

The Business of Heaven

by Lynn Andrew

Any trouble we encounter fitting biblical data into a logical framework will be due to the framework, not the data. Difficulties disappear when the framework is made realistic enough. For example, if you see tension between election and volition relative to salvation, it is a sign that your framework is too simplistic. Imagine what might happen if everyone allowed that salvation is more than something God has purposed in order to meet the human need. We might discover another variable that eliminates the problem altogether.

Consider a parable:

The enterprise of a certain business was such that more than one class of employee was required. The owner tapped choice people for the most responsible positions, securing them with incentives they could not refuse; regular employees were simply hired as they responded to advertised openings—if one of them quit it would not harm the company, and if any of them turned out to be worthless servants they could be readily fired. In a third category were family members whose performance was irrelevant.

Now consider another, rather unlikely business where the owner had no aim to make a profit and had no particular goal in mind other than keeping his employees happy. He might hire anyone who would be willing to hang around, partying and admiring him. He sometimes picked them out and sometimes waited for

them to come to him because he never came to a conclusion as to which of the two policies yielded a better climate in his heavenly enterprise.

If changing the framework has the potential to unseat the election dilemma (for example), why not move the debate up to address the business of heaven? Better yet, if the Bible reveals a more comprehensive plan than just personal salvation from sin to eternal felicity, would it not be a good idea to expand the framework to include the full scope of the business of heaven?

Notwithstanding C. S. Lewis' famous remark that joy is the serious business of heaven, there is a serious business amply represented in Scripture: the climactic, flesh-and-blood battle to eliminate evil in heaven and earth. Our personal salvation is only one component in the grand war of the ages.

Although that incessant debate sparked by the disparate views of John and Jacobus certainly owes its existence to a flat, icon-like framework, no one would seriously suggest that classes be introduced, even if indicated in the biblical data, for everyone has learned that inequality of opportunity is evil. (Too bad. We could be debating not whether it is possible but if it is more advantageous to be conscripted or to be free to come and go at will.)

So in the mainstream of opinion, joy must remain the only serious business of heaven until that day when the Bible's politically incorrect picture of the campaign to put Satan in his place is proven to be more than fancy words for ... for what I don't know.

†