



Sunday, May 2, 2021

WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Stone by the Sea

The earth was created on the very first day of time (Genesis 1:1). When it was created, its entire surface was covered by water (1:2). This water was divided, first by the creation of the sky on day two (1:6-8), then by the formation of land and seas on day three (1:9-10).

Imagine that you are a small stone on the dawn of that third day of creation. For your entire (albeit brief) existence, all you have known is water. Nothing you have experienced could have prepared you for that third day. In an instant, you no longer feel any water at all, but find yourself perched on the edge of a vast sea.

The heavenly bodies – the sun, the moon, and the stars – were created on day four (1:14-19). In the cold vacuum of space, water instantly freezes; if it were not for the warm light of the sun or some other luminary, it would remain that way. If the above were all you knew, you might be tempted to envision your existence as a stone on that third day as an impossibly cold and dark one. Light though was created on day one (1:3-5), and that light was sufficient to ensure that the water you knew from creation was liquid and that the plants, soon to be created, would survive (1:11-13).

So, life at the edge of the sea is not that bad. You feel the warmth of the light. What's more, a moment later, an incredible scene unfolds: the ground opposite to the sea explodes in a symphony of colorful diversity, as grass, flowers, shrubs and trees appear. You find the scene captivating, yet, you cannot participate in it. You are a stone. Neither can you participate in the water just beyond your reach. And now, for the first time you notice what you've been feeling since you emerged from the water: an inescapable, incurable dryness.

As best as we know, the movements of the seas – the currents, tides, and waves – are governed by the gravitational influence of the heavenly bodies, primarily the moon. The interplay between the earth, the moon, and the sun not only moves the seas but forms the seasons, which came into being on day four (1:14). The movement of the seas and the winds above them have a lot to do with our experience of seasons. If the heavenly bodies and the seasons they created didn't exist on day three, it's reasonable to assume that the seas didn't move. Thus, the sea you see as a three-day-old stone is different than the one we see today: perfectly still. And, though you are right next to it, it is totally beyond your reach. You are a stone. The light fades, and day three closes.

As day four opens, the dryness you feel is compounded by a feeling of panic and despair. You long for the ocean, and it is *so* close, but you simply cannot reach it. Then, in a glorious instant, a blazing yellow orb appears in the sky, replacing the light you had known from the first day. Then, something wonderful happens: the sea moves! Thunderous waves begin to crash over you, and you find yourself covered! You are dry no more. Instead, you feel as you did in the beginning.

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As time continues though, something truly tragic happens: the sea retreats. “Not again!” you cry. There’s nothing you can do though. You’re still a stone. And you’re dry once again. What’s going to happen? Will the sea return? It does. And, no matter how many times you find yourself dry, it keeps coming back.

You are of course not a stone, but a soul. And God is not a sea, but the Maker of the seas and you! When you awaken to the existence of right and wrong though, you find that the relationship with God that you had enjoyed in innocence is gone (cf. Romans 7:9). In its place are the dry and harsh realities of sin; you find yourself spiritually thirsty and helpless as a stone. Unlike the situation you’ve imagined though, God didn’t and won’t move away from you; it is you and I who have turned from Him and “hid, as it were, our faces from Him” through sin (cf. Isaiah 53:3). The stone had nothing to do with its dryness; we have everything to do with our sin.

Being helpless to fix your sin problem doesn’t mean you are hopeless. You’re not a stone. You can draw nigh to the God you’ve left. And guess what happens when you do? Every single time, like the tide rolling in, “He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). You’ll never be dry, but instead a fountain of water will spring up in you unto everlasting life (John 4:14).

It might be that the tide of your relationship with God has drawn back because you have travelled down the road to perdition. It’s time to return and “believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:29). Belief leads one to the fountain opened “for sin and for uncleanness,” the watery grave of baptism (Zechariah 13:1; Romans 6:3-4).