

FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY: GOD'S PLAN

INTRODUCTION: In Psalm 102:25-27 the psalmist says to God, *"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."*

Listen to that last sentence again: *But you remain the same, and your years will never end.* Another Bible translator put it this way: *But year after year you're as good as new.* I like that thought! I can easily see that my body has NOT remained the same year after year; my body is NOT as good as new, and neither is the earth nor even the skies. Everything associated with time will eventually perish, but God remains the same. I have usually thought of eternal as unending, but equally exciting is the idea of eternal as unchanging! The Bible is full of new material for us to ponder and digest!

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"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

How good to know that God is eternal – that God is the I AM: before the beginning and after the end, the first and the last, the one who always is, who always was and who always will be. We all need safety, certainty, dependability, and durability in our lives – and we find it all in God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

The Son of God, the Word, is also eternal, is God. We must never think of Jesus – the Word become flesh – as having his start in Bethlehem. No, that was just his start in a new form and with a new name. The Son of God is the Creator of all things.

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26,27)

God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit conferred and decided to create human beings, knowing full well the cost that would be involved. Male and female were both needed to reflect the image of God. They were equal; both were valued: both were loved. AND both were curious about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for they were forbidden to eat its fruit.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are to dust you will return. (Genesis 3:19)

Both the male and the female were also equally guilty of sinning by disobeying God's orders and both suffered the consequences. Now they needed a Savior, which God would provide – in due time.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus (for he will save his people from their sins). He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:30-33, with Matthew 1:21 inserted)

Mary's response to the angel's announcement showed the depth of her faith: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." She also said, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Yes, a Savior was coming, not only for her, but for everyone, including us!

The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The Son of God was not only BORN into the human race, he also grew up – like we do. When he was about thirty Jesus embarked on a public ministry that lasted about three and a half years. John, who followed Jesus closely during those years, had no problem believing that he came from God the Father. The glory that surrounded Jesus and the grace and truth that marked his ministry were proof enough for John!

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:14-17)

At the cross we understand why the Incarnation took place. For the Son of God to be the sacrifice for our sins, to be our Savior, he needed a body. The Bible had established right from the start that blood had to be shed in order for sins to be forgiven and that the system of animal sacrifice that God set up was only temporary. When Jesus died on the cross, God's part in providing for our salvation was finished. Our part now is to believe in Jesus, and when we do, we receive eternal life and become a participant in the rest of the story!

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

About the Son [God] says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." (Hebrews 1:3,8,9)

It is easy to see who is the Star of the eternal story: is it God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He came to earth, provided purification for our sins through his death, returned

to life, and ascended to Heaven, where he will forever be praised for his matchless deeds and qualities.

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them, singing: To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" Amen. (Revelation 5:11-13)

We have much to look forward to, like joining the millions of angels in singing praise to our Lord. Meanwhile we can encourage ourselves and each other by talking and singing about our heavenly home.

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