They don’t believe God’s Word as they should. They have been influenced *by* the world so they don’t have this history that they can use to explain sin to the world. And so they can’t give answers. It is only those who believe the history God has given to us (beginning in Genesis 1:1) who can consistently explain how there can be a loving God *and* death and suffering at the same time. As finite beings, we can’t give ultimate and absolute answers in regard to everything, but we can give answers that are consistent, logical, rational, and defensible as we search the Scriptures for solutions.

As Rob tried to conclude his sermon on the tape, I smiled as he kept apologizing to the congregation because his message was going overtime. Yes, he was sorry—but not so sorry that he was willing to stop! He still had many things to say and was unable to restrain the words that were on his heart. They were words from the Word of God that could bring hope and eternal perspective to his church . . . and to us now years away from where he was. His passion for the Bible again overflowed as he turned his focus to the future. He began expounding on two things: first, the things that are reality in our lives (now that we are in Christ); and second, the things that are *not yet* (the realities that await us on the other side of the grave when all things are made new again).

With his customary flair for words, he described the awkward balance in which we find ourselves as we navigate through life somewhere between “the Fall” and the coming “consummation” of history when Christ will return and all things will be restored. He had covered past history, explaining how we got to where we are in the present. Now he was explaining coming history, instructing how we are to move ahead, living out our place in the biblical “big picture” as it spans toward the future.

Now: Healed from Sin

I firmly believe that if Rob could talk to us today, he would tell us that he is restored and healed from the worst disease: sin. When Christ was on earth, He carried out great miracles, including wonderful physical healings of sick people. As significant as those individual healings were, Rob preached that “the Great Physician” had a broader focus of restoration in mind:

When the Lord Jesus came, His whole purpose and reason was to pay the penalty for our sin, to appease the wrath of God, and to rise again from the dead. His whole purpose was to make us what He intends us to be. What does He intend us to be? Well, you see, He is speaking there about freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, release of the oppressed. . . . It means this:

He paid for our sins; He bought us forgiveness. That's what it's all about, real and genuine forgiveness so that He could bring us into a right relationship with God, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rob explained this further by expounding the passage in Isaiah 53:5 which states, "**But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed**" (NKJV). Moving on to 1 Peter 2:22–24, he showed how this passage gives us the correct understanding of the Isaiah passage:

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (NIV).

As Rob preached on this particular passage, both the content of the passage and the importance of interpreting it properly became evident:

What's the context here? That's what we have to examine. Let's put the Bible back in context, because a lot of people take verses out of context and they will just apply them to whatever they want. But the context here is this—that Peter is talking about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins. That's the whole emphasis and that's what he gets out of Isaiah 53. In fact, when it says "**and by his wounds you have been healed,**" the Greek makes it clear that "**you have been healed**" is in the *passive* tense. It means you have *already* been healed.

Friends, you are all healed. The Bible tells us that if you are in the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ died to shed His blood so that you can be washed clean from your sin. That's the whole perspective

of it. That's what it means. That's the context of it all. You *already* have been healed. You *already* have been washed clean from your sin.

You have been restored to Christ, and it's *now and not yet*. Now we have the cleansing and forgiveness. Yet to come is a new heaven and new earth in which there will be no sicknesses and no death. But the primary emphasis is definitely not on physical healing now. Our primary focus here is on the Lord **Jesus** [<http://answersingenesis.org/jesus/>] Christ and His death and resurrection for us. That's what that verse means.

In fact, we know that the Lord Jesus went out and healed people; He went out casting out evil spirits; He went out raising people from the dead. . . . He did that. He stopped the storm, didn't He? Remember that? In all of this, the Lord Jesus is showing us that our restoration is to be spiritual. That's what He is talking about, that's what He is showing us. That our restoration is spiritual now. Right now. Right now, you and I, through the Lord Jesus Christ, are spiritually restored to God. *Right now*, through the Lord Jesus, through His death and His resurrection. But you see, it is *now and not yet*. It is yet to come. . . . We are living in a world where we are living *now and not yet*. Now we are spiritually restored to God, spiritually restored through the Lord Jesus Christ, yes, but it is yet to come.

What is yet to come? What is yet to come is a new heaven and a new earth. That is what we are looking forward to. And in fact, that is where our focus needs to be, friends, because in the new heaven and the new earth the Lord Jesus, who is righteousness, will dwell there, and we shall dwell with Him. Isn't that fantastic? We don't want to focus on this world; it's a world ruined by sin. We don't want to focus on ourselves; we are people who have been ruined by sin. We want to focus on the new heaven and the new earth that is yet to come. . . . In that new heaven and new earth, there will be no sickness; there will be no disease; there will be no demons; there will be no death; there will be no chaos. . . . Everything is going to be peaceful and perfect. Wonderful, isn't it? You see, now and not yet. Restored to Christ today, yes—and yet to come is

all that we are looking forward to in the new heaven and the new earth.

