



Part One

By

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Chapter One

Every one of us is on an epic journey through time, space and eternity. I call it the *Great Reveal*. Why?

Let's begin at the beginning .. well .. before the beginning.

“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.” Psalm 90:1-2

Working Backward

The psalmist (believed to be Moses) worked backward in time and space to eternity.

Time – Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all *generations*.

Space – Before the *mountains* were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the *earth* and the *world*.

Eternity – Even from *everlasting* to *everlasting*, You *are* God.

Working Forward

Reversing the order of this verse shows us the process of the **Great Reveal**.

Eternity – Even from *everlasting* to *everlasting*, *You are God*.

Space – Before the *mountains* were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the *earth* and the *world*.

Time – Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all *generations*.

Finite and Infinite

The epic journey you and I call *life* began before time and space. It started with God in *eternity* (“everlasting to everlasting”). I think *eternity* is difficult for us to understand because all of our experience is with *time* and *space*. We are *finite* and God is *infinite*. How can *finite* beings understand the *infinite* God?

The word *finite* is an adjective that comes from the Latin *finis*, which means “end, boundary, limit.” A *finite* being is a being with an end, with a boundary, with limits.

The word *infinite* is an adjective that comes from the Latin *infinītus*, which means “endless, boundless, without limits.” An *infinite* Being is a Being without an end, without a boundary, without limits.

Think about the challenge before us. We are *finite* beings, **with limits**, trying to comprehend an *Infinite Being*, **without limits**. How is that possible?

God is *infinite* in relation to time and space. He is not limited by time or space. He is not dependent on time or space. In fact, time and space depend on God. God is the cause of time, the cause of space. God is the *necessary* Being. Time and space are *contingent* on God's existence and creative choice and accomplishment. So, we need to go back **before** time and space for help in answering the question of how a *finite* being can comprehend an *Infinite* Being.

The Eternal God

“The eternal God *is your* refuge, And underneath *are* the everlasting arms.” Deuteronomy 33:27

The Hebrew words for “eternal God” are אֱלֹהֵי קִדְמוֹת (elohim qedem) – “the eternal (aforetime) God.” The word *qedem* also translates as “ancient, long ago, days of old, front, forward, forever, everlasting, east,” so it's important to note the usage and context when searching for the proper translation.

God's “arms” are described as the *everlasting* arms. The Hebrew word is עוֹלָם (*olam*), which means “forever, ancient, eternal, of old, long duration, antiquity.”

Moses wrote in Genesis that God is “the Everlasting God.”

אל עולם (*el olam*) “God forever”

The Prophet Isaiah identified God as “the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity ...” (Isaiah 57:15)

High – רום *rum* – “high, exalted”

Lofty One – נשָׂא *nasah* – “to lift, carry”

inhabits – שָׁכַן *shakan* – “to settle down, abide, dwell”

eternity – אֲדָמָה *ad* – “forever”

The psalmist wrote – “Your throne *is* established from of old; You *are* from everlasting.” (Psalm 93:2) (אל עולם *olam*)

After King Solomon wrote his famous – “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die” – thoughts in Ecclesiastes 3, he wrote this –

“What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:9-11

Interesting thought that God has placed *eternity* in our hearts, especially after writing about those things human beings experience within the boundaries of time and space:

- A time to be born, And a time to die
- A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted
- A time to kill, And a time to heal
- A time to break down, And a time to build up
- A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance
- A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing
- A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away
- A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak
- A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace

The eternal God who is not bound by time and space placed eternity in the hearts of humans who are bounded by time and space. That's an important clue as we search for an understanding of this thing called **ETERNITY**.

What Is Eternity?

Human beings are “time-bound.” What I mean by that is we are limited (finite) by time. Time is our “boundary.”

When I was younger I would often say, “I can’t wait until this happens or that happens.” I was excited to get to the next big thing, but not any more. As I am starting my eighth decade of life on earth, I find myself pushing back on that “time boundary”. I **can** wait until this happens or that happens. I’m more **patient** waiting for the next big thing to happen. Time is short, shorter than I had realized, and I don’t want to rush through what’s left.

In case you wonder if I have *apeirophobia* (the fear of infinity, eternity), I don’t. Many people do and I understand why they would. However, the idea of living forever with God is a *joyous* concept to me. What I am conscious of is that my “time” of serving Him on earth in this lifetime is rapidly coming to a close. I want to accomplish as much as I can for Him while in this mortal body. I am “time-bound” in service to God on earth, in my corruptible flesh.

There is coming a time when we will no longer be bound by time or space. Our present circumstances are about to **change!**

One of my favorite sections of Scripture is 1 Corinthians 15 – especially this part –

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?’” 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

Whether you are excited about eternity or have some fear about it, the question still remains – “what is eternity?”

Think about the way you think about life and the way you express your thoughts about it. How often is your thinking “bound” by time and space? Time is a succession of events. Space is where those events take place. Both are based on “measurements.” We measure time by seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia. We measure space by distance or volume: height, width, depth, inches, feet, yards, miles, ounces, pounds, tons, etc. Mathematics and physics play an important role in our understanding of “life.” Our *finite* boundaries are impacted by them.

