We're going to turn to Revelation 22. *Then the heavenly messenger showed me the river of the water of life as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him, and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun. For the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and forever.*

That is one of the most beautiful passages in literature. It is also, of course, the close of the New Testament. Now, I'd like for you to follow something with me. Perhaps you have never considered this: four chapters in the Word of God are outside the curse. The curse begins in Genesis 3, the fall of our creation, the fall of Adam; then in Revelation 18, 19, and 20, we have Satan disposed of and all negative things. We then have the last two chapters of Revelation, beyond the dissolving of this creation, where sin has been done away with, and the fall has been done away with; then you have Revelation 21 & 22. We have four chapters in Scripture untainted by the fall.

Now, this is extremely significant because we get to see the mind of God without the fall. No redemption is here, not before Genesis 1 and 2, and not after Revelation 21 and 22. We have four wonderful passages of Scripture that are better for knowing the mind of God than any other in all Scripture, because it's so unvarnished and unflawed.

I want you to think with me for just a moment of Paul's prayer in the book of Ephesians, when he said that you might have a revelation of Jesus Christ, and he spoke of God's counsel, and he used a term that perhaps has not been emphasized as much as it should be. We have been very enamored with the fall and salvation. Now, I don't want to take from that, but brothers and sisters, salvation was never God's goal. Now, if God has a purpose that is outside of the physical creation, then He has a purpose that preceded creation. It was in the eternals. And He has a purpose that will go on beyond the end of creation. A purpose that is above and beyond the fall.

Let me see if I can do this. It was one of your own, T. Austin Sparks, who gave us this illustration. We will forever be indebted to him. He did it this way: that here's God in eternity, and He has a purpose that has nothing to do with salvation, and then T. Austin Sparks would draw a line out this way, and that would go on into the eternal future, and this is His purpose. But at this point, the fall came, and man fell.

T. Austin Sparks then drew a cross right there, indicating Jesus Christ's redemption for the world. Then he drew a line back up here, allowing the Lord to go on to His true purpose. We have become so focused on, and so centered on, salvation that we forgot He has a purpose above and beyond the fall, and beyond redemption. Does that illustrate it? Can you understand? Have you heard what I've said? I am of Baptist vintage. Baptists are, without question, more evangelistic than most people. The seminary I graduated from boasts that it has sent more missionaries to the field than

all the other Protestant seminaries in the world, and that's probably true, too. To go out and preach the Gospel.

We Baptists don't know anything *but* salvation. You can live in a Baptist church, and you will hear for the rest of your life probably basically two kinds of messages…I'll make it three. If you're lost, get saved. If you're saved, save others. And the other, from time to time, is a message of comfort, thrown in about three times a year. Basically, we have only two messages, and somewhere, and it wasn't the Baptist who did it, somewhere along the line, probably starting with Charles Finney and John Wesley. We bent the New Testament and everything in it so that it would tell us two things, and two things only. If you're lost, get saved, and if you're saved, save others.

Brothers and sisters, that's what I learned in four years in the seminary. I sat in New Testament classes and Old Testament classes, and everything was turned and forced to say, "You're lost, get saved. You're saved, save others." And when I walked out of the seminary, I was like any other good Baptist. You take John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Revelation 3:20 away from us, and we'd be struck dumb. That's all we knew.

I'm wondering if any of you can identify with what I'm saying. You can hear just so many salvation sermons. You can hear just so many touching messages about someone's conversion, and somewhere along the line you get weary, but every once in a while you thank God for one of those comfort messages.

Brothers and sisters, two chapters at the beginning of Scripture have nothing to do with the fall. Two chapters at the end of Scripture have nothing to do with the fall, and they give us great insight into that eternal purpose. And that's not all. The four Gospels give us great insight into His purpose, His eternal purpose, and we find great insight in the epistles. I don't know how we found so much evangelism in the epistles.

I quoted you a passage of Scripture this morning about how we *have been* given all the blessings of heavenly places in Christ Jesus. When that is preached on, they say, "Isn't it going to be wonderful when we get to heaven and have all the riches that are in Christ?" I want to debunk something right now. I want to tell you that not only have you never been born again, but you will never be born again. Boy, I hope to goodness you were all here when I said that.

I would also like to tell you that you're never going to go to heaven. You are never going to go to heaven. Nobody in this room is going to go to heaven. Most of us probably got saved because we wanted to go to heaven. You will never, never go to heaven. You'd be the loneliest human ever born if you went to heaven. Could it be any clearer? *And I saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.* Now, you want to go to heaven. You want to go to New Jerusalem. Make up your mind. You go to heaven. I doubt there'll be anybody there. You might have to fellowship with a few angels, but God's people will be in the New Jerusalem. You knew that, didn't you? You knew we were going to the New Jerusalem. How is it that we can read that I saw the New Jerusalem

coming down out of the heavens? So, you're never going to be born again, and you're never going to go to heaven.

Now, for those of you who don't know what I'm talking about in the first passage, the Scripture actually says, "You must be born from above." By the way, that's our mother, Jerusalem. That's our mother. We're born of her. You must be born from above. Somehow, in all our translations, we have dared not touch those two things. There's a lot in the New Testament that stays and stays and stays because it's what we first learned in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Let's lift our eyes higher, and let us see if we can find a purpose that brought forth creation itself; the purpose that moved God, out of a heart of love, to do what He did, including dying for us.