In fact, you see the New Testament emphasis is not primarily on physical healing, but it is on the power of the Holy Spirit who brings us into a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the primary aspect of the New Testament.

Right now, this spiritual healing from sin is about relationship, a trusting relationship that is more valuable than anything else on earth. Paul put this into words in Philippians 3:8-10:

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (NAS95).

That relationship starts at the moment Christ comes into our spirits and is cultivated until death. As Rob said, it is *now, but not yet*. Yet to come is the final consummation of all things, a complete and total healing for the soul and the body and the world that ushers in a new and never-ending era of unhindered intimacy with the Creator. **“Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face,”** says 1 Corinthians 13:12.

The Bible tells us that sometime in the future we will see a restoring of the harmony that existed in Eden once again. For example, Isaiah 11:6 says:

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them.

In peace they will exist together, apparently as vegetarians again. You have a little child. You have a viper . . . and they're not frightened of each other; they won't harm each other. And you know what equates to that situation? Righteousness and restoration. Acts 3:18–21 speaks of this restoration and where it fits in the big picture:

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Note that God is going to *restore* and He is going to make all things new *again*. The standard to which we will return is the one that existed so long ago in Eden. Everything will be in balance once again—the groaning of **creation** [<http://answersingenesis.org/creation/>] will cease and the righteousness that is equated with peace and harmony with the animals and man will be the norm again, just as it was before sin.

Might I ask, however, where we would be without this foundation of hope? From Genesis we are able to see the picture of how things were, telling us also of how they will be. Only from the perfection of the past can we tangibly hope in the promise of this glorious future. Those who reject a literal Genesis have little to go on, and will probably never understand the believer's

hope—the hope that life will again be as perfect as it once was, but no longer is. How can there be a restoration to such a perfect state when there never was one to start with? Without this understanding there is no longing for heaven, a grim outlook on life, lack of true joy, and the beginning of a steady slide into spiritual bankruptcy and lukewarmness.

The existence of Eden, as long ago as it was, gives hope for the future. Between now and then, in a world where death and sin are “normal,” this hope gives us faith to face another day. I believe we are incapable of imagining what heaven will be like, just as we are unable to truly imagine what life was like in Eden before the Fall. We do know that there will be no Curse (Revelation 22:3). In this present sin-cursed world, we live in sin-ravaged bodies that cause us to groan. But what an encouragement to know that Christ will one day restore our bodies, and the whole creation, to perfection!

We see a glimpse of the complete healing of all creation that will take place through the ministry of Christ and the Apostles. Of course, we wish this would happen now—and at times, for His purposes, God does ordain specific miraculous events to overcome the consequences of the Curse. But at the right time, God will bring this present era to a close, this great season of suffering and death will end—and then, for all those who do trust in Him, we will have that final healing. Yes, we have a fraction of it *now*, but the completeness of it is *not yet*.

Between Now and Then

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Living as we are now (between “the Fall” and “the consummation”), how then should we live? In

the above verse, Paul challenges us to live lives of wisdom and careful progression. These would be lives that are lived in *truth*, *trust*, and with a vision for *eternity*.

John 8:32 says, **“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”** This certainly is the case when dealing with origins and the big picture of biblical history (including a proper understanding of Eden, the Fall, Christ, and the Cross, and the restoration that will consummate all things). The truth about inevitability of death sets us free as well. Because of what we know through the revealed Word of God, we no longer need to be bound by the fear of death. Having received the gospel, we can even be expectant and looking forward to what lies beyond the grave. Where do we find such truth? Jesus himself is truth (John 14:6), and the Bible, we must always remember, is truth as well (Psalm 119:160). Devotion to its study and upholding its authority is central to living a life of wisdom.

*The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord
blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the
flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:7-8).*

A life of wisdom is also built on trust. We are to trust in God as the Creator and sustainer of all existence, trust in His immediate presence in our lives, and trust in His continued provision as we seek to live lives of faith in the midst of suffering and death.

But he said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; NIV).