Now think about eternity where there are no time or space limitations. Mathematics and physics play no role in eternity. The infinite knows no boundaries and is not impacted by them. To say something is ‘past’ or ‘future’ works in a *finite* experience, but not in an *infinite* experience. To say that God did something in eternity past is to misunderstand eternity. There is no past in eternity, there is no future. *It just is.*

We get a glimpse into God’s eternality when Moses asked Him a question –

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ Moreover God said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.’” Exodus 3:13-14

I don’t want to jump ahead of myself, but a big part of *The Great Reveal* are the names God uses for Himself. In God’s first discussion with Moses, He reveals three names for Himself –

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה – *’ehyeh ’ăšer ’ehyeh* – I AM THAT I AM (come which come)
 .. God repeats אֶהְיֶה when He tells Moses to say to the leaders of Israel – “I AM has sent me to you.”

יְהוָה – *Yahweh* – “The Lord”

אֱלֹהֵי – *’ēlōhē* – “God” (used four times in verse 15) – “God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”

God then tells Moses – “This *is* My name forever” – “name” is שְׁמִי (*šəmi*) and “forever” is לְעֹלָם (*lə’ōlām*). The word “name” transliterates as “shem” and “forever” has the idea of both antiquity (past) and futurity (future). The word *lə’ōlām* can be translated as “eternity, everlasting.” The name God gave to Moses is His “eternal, forever” name.

Then God told Moses – “this *is* My memorial to all generations.” The word זִכְרִי (*zikri*) means “remembrance, memory, memorial.” God’s name is His “remembrance” to all “generations.” The Hebrew reads לְדֹר (*lədōr*) “from generation” :דֹר (*dōr*) “to generation.”

We’ll dig into God’s names more deeply as we continue our series, but it’s definitely something to ponder when we think about trying to grasp the concepts of *finite* and *infinite*.

How Do We Know About Eternity?

One question is how do we understand eternity, but another is how do we even *know* about eternity? How can finite beings who live inside the boundaries of time and space know there exists something outside of time and space that is not limited by what limits us? We can't! Our limits keep us from knowing that something outside our limits exists – unless Someone without limits *reveals* it to us.

Aha! Now we're on to something; we're beginning to grasp the importance of the **Great Reveal!** Unless a Being without limits reveals *eternity* to us, we would not, **could not** know of its existence. Because we are limited within the boundaries of time and space, there is no possible way for us to know about anything outside those limits.

Let's look at eternity from a different perspective. How does an infinite Being without boundaries view something going on inside time and space boundaries? King Solomon, in the same context of Ecclesiastes 3, give us some insight –

“I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it *is* the gift of God. I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does *it*, that men should fear before Him. That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been; And God requires an account of what is past.” Ecclesiastes 3:12-15

- That which is has already been
- what is to be has already been
- God requires an account of what is past

What kind of *being* could look at time and space in a way “that which is has already been” and “what is to be has already been?” Can a finite being look at what is and what is to be as having “already been”? Remember that a *finite* being is one who is limited by the boundaries of time and space. That’s not possible for them. The only type of being who looks at “what is” and “what is to be” as having already been must be an *infinite* Being.

Chapter Two

How do we ask questions about *eternity*? We looked at eternity and infinity in the first part of our series and saw that it has no boundaries, no limitations. Time and space are not part of eternity and infinity. So, how do we form good questions about eternity and infinity?

We've all heard the phrase "eternity past," but how can eternity have a past if it has no boundaries? Can we talk about eternity as *past* or *future*? Is it better to describe eternity as "always present" as in *now*? But how do we understand eternity as *now* when *now* doesn't remain *now* because *now* becomes *past* as soon as we think of *now*?

That's just one of the challenges we "time-and-space-bound" beings have in trying to understand something like *eternity*. We can try to define the words best as we can, but is that good enough? How can *finite* beings understand an *infinite* being who is not encumbered by boundaries/limitations of time and space?

I don't think we have any chance of understanding *eternity* "unless" an *eternal being* reveals what *eternity* is like.

Before Time

Here's another question. What happened "before" time began? If *eternity* is not bound by time or space, how could there be a "before"?

Good question!

Keeping in mind that only an *eternal* being could answer questions about *eternity*, let's see what we learn from the Eternal God. There are several places in the Bible where God shares clues with us about what He was doing in eternity. Two phrases we can look at are: "before time began" and "before the foundation of the world." As we look at these, remember that the Eternal God reveals eternal things in ways that *finite* beings could understand.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began." 2 Timothy 1:8-9

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time

manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.” Titus 1:1-3

“... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:18-21

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Ephesians 1:3-4

Here's what God revealed to us about what He did before time began, before the foundation of the world –

- God the Father loved God the Son and the Son loved the Father
- God chose us in Christ
- God saved us and called us with a holy calling according to His own purpose and grace toward us in Christ
- God foreordained Christ's death and resurrection
- God promised eternal life to us

Wow! All of that happened in eternity “before time began,” “before the foundation of the world.”

