

Time travel makes for interesting story lines, like Ron Howard's movie, "Back to the Future." We love to fantasize about what it would be like to go back or look ahead. But we already have the means for that to be. Genesis proclaims a perfect creation of the past that has been lost, while Revelation reveals a perfect future creation to be restored. Sandwiched between these bookends is God's plan for Jesus to bring us back to the future. In other words, the Bible contains the original *Back to the Future* script!

Moses caught a glimpse of that glory on a mountain called Sinai. Jesus shared this bright light in the wedding at Cana, the feeding of 5000, and the miracle of Easter. The disciples had their eyes opened to this reality on the mount of Transfiguration and the Road to Emmaus. Years ago, when I flew overseas, I remember walking down the ramp to a Boeing 747, surrounded by people of every nation, all speaking many languages. (I wondered if this is what it will look like upon our arrival in heaven.) In a sense, that became an important vision for me.

Have you ever had a vision that has changed your present and your future? John Kennedy saw a chance to put a man on the moon. Martin Luther King dreamed God would bring a change to our hearts so all would be judged by their character and not the color of their skin. Your parents saw a future in their life with each other. Zion's founders had a vision in a congregation that would gather for worship, spiritual growth and service, and 150 years later, we are here.

John had a vision of the only future that can change this sinful world. We make his vision more complicated than need be, as control and understanding are often more important to us than the trust of faith. We would prefer earth to look like heaven and forget heaven will replace earth. Rather than basking in the glory of an eternal future, we allow the distractions of a broken world to make this vision seem impossible, impractical, and not to be believed.

Arrogantly assuming we are the key to glory now, we often fail to allow the assurance of an eternal life with God to translate into learning to live in that faithful relationship now. But knowing our future can change our present!

When we read parables in Bible study, I have found that once we understand the ending, it helps to go back and read the parable again, as we find out how we missed the first time through, and better understand how it speaks to me. Revelation's back to the future approach helps faithful living in the same way.

Picture again what we hear: *'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore ... for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'*

Like a lamb, God came into our present in Bethlehem's manger. In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus (the Shepherd King) leads us on a journey to that new future. Revelation shares a future vision, so our earthly present does not distract

us from the gift of life that has already been given. This is a call to keep our eyes on the prize and our feet firmly grounded in the life that has been changing us from the beginning.

Revelations speaks of a new creation, and what a gift of love that is! The first creation was perfect, yet sin has changed its appearance. God could have responded in anger or total destruction and yet he didn't. So there would be no mistake, he came in person of Jesus to re-create, or make all things new. He came back from the future to change our past, so that our present would have meaning, hope, and a love that might change the future of those around us.

We like sheep who have gone astray, are made clean in the baptismal flood, and called to shepherd others, as we have been served by Christ. All Saints is the reminder that God has given everything (even his Son) to forgive a painful past and begin a hope filled future. Yet our world pays more attention to Halloween than today's joy of All the Saints! It is our joy to help the world around us see the vision we have seen and help change the hopes and dreams of a broken world.

In a sense, Halloween is no different from the idea of time travel. Costumes become a way to pretend we are someone else and travel where we have never been before. It is a playful way to hide from the reality of a scary world. It is a vision of pretending, but illustrates what life is truly like -- hiding, imagining, and hoping for good treats. Jesus says the best treat is already on the table, and there is no reason to hide from what we fear or pretend to be whom we aren't.

The first Halloween was in a garden as Adam and Eve tried to hide what they really were. Easter proclaims, "there is no need to hide from or fear the future!" What a heavenly present such grace allows us to live in. Our celebration of All Saints is a reversal of the Halloween syndrome. It announces an end to hiding who we are and the fear of what we might not become. The veil has been lifted and the glory of God's love has chased the darkness of yesterday and tomorrow away forever.

The script from Genesis through Revelation is a time travel manual that reveals the back to the future God has intended from Day One. In a perfect plot of glory, Jesus (God in the Flesh) came to show us the way in his life, death, and resurrection. He took off the mask of God and put on the mask of humanity, so his sacrifice would lift us into peace. His mission showed how our hope-filled future has already overcome our sin-struggling past. Now we are free to live in the present as people of change! People of hope! People of servant love!

How much easier it is to live when we know the ending before we even see the beginning – and all the hard work (like Calvary and an empty tomb) are taken care of for us by our God of love. No longer do we need to wander in the darkness, hiding who we are and hoping for what we don't deserve. We are loved! We are home! We are gifted with peace. Welcome home ... already and for always.

-- Seeber