Wisdom dictates that you not only trust in Him, but that you also trust in who the Scriptures say

you now are *in Christ*. Between now and death, it will always be a challenge to remember that the very presence of God is not just *with* you, but is *within* you (John 14:17). Continually, you will need to renew your minds according to the biblical fact that you have been crucified with Him and it is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you (Galatians 2:20). When it is time to submit and obey, you must be wise to recognize that God's Spirit himself gives you the power and the desire to do what is right (John 15:5;; Philippians 4:13).

Again, in those times when wisdom fails and circumstances tear at your heart . . . when the tears will not cease and the grief will not lift . . . in those times there will always be the need to bow the knee before God as your only sovereign King and trust Him in spite of all that you see and all that you feel. Then you can make wise and godly decisions in this fallen world. We read in Deuteronomy 30:19–20 how the Israelites were offered a choice by God; it's the same choice that you have day by day:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him.

Finally, wisdom requires a vision for eternity. We simply must accept the reality of our mortality and live lives for the things that will never end. The Bible tells us something that science knows very well. **"The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away"** (Psalm 90:10; NIV). We consider someone who lives to 80 years old to have had a long life. However, contemplate this: *How long is 80 compared to eternity?* Job 8:9 says, **"We were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow"** (NIV). Even though we live in time (and to us the sufferings of a loved one like Rob seem so prolonged), compared

to eternity it's not even a fleeting moment. That does not in any way negate the trauma of it all in this life, but we do need to put it all in perspective and try to see more of the "big picture" as God has revealed it in the **Bible** [<http://answersingenesis.org/bible/>].

Suffering and death from sin is the universal norm, and that should be a warning to us—a reminder that our days are numbered. If we are wise, we will invest the best of all our resources for things with eternal significance.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21; NIV).

Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die in like manner. But My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not wane (Isaiah 51:6).

How important it is to put our trust in the living and inerrant Word of God and live for worthy purposes. Think about this! Eventually, you *will* die for what you are living for, since eventually, you will die. It's not a matter of *if* you will die (we know that is a certainty). It's a matter of living for a cause that is worth dying for.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:18).

For I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

From Genesis to Revelation

In the beginning, we know that God created the heavens and the earth, and then man and woman. When He was done, He said it was all exceptionally good. Sin has polluted it all, but still a remnant remains . . . a shattered reflection of the pure good that once was. We can still see the beauty in nature and in art. Even human love (as conditional and fickle as it is) can be a tainted remnant of the perfect, unconditional love of God and a reminder of the way things used to be in the Garden before sin. In the song *Echoes of Eden*, Stephen Curtis Chapman sings about human love, and how it is a shadow of the pure intimacy we once had (and will have again) with our Creator:

What is it about a kiss that makes me feel like this?

What is it that makes my heart beat faster when I'm in your arms?

What is it about your touch that amazes me so much?

How is it that your sweet smile can get me through the hardest mile?

What's the magic in your eyes that brings the love in me alive?

What is it about this dance, the sweetness of our romance—that makes me feel this way?

These are the echoes of Eden,

Reflections of what we were created for

Hints of the passion and freedom

That waits on the other side of heaven's door.

These are the echoes of Eden.

How is it the sky turns gray anytime you're far away?
What is it that makes me sad anytime you're feeling bad?
What is it about this night, the music and the candlelight,
That makes me feel this way?

*These are the echoes of Eden,
Reflections of what we were created for
Hints of the passion and freedom
That waits on the other side of heaven's door.
These are the echoes of Eden.*

What is it about this night, the music, and the candlelight that makes me feel this way?

*These are the echoes of Eden,
Reflections of what we were created for
Hints of the passion and freedom
That waits on the other side of heaven's door.
These are the echoes of Eden.*

Between Eden and the new heaven and the new earth, we will live for an unknown duration of time. In the Book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, God gives the apostle John a vision for what will emerge from the disease, destruction, and death of the present days. The descriptions paint a picture of the future that awaits us. Both the parallels and the contrast between what once was and what will be are important:

*... and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people,
and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away*

every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away(Revelation 21:3-4).

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

The new heaven and the new earth: This is the great hope for all who suffer in this fallen world. This is the hope God leaves us in the closing chapters of the Bible . . . and this is the hope that Rob left his congregation at the end of his sermon. As I turned off the tape, I realized that he had recorded this sermon only a few months before “frontal lobe dementia” began to make him an extreme illustration to his own message.

The Last “Goodbye”

The last time I saw my brother alive, I sat beside his bed watching my mother lovingly caress his head. “I wish he could just say ‘Mum’ one more time,” she said. Instead there were times when her son (obviously not knowing what he was doing) would push her away—seemingly to reject the loving hand that gently stroked his cheek.