I don't want us to miss this point because it is central, *foundational*, to everything that happened ‘after’ time began, ‘after’ the foundation of the world.

**** God determined in unlimited, unbounded eternity that *Jesus Christ would die on the Cross, be buried, and rise from the dead.* ****

Please read that again –

**** God determined in unlimited, unbounded eternity that *Jesus Christ would die on the Cross, be buried, and rise from the dead.* ****

I'm **not** saying that God determined in unlimited, unbounded eternity that He would start things up, see what happened and respond to problems as they arose.

I'm **not** saying that God the Father determined in unlimited, unbounded eternity that He would ask His Son to be on standby to help out if things went bad in the new 'time and space experiment' He had planned.

I'm **not** saying that God decided to give time and space a whirl and would pull the plug if anything wasn't to His liking.

What I **am** saying is that God determined in unlimited, unbounded eternity that **Jesus Christ would die on the Cross, be buried, and rise from the dead**. Period.

Think about that for a moment.

Before time began, before the foundation of the world, God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – determined together to create time and space, knowing exactly what would happen in time and space. God determined that the Father would send the Son to die on a Roman cross and rise from the dead, and that the Son would send the Holy Spirit to followers of the Son to guide them through time and space and into eternity for the glory of God.

Before time began, God 'chose us' in Christ. God decided in eternity, before the 'beginning' we understand as the start of time and space, to express His purpose and grace toward us in Christ. God promised eternal life to us 'before time began'!

The offer of 'eternal life' was not an afterthought for God. It wasn't something God came up with at the last second in the Garden of Eden when the slimy serpent got to Adam and Eve behind God's back and tricked them into disobeying God. No, indeed! God walked through the Garden toward the serpent and the first man and woman knowing what they had done and what He would do. How did He know? It was part of God's epic plan determined in eternity, "before time began."

What God Knew and When He Knew It

I. God knew "before time began" that sinners would need a Savior.

God knew "from before the foundation of the world" that Jesus Christ would be that Savior.

God knew "before time began" that His Son would die on a Roman cross, be buried in a borrowed tomb, rise from the dead, and ascend to the right hand of the Father in the "heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come."

God knew all of that before He ever created time and space.

II. God knew the end from the beginning and before.

God knew 'everything' before time began, before He created the universe. Everything!

Does that mean God knew Adam and Eve would disobey Him in the Garden of Eden?

Yes.

Does that mean God knew Adam and Eve's disobedience would cause the sin nature that would distance humans from their Creator?

Yes.

Does that mean God knew the human sin nature would be passed along to all generations?

Yes.

Does that mean God knew the sin nature in every person born would lead to great evil and wickedness around the world?

Yes.

Does that mean God knew He would send His Son to be born of a virgin and die for the sins of sinful people?

Yes.

The answer to all of these questions and other questions we can ask about what God knew is **YES**. God knew **everything** “before time began.”

III. Then why didn't God do something else?

Excellent question!

It would seem that an All-Powerful, All-Knowing God would have a choice about what He was going to do. He's God!

God could have chosen to do something else. He was under no compulsion to create time and space. If God didn't want to create time and space, He didn't have to do it. If God wanted things to turn out differently than they did, He could have made things turn out differently than they did.

So, where do we go with that? If God knew what would happen before it happened and could have done something else, why didn't He do something else? If He wanted to create time and space with a perfect universe and earth and living beings who would always be perfect and never disobey Him, why didn't God do that?

I think the answer is obvious, but we may not want to hear it.

Chapter Three

We ended the last chapter with a question that must be addressed before we move forward.

“If God knew what would happen before it happened and could have done something else, why didn’t He do something else? If He wanted to create time and space with a perfect universe and earth and living beings who would always be perfect and never disobey Him, why didn’t God do that?”

My thought is that the answer is obvious, but we may not want to hear it. Here’s why I say that.

We’ve already established that God determined “before the beginning of time” that He would send His Son from Heaven to earth to bleed and die for the sins of those whom He chose “before the foundation of the world.”

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having

predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Ephesians 1:3-5

“... who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” 2 Timothy 1:9

“... in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” Titus 1:2

“... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:18-21

Lots of great theological points to make from these portions of God’s Word, but let’s focus for now on the primary question before us –

“If God knew what would happen before it happened and could have done something else, why didn’t He do something else? If He wanted to create time and space with a perfect universe and earth and living beings who would always be perfect and never disobey Him, why didn’t God do that?”

The obvious answer is that **God knew what He was doing and did it!**

Did God struggle with the decision to create the world in a way that would require the death of Christ on the Cross? Did God second guess Himself after He made the decision? Did He re-think it, start over again and come up with something different? Did God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit disagree about the great plan? Did they hold several council meetings to hash out the details? I doubt it, and here's why.

The All-Wise God

“to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

Romans 16:27

The Greek text reads – μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ – *monō sophō Theō* – [to the] only wise God.