Now, will you engage me in just a little speculation here? There's a possibility that if there had never been a fall, there would still have needed to be the death of Jesus Christ without any need for redemption. Now, I am not married to this idea, but I want to consider it for a moment. That it took the death of Christ…one grain fell in the earth and grew up out of there many grains absolutely identical to the one in the earth. But it took the death of Christ to bring forth the many grains. I'm not really sure, but there's a possibility that there is a suffering, dying, resurrected Lord outside of salvation, that we might be one with Him.

I want you to go to Genesis with me, and I want you to do something with me. Let's follow the story. I suppose it would be impossible for God to create without leaving some impressions of Himself in that creation. Would you not agree? I went to an artist once to get some artwork done, and he had very short arms; when he gave me the artwork back, everyone he drew had remarkably short arms. I hope you get my point: that the imprint of God Himself is in His creation.

In the beginning He said, “Let there be,” but He was before the beginning, and let there be light, and that showed us the Lord. Then for six days He created, and each day gave us a little more understanding of our Lord. The first day…it is void. The second day we have light. And what happened on the third day? The earth rose out of the water, and land became a symbol of Jesus Christ throughout the Old and New Testaments. Then came life, the first life being the grain and the trees, and showed forth our Lord as grain and as trees.

In the lowest form of life, there is a picture of our Lord for us. Then came the birds that fly above the earth, and we have the picture of our Lord ascending. After the birds, we have the cattle, including the lamb, picturing for us a Lamb who's already been slain, and letting us really know what Jesus Christ is like. And after the cattle on the sixth day, God took clay from the earth and molded the clay. I don't know if you know this, but if you examine a human body and the dirt, you'll find we have the same composition. Did you know that? We have calcium and magnesium and manganese and iron and little bitty flecks of gold in us, too.

That's all in the soil, and we came from the dirt, which forever tells us that we belong to this planet. But something else happened: God knelt beside the clay and blew something of the other realm

into him. Something that came forth, if you please, out of the lungs of God. And man became, unfortunately, because he got stuck there, a living soul.

God said to him, "Let him bear My image and let him rule." God showed us His heart, that this planet belonged to a man who was partly of the dirt of this earth and partly of the other realm. He said, "Stand up and show the visible world what I'm like." The animals saw God expressed in an image of God, and they could get a little idea of what God was like by seeing Adam.

Now, brothers and sisters, this man has not fallen. He has not eaten of knowledge. You know, I have the feeling if we saw Adam in his unfallen state, we'd be hard-pressed not to fall down at his feet and worship. He must have been splendid. He must have been a beautiful creature, probably clothed in light. Here is a man who is supposed to do two things: he's supposed to walk this earth and show forth God; he's supposed to rule this earth, and there is so much of God's eternal purpose in that.

Well, we know what happened to Adam. He was the first man. God sent a second man. Later, a new man who was not only of the dirt and also of the heavens, but he even had God the Father move inside of him, that made him a new kind of species. Now, many other things happened. God put him to sleep and showed us what death might be like in that sleep. Then He pulled a rib out of that man, and saints, you get to look at the heart of God now.

When He pulled that rib out of Adam's side, He showed His own heart. He said to Adam when he put him to sleep, "It's not good for man to be alone." Saints, that man was made in God's image. It was not good for God to be alone either. We learn something, and this is before the fall, and that is there's a woman inside God, and it takes going to sleep to get her out. This is His purpose, His eternal purpose. It ought to be the very focus of our whole being to bring forth His image even to a fallen world, and to know that His heart is to have a wife, a bride, a counterpart that has only been male up to then for God and man.

I have a feeling God cried when He took that rib, and He didn't use any clay; He took it from Adam’s side. Now, saints, if we could take that rib and put it in a laboratory today with our scientific equipment, we'd discover that the DNA in that rib was identical to the DNA of that man. I think you'll agree with that. It's his rib, and He built the most beautiful woman this world will ever see.

Now, in a realm free of the fall, we have a man and a woman, and the woman came out of the man's side. Both of those show us the Lord's eternal purpose. A woman; she was already one with him, for she was in him, and then she was built out of that rib; not created, but built out of that rib. She wasn't created by God; she was part of Adam. She was already in there, and she was one with him. Then she rose up into the life that Adam gave her, and their DNA was the same. You have male DNA and identical female DNA, and if you tell me that's not possible, well then it's just because you're not Adam…and you're not Eve. They were the same person, but two; but they were not two for very long - they were one.

Creation must have moved and quaked at its foundations when it observed this beautiful woman. The business of marriage is the greatest picture God has ever given us of His eternal purpose. I think…it's hard to know, for He gave us so many pictures of His eternal purpose, and the two became one just like they already had been. And there's a girl in God, and He is determined that she will be one with Him.

He put them in a garden. He had built the girl - that's the first building God ever did. Then He put them in a garden, and this is really amazing. Was there gold there in that garden? No, there was a picture of gold in that garden. Your Lord is gold; that's a picture of Him.

There was a pearl - a picture of Christ. There were gems and stones there, and there was water there that was a picture of Him. There was a tree there that is also a picture of Him. What a gigantic river, and one gigantic tree. If you read where that river flowed, it flowed all the way from Assyria to Ethiopia. That's quite a river, and the tree went with it.

How can you have a tree that'll reach all the way from Assyria to Ethiopia? No possible way can that be done, is there? I don't think so either. Not until you get to John 14 and 15…and then you know there's a tree that can be that big. There's only one kind of tree that can be that big - a vine tree. He said, "I am the vine," and so He gave us the picture of Himself. And there is fruit in the tree, but we don't know that yet. There's gold and pearls and precious stones. There's a tree, and there's water.