Unmoved, our mother continued to patiently feed him his favorite drinks, instinctively hoping to satisfy his hunger, perhaps giving him some joy and comfort—if he could even experience such feelings in his embattled state.

On the one hand, I wanted to cry. On the other hand, I rejoiced that Rob already had the most important healing of all.

I looked on with mixed emotion. On the one hand, I wanted to cry. On the other hand, I rejoiced that Rob already had the most important healing of all. His spiritual healing from sin meant when he passed away from this earth, he would be totally healed in eternity. Many memories and many Bible verses passed through my mind in those final minutes with him:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us
(Romans 8:18).

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Corinthians 4:17; NIV).

Knowing that this would probably be my final goodbye to Robert, I bent over and kissed him on his forehead. “Goodbye, Robert. I love you, brother,” I said. I left the room holding back tears, but also departed with a real peace—the kind of peace “**which surpasses all comprehension**” (Philippians 4:7). The tears would come, and then come again and again. Even today, I can’t think about him for very long without feeling the loss and reliving portions of the pain. . . . But those emotions I know will one day cease as well, as every tear is wiped away by Jesus . . . this I know, for the Bible says it’s so. The question has been answered through the big picture of God’s Holy Word. *Why is there suffering and death?* Eden was lost to sin. I now live in a fallen world. But in the future there will be a restoration and a healing that is beyond the imagination. In the meantime, I know that my brother is in the hands of His Creator, as I am . . . now, but not yet.

I held my mother closely as we walked down the hallway, out the door of the nursing home,

and toward the car. Around us, people continued about their daily business, boarding buses, coming out of stores with armloads of goods, children laughing on their way home from school. . . . it all looked so normal in the bright sunlight. People were going to and fro, indifferent and unaware of what was happening to my brother Robert. But why should they? They didn't know him or know what was happening to him. Why should they care?

But as I looked at them, I thought of the fact that each one of them is, like Rob, going to face death one day. Many of them will end up in nursing homes, aimlessly staring at the wall, their minds tragically deteriorated from the effects of disease. What is the purpose of all that they are doing now if death is just the end of it all? Is it all, in the end, futility? No, no it's not. In fact, it is all full of meaning, guided by the hand of the God who not only created it all, but also causes it all to work together for good—and soon enough He will restore it all once again. We all will die, yes, but we all will live for eternity either in heaven (the renewed creation) with our Creator, or in hell, separated from Him for eternity.

As I thought about this, I felt anew Robert's passion and the burden he felt to warn the world about the true meaning of life and tell them the wonderful saving message of the gospel. *That's what Rob would want me to feel*, I thought. They need to care—they need to face the reality of death. At the car with my mother, I thought about the fact that one day I'll have to say goodbye to her also . . . and the fact that I too will someday finish my days on this earth. Until then, suffering and death will be the norm. But after that. . . .

There shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and

ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Amen (Revelation 22:20-21).

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. In Philippians 3:8-10, Paul said that knowing Christ was more important than all other things. Review this passage. Would you agree or disagree with him? Give solid reasons for your answer.
2. If someone does not believe history as it is recorded in Genesis, how might that affect their hope for the future as prophesied in Revelation? Do you think someone can hope in heaven without an understanding of Eden? Why or why not?
3. When it comes to living wisely and making the most of our days, do you think it is more important to have truth, trust, or a vision for eternity?

Questions for Personal Reflection:

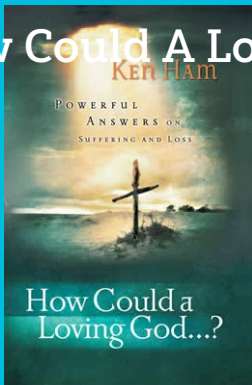
1. Find a quiet place where you can pray and read God's Word without interruption. Skim back through the many passages of Scripture we have discussed in this book, and review any notes you have from the group discussions, the personal reflections, and the verses for contemplation and memorization. Then read James 1:22-25. How do you think God wants to change your life in light of all that He has shown you through the Bible?

Bible Verses for Contemplation and Memorization:

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

- 1 Peter 1:6–16

How Could A Loving God...?



[<http://answersingenesis.org/store/product/how-could-loving-god/?sku=10-2-271>]

Apologist/Bible teacher Ken Ham makes clear the hope-giving answers found in the pages of Scripture. Be ready when hurting hearts need comfort.

Master Books has graciously granted AiG permission to publish selected chapters of this book online. To purchase a copy please visit our online **store** [<http://answersingenesis.org/store/sku/10-2-271>].

Support the creation/gospel message by **donating** or **getting involved!**