These are some of the last words the Apostle Paul wrote in his great epistle to the Romans. He brought the letter to a great crescendo about the “revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.”

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the

faith— to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27

That “revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began” is the **revelation** of God’s *eternal* plan – which is the “gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” *The Great Reveal* is how the “mystery kept secret since the world began” was “made manifest,” which means “made known clearly” (*phanerōthentos* – make clear, visible, open to view).

How did God make His eternal plan of the “gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” known to all people?

“... but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God.”

There’s the communication vehicle to announce God’s eternal plan to all nations – “the prophetic Scriptures.” The writer of Hebrews covered the same information in explaining God’s eternal plan and how He would communicate His plan to all the nations –

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at

the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1:1-4

God spoke first “by the prophets,” then “by His Son.” What was the grand eternal plan that God communicated through prophets and His Son? “... who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” That’s the “gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ”!

What was God’s purpose for revealing His eternal plan of the “gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ”?

“... for obedience to the faith.”

We’ll unpack a lot of this as we move forward in the study, but let’s sit back for a few minutes and let this information sink in.

The “alone wise God” designed a grand plan – the “gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ” – that He would make clear to all nations through His Word (the prophetic Scriptures) “for obedience to the faith.”

James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote this about God’s wisdom –

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” James 3:17

As we read those words about the wisdom that is from above (from God), we learn several important things about how God would have approached designing a plan in eternity that would impact every human being in time and space. It would be –

- first pure
- then peaceable
- gentle
- willing to yield
- full of mercy and good fruits
- without partiality
- without hypocrisy

The deliberations among God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be all of that because God is all that. God is pure and peaceable and gentle and willing to yield and full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. Those are some of the primary attributes of the all-wise eternal God who designed a great plan in eternity to **love the world**.

We know from Paul's letter to the Galatians (5:22-23) that God the Holy Spirit is filled with –

- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- kindness

- goodness
- faithfulness
- gentleness
- self-control.

That means God's eternal plan is all of that because God is all of that. It's part of God's *Great Reveal*, but more on that later in our study.

The Guiding Principle

The "fruit" (singular) of the Spirit begins with *love* and everything else (joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) flows from that love.

The Apostle John wrote – "God is love" (1 John 4:8). 'Love' is at the forefront of God's eternal plan as **THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE**.

All that God determined to do before time began, before the foundation of the world, was guided by His great **LOVE!**

The word "love" is found about 500 times in the Bible. 500 times! Much of that referring to God's love. Jesus pulled the covers off the entire eternal plan when He told a religious leader of Israel – "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16 is the *Great Reveal!* God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son** “before time began,” “before the foundation of the world.” To what end? “... for obedience to the faith” so that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Look at John 3:16 again – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

- God so loved the world
- that He gave His only Begotten Son
- that whoever believes in Him
- should not perish
- but have everlasting life

God in eternity loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son! Does that mean God the Father loved the world more than He loved His Son and that’s why Jesus died on the cross? Not at all. Here’s what Jesus said to His Heavenly Father –

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

Jesus, the Son of God, said that God the Father *loved* Him “before the foundation of the world.” So, in eternity (before the foundation of the world) God the Father loved God the Son.

[Another interesting point from John 17:24 is this statement – “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am.” .. *where I am* .. A possible view of a time-space event from eternity?]

We also have these testimonies of the Father’s love for His One and Only Son as witnessed by John the Baptist and the apostles Peter, James and John –

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” Matthew 3:16-17

“While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.” Luke 9:34-36

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we

heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” 2 Peter 1:16-18

Chapter Four

In our last study we looked at how Jesus Christ revealed God's great eternal plan on a dark evening as a ruler of the Jews approached Him secretly.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 3:16

I promised last time that we would look at an important *negative* word in God's eternal plan, so here we go.

“should not perish”

I call that a ‘negative’ from how both God and humans look at it. The idea of *perishing* is not something that surprised God, so it should not surprise us. It shouldn't have surprised the first man and woman on earth either. They should have seen it coming.

Death

We will spend time in future studies about how God carefully revealed His eternal plan during the Creation process, but I want to jump ahead a little so we can see how the idea of *perishing* developed. It seemed to be an important part of what Jesus wanted people to know – that they could have *eternal life* and **not perish**.

[A quick word about the Greek word used in John 3:16 – ἀπόλλυμι (*apollumi*) is an ancient word that predates the New Testament by almost a thousand years. It was understood as being “fully destroyed.” Greeks understood the word as being a great loss of ruin and destruction. It was more than just dying; it meant a miserable end to one’s life in the sense of eternal ruin.]

We read in Genesis 2 that God planted a garden eastward in Eden and placed the man He “formed” in the garden. The garden was filled with every tree that was “pleasant to the sight and good for food.” One of the trees in the middle of the garden was called the “tree of life.” Another tree in the middle of the garden was called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Make note of these words: **life, knowledge of, good, evil.**

God placed the man He formed in the garden of Eden to do two things: “tend and keep it.” God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Death (“surely die”) is a *negative* to someone who was made to be alive. Adam, the man God placed in the garden, heard and apparently understood what God meant or at least saw it as something he should **not** do. How do we know? From what happened after Adam ate from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’ Then the man said, ‘The

woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” Genesis 3:6-12

That’s the first time a human being expressed *fear*. Adam knew exactly what he had done and what God would require of him – **death** – and Adam was *afraid*. He had disobeyed a direct command from God and knew he would *die*.

The Hebrew word for *death* is מוֹת (*mōwt*). So, how does that connect to what Jesus told Nicodemus – “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”? The Hebrew word for *perish* is אָבַד (*abad*) and means “perish, destroyed, dying.” To die and be destroyed is to *perish*.

Jesus told Nicodemus that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

How does that work?

“For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming.” 1 Corinthians 15:21-23

All people die “in Adam.” Everyone who is *born* will *die* – unless God intervenes. Now we’re back to the eternal plan.

That is the meaning of what we read earlier in our study concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ “foreordained before the foundation of the world.” (1 Peter 1:20)

Jesus Christ is known as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Why was Jesus “slain from the foundation of the world”? So that He could bring life to those who were *dying* and *perishing*. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.” John 10:27-29

1. Jesus has ‘sheep’
2. Jesus’ ‘sheep’ hear His voice
3. Jesus ‘knows’ them
4. Jesus’ ‘sheep’ follow Him
5. Jesus gives His ‘sheep’ *eternal life*
6. Jesus said His ‘sheep’ will ‘never perish’ [not that they wouldn’t physically die, but that they would not suffer eternal ruin]
7. Jesus said no one would ‘snatch’ His ‘sheep’ from His hand
8. Jesus’ Father is ‘greater than all’ and gave Jesus’ ‘sheep’ to Him
9. Jesus repeated that no one is ‘able’ to ‘snatch’ His ‘sheep’ out of His ‘Father’s hand’

This is central to understanding God's eternal plan. God the Father gave 'sheep' to Jesus. No one would be able to 'snatch' Jesus' 'sheep' from His hand or the Father's 'hand.' That means Jesus' 'sheep' are in the hands of God the Father and God the Son.

How does that work? Look at some of what God the Holy Spirit does and has done –

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”
Genesis 1:1-2

“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The* Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Luke 1:35

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Matthew 3:16 – 4:1

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” John 3:5-6

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8

“God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:24

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:38-39

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:16-18

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” John 15:26-27

“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:5-14

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Luke 11:13

“And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” John 20:22

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.’” Acts 2:16-18

“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 2:38

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21

“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

We will share more about the role of the Holy Spirit in the grand plan of God in future articles, but the verses listed above give us some idea of what the Spirit has done in the past and is doing today. A vital **work** of the Holy Spirit that directly impacts Christians today is He is our ‘seal’ and “the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” No one can ‘snatch’ us away from God, even as Jesus promised.

God's Grand Plan

God the **Father**, **Son** and **Holy Spirit** designed a **grand plan** in *eternity*. Each member of the **Godhead** would play a vital role in the execution of the plan. Here's a simple way of looking at it –

- God the Father sends God the Son
- God the Son sends God the Spirit
- God the Spirit speaks of God the Son
- God the Son glorifies God the Father

Of course, the *grand plan* has been more complex in its execution, but understanding the basic purpose is easy.

What God determined to do in eternity – that you and I see in time and space – is more than remarkable – it's EPIC! That's why we called this series *The Great Reveal: Our Epic Journey Through Time, Space and Eternity*.

Chapter Five

In the last chapter we looked at God's *Grand Plan* designed in **eternity**. Each member of the **Godhead** played a vital role in the execution of the plan.

Here's how we described it –

- God the Father sends God the Son
- God the Son sends God the Spirit
- God the Spirit speaks of God the Son
- God the Son glorifies God the Father

It is an exquisite completed circle where every member of the Godhead is demonstrating love to each other and to human beings they created.

So, how did God execute the **plan**? That's where it gets a bit more complicated.

God

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one!” Deuteronomy 6:4

The Lord God is “one.” It doesn’t say God is one Person – it says God is “one.” That’s a term that describes *unity*. God is ‘one’ in Essence, three in Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – unified.

- One God (One Essence)
- Three distinct Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

God told Moses to speak those words to the children of Israel prior to their entering into the promised land. Here are verses just before the statement about God being ‘one’ –

“Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’” Deuteronomy 6:1-3

Why would God emphasize His being ‘one’ as part of Israel’s preparation to enter into the promised land? The Israelites had a long history of being around and even involved with the worship of multiple *gods* (polytheism). The family of Abraham worshiped pagan gods when they lived in Ur –

“And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out.’ Joshua 24:2-5

Even though Abraham learned to worship the ‘one’ true God, members of his extended family were still involved in worshiping pagan gods, even to the time of his grandson Jacob (Israel) –

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’ And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the

way which I have gone.’ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.”

Genesis 35:1-4

Jacob and his family were surrounded by people who worshiped the Canaanite gods and some of his family continued to worship the gods of Ur. When he moved his family to Egypt because of the famine, Jacob and his family were surrounded by the Egyptian gods. The Israelites had experienced centuries of exposure to pagan gods by the time God freed them from slavery in Egypt. God was going to send them into the ‘promised land’ where they would again face the temptation of worshiping foreign gods. What did *Yaweh* do? He reminded them that “The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one.”

The stories about the gods of the Canaanites, Egyptians and other ancient people were not at all like the God of the Bible. They were petty, unloving, uncaring and constantly fighting among themselves for position and power. The God of the Bible is loving, caring and unified. We find no evidence of pettiness and fighting among God the Father, God and Son and God the Holy Spirit.

“My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand. I and *My* Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” John 10:29-31

Jesus made an amazing claim, one that the Jews understood immediately. That's why they took up stones to kill Him. Jesus claimed a *unity* with and *equality* to God the Father.

Do we find squabbling and bickering between God the Father and God the Son? Do we find petty jealousies expressed among God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? We don't. Why? Because "The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one."

God in *eternity* – "before time began," "before the foundation of the world" – agreed on a *grand plan* where each member of the Godhead would carry out the plan's purpose in beautiful **perfection**.

Secret Things Revealed

"The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29

All the secrets of *eternity* belong to God – and to those He *reveals* them –

"Daniel answered and said: Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness, And light dwells with Him." Daniel 2:20-22

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7

“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:9-11

We might say that **everything** God determines in *eternity* to do in *time* and *space* is **secret** until He reveals them. That will be important to remember as we look at what each individual Member of the Godhead reveals. Why? Because God declares the end from the beginning –

“Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.’”
Isaiah 46:9-10

God the Father

- God the Father sends God the Son

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:16-17

We see that the Father’s motivation for sending Jesus is His love for “the world.” But there is more to the plan –

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:18

There is the issue of ‘condemnation’ that impacts those who do not believe “in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” We’ll dig deeper into that challenge in the near future.

First, let’s look at how God the Father revealed the *grand plan* to the world

–

“So the Lord God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And

between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:14-15

This is God’s first reveal about sending God the Son to the world. God spoke directly to the serpent (Satan) in the hearing of Adam and Eve. Eve understood God’s promise and thought that her firstborn son, Cain, would be that promised ‘man’ (Genesis 4:1). After God banished Cain because he killed his brother Abel, Eve had another son and believed he would be the seed God promised her –

“And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, ‘For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” Genesis 4:25

The “Seed” God promised Eve did come from the lineage of Seth centuries later. That “Seed” was Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20-21

God the Father sent God the Son to do many things. One of them was to “save His people from their sins.” God the Son would be the “Savior” of lost souls.

God often used angels (ἄγγελος – messengers) to **reveal secrets** to people. Here's another:

“Then the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Luke 1:30-33

God the Father sent God the Son to be *great* and *reign* from the throne of David over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever. God the Son would be the “Lord” of the world.

God the Father sent God the Son to be “Savior” *and* “Lord.”

Mary, the mother of Jesus, recognized that her Son would be both Savior and Lord –

“And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’ Luke 1:46-47

The angels of Heaven revealed that Jesus would be Savior and Lord –

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”
Luke 2:10-11

God the Father revealed to Jesus’ disciples that God the Son was the *One* promised to Israel and to the world –

“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’” Matthew 16:16-17

God the Father determined in eternity, “before the foundation of the world,” that He would send His Son to be Lord and Savior of the world.

“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from

Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:25-30

Chapter Six

In the last chapter we looked at the role of God the Father in the **grand plan** designed in *eternity* – “before time began, before the foundation of the world.”

- God the Father Sends God the Son

What did God the Father send His Son to do in *time* and *space*?

- God the Father sent God the Son to be the Savior of the world.
- God the Father sent God the Son to be *great* and *reign* from the throne of David over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever. God the Son would be the “Lord” of the world.
- God the Father sent God the Son to be “Savior” *and* “Lord” of the world.

God the Son

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and *accomplished* exactly what God the Father sent Him to do.

“And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.” Luke 9:30-32

“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.” Luke 12:49-51

“Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.’” Luke 18:31-32

“Then He said to them, ‘But now, he who has a money bag, let him take *it*, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with

the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end.” Luke 22:36-37

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” John 19:28-30

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” Ephesians 1:8-12

Notice the words “eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Apostle Paul claimed here that God the Father *accomplished* His **eternal purpose** “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That’s significant to note in our study because it demonstrates how the *eternal* plan of God determined “before time began” was accomplished in *time* and *space*.

The first Scripture quoted above concerns what happened on a mountain in Israel. It happened soon after Jesus fed thousands of people miraculously starting with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Afterward, Jesus asked His disciples how the crowds identified Him. The answers included 'John the Baptist,' 'Elijah,' or one of the 'old prophets' who had risen again. Then Jesus asked His disciples – “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” Jesus then told the disciples that He, “The Son of Man,” would suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.

What Jesus did at that moment was *reveal* the **heart** of the *eternal* plan – the reason God the Father sent God the Son to the world. The disciples didn't understand what Jesus told them until after the Resurrection, but Jesus did reveal that part of the plan to them.

Jesus then gave His disciples more insight into the inner workings of God's **eternal plan**. He told them what following Him would cost them personally – all part of God's plan from “before time began” –

“Then He said to *them* all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels.

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:23-27

About eight days after saying those words to the disciples, Jesus took Peter, John and James up on a mountain to pray –

“As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.” Luke 9:29-36

Several important things happened during Jesus' *transfiguration* –

- Jesus' appearance was altered in view of three witnesses: Peter, James and John. His robe became white and glistened. This change of appearance was part of *revealing* Jesus as God the Son to His disciples.
- Two men who lived centuries earlier (Moses and Elijah) appeared with Jesus and spoke about Jesus' death which He was about to "accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses represented the Law of God and Elijah represented the Prophets of God. Moses, who was buried by God, and Elijah, who was taken into Heaven without dying, both knew about God's eternal plan in more detail than they did when they were alive on earth. They knew who Jesus was and that He was going to die at Jerusalem. God had *revealed* that to them.
- Peter recognized who Moses and Elijah were and wanted to build three tabernacles for them and Jesus.
- A cloud overshadowed them as Peter spoke and a **voice** came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"
- After they heard the voice of God the Father, the cloud disappeared and Jesus was alone with them.
- Peter, James and John kept secret what they had seen.

That event would have been further confirmation to Peter, James and John that they were following the Son of God, the promised Messiah of Israel. It is also confirmation for us that God was carefully *revealing* His eternal plan to the followers of His Son –

- God the Father sent God the Son to be the Savior of the world.
- God the Father sent God the Son to be *great* and *reign* from the throne of David over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever. God the Son would be the “Lord” of the world.
- God the Father sent God the Son to be “Savior” *and* “Lord” of the world.

The Law and Prophets

Jesus often spoke about how what He was doing was a fulfillment of the **Law and Prophets**. The Law and Prophets were an integral part of the *great reveal* of the eternal plan of God –

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Matthew 5:17-18

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matthew 11:11-15

“The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.” Luke 16:16-17

“Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Luke 24:44-45

An important part of the *eternal* plan designed “before time began” was how God would **reveal** the plan during *time* and *space* –

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1:1-4

Moses, who was also called a prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10), and Elijah and the other prophets of the Old Testament, revealed much of God’s *eternal plan* over a period of about a thousand years. In “these last days,”

God spoke “by His Son.” Even as God spoke through Moses, Elijah and the other prophets, God the Father spoke through His Son. When we read the words of Jesus in the New Testament we are also hearing the voice of God the Father.

That’s extremely important for us to understand and remember. As Moses told Israel –

“The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29

Everything that God determined to do in eternity is a secret until He reveals it. What God reveals to humans “belong to us and to our children forever.” Why? “... that we may do all the words of this law.”

Revealing the Father

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My

Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.’ Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:1-11

Jesus received a lot of attention during His time on earth, but getting attention for Himself was not His intention. He had come from Heaven to earth to reveal His Heavenly Father. What was the purpose of God the Son revealing God the Father? To bring **glory** to the Father –

“Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:15-16

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again.” John 12:27-28

**** The eternal plan** was based on the idea of God the Father glorifying God the Son in *time and space* so that God the Son could glorify God the Father in *time and space*. The gift of **eternal life** that is a central part of the eternal plan determined “before the foundation of the world” is that God the Son would give eternal life to as many people as God the Father gave to God the Son. Eternal life, said God the Son, is to *know* the Father and the Son. **

When Jesus taught people how to pray, He taught them to begin by glorifying the Father –

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Matthew 6:9-13

When Jesus was nearing His death on the Cross, He demonstrated a deep desire to glorify the Father –

“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have

finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” John 17:1-5

Jesus prayed these words to His Father on the night of His arrest. Jesus was just hours away from being beaten and crucified for our sins and what was foremost on His mind was bringing **glory** to His father. How did Jesus accomplish that? By finishing the “work” that His Father had given Him to do.

Jesus glorified His Father on the earth by finishing the work His Father had given Him to do. That’s an important insight to what happened in *eternity* “before time began.” God the Father **gave** God the Son “the work” because that’s **the eternal plan**. That is why Jesus said, “It is finished,” on the Cross. He finished “the work” His Father had given Him in *eternity* to accomplish in *time* and *space*.

The Father did not assign His Son “the work” of dying on the Cross to do as an afterthought because things went horribly wrong in the Garden of Eden. God the Father gave “the work” to His Son in **eternity** – “before the foundation of the world.” That’s important for all of us to understand and remember during our time on earth.

A Personal Note

I am **deeply concerned** that many Christians don't understand this foundational point about why God did what He did and why He's doing what He's doing. Many Christians seem confused by it all. That's based on being a Christian for almost 50 years, meeting thousands of Christians during those years, talking with them about what they believe and why, listening to preachers preach and teachers teach, and reading hundreds of books about God, the Bible, and Christianity.

The differences in what Christians believe about God, the Bible, and Christianity is *astounding* and *disheartening* to me, which is one reason for this series of studies about **The Great Reveal**. We are all on an *epic journey* through time, space and eternity and we need to get it right – the first time. We won't have a second chance to get it right, so this is it. This is *our* opportunity to bring glory to the Father in time and space.

My prayer is that things about God and life that are fuzzy or confusing now will become clear and understandable as we continue together.

Chapter Seven

We are looking at what God did in *eternity*, “before time began, before the foundation of the world,” that impacted what has happened and will happen in *time and space*. We’re calling it the **Grand Plan** that led to the **Great Reveal!**

Each member of the **Godhead** played a vital role in the execution of the plan. Here’s how we’ve described it in previous chapters –

- God the Father sends God the Son
- God the Son sends God the Spirit
- God the Spirit speaks of God the Son
- God the Son glorifies God the Father

It’s a beautiful and powerful completed circle where every member of the Godhead is demonstrating love to each other and to the world they created.

The Apostle Paul used the “before” terms in his letters –

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Ephesians 1:3-5

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:8-10

“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.” Titus 1:1-3

The Apostle Peter used one of the “before” terms in his first letter –

“... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:18-21

Jesus mentioned it in a prayer to His Father on the night of His arrest –

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.” John 17:24-25

God the Holy Spirit

We turn now to the role God the Holy Spirit played in the grand plan designed “before time began, before the foundation of the world.”

The Holy Spirit is **active** and **energetic**. We see His activity and energy displayed from the beginning of the revealed Word of God – “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) – to the ending of the revealed Word of God – “And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

In fact, the Holy Spirit is the One who **revealed** God’s Word!

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy

never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21

“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

When did the Triune God decide that the Holy Spirit would be the revealer of God’s Word by inspiring prophets and apostles? “before time began” – “before the foundation of the world.”

It’s important to remember that what God does in time and space was determined in **eternity**. God has not, does not, and will not ‘make it up’ as He goes. God is not limited by time and space. He has no boundaries. Understanding that is quite freeing, as we will see in future studies.

The Helper

The plan of God for human beings was such that they (us) would need a **LOT** of help. Jesus called the Holy Spirit the παράκλητος (*paraklétos*). The Greek word can be translated as “helper, comforter, consoler, intercessor, advocate.”

Here are some of the things Jesus said about what the Holy Spirit would do as the *Parakletos*. Keep in mind that all of this was determined in eternity and was revealed after time began.

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:15-18

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” John 15:26-27

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.’ I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and

declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.” John 16:7-15

“ So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” John 20:21-22

Jesus promised His disciples that He would send the Helper, God the Holy Spirit, to give them power to be witnesses of Christ throughout the world. Jesus did that soon after He ascended back to Heaven –

“And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ *He said*, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’” Acts 1:4-8

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire,

and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

We would make a mistake to think that the Holy Spirit didn't act as a 'Helper' to God's people until Jesus sent Him on the Day of Pentecost. God the Spirit *helping* people started long before that.

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship.” Exodus 31:1-5

“So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did *so* again.” Numbers 11:24-25

“When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came

upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. So the land had rest for forty years.” Judges 3:9-11

“So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though *he had* nothing in his hand.” Judges 14:5-6

“Now these *are* the last words of David. *Thus* says David the son of Jesse; *Thus* says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: ‘The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word *was* on my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men *must be* just, Ruling in the fear of God.’” 2 Samuel 23:1-3

These are just some of the dozens of examples of how God the Spirit **helped** people in the Old Testament, just as He did in the New Testament and He does now in us.

The Revealer

Jesus said that God the Holy Spirit would “testify” about Him. That’s a primary role of the Spirit – determined in eternity, executed in time and space.

Here’s a quick reminder of what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do when Jesus sent Him to the disciples and the world after He (Jesus) departed from the world.

The Holy Spirit of God, the “Spirit of truth,” will –

- Convict the world of sin
- Convict the world of righteousness
- Convict the world of judgment
- Guide you into all truth
- Not speak on His own authority
- Speak what He hears
- Tell you things to come
- Glorify God the Son
- Take of what is Christ’s and declare it to you

(From John 16:7-15)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” John 15:26-27

God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from God the Father and testifies of God the Son. John 15:26-27 presents succinctly and powerfully the eternal plan of God.

God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit, who “proceeds from” the Father, to the disciples. God the Spirit testifies of God the Son and helps the followers of Christ bear witness of the Son.

There’s a lot more detail to cover about the amazing Work of the Holy Spirit, but this gives us a strong foundation for understanding His role in **our epic journey**.

**** God the Holy Spirit reveals God the Son who reveals God the Father. ****

Next Ebook

In the next part of our study we will see how God began to put His eternal plan into motion.

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