

ULTIMATES IN THE BIBLE'S PROLOGUE

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10b).

God is omniscient. In His perfect and infinite knowledge, He knew that, because He is good, in a physical creation, evil would necessarily erupt. For God to be good, the opposite can't be merely an abstract possibility, but a reality. And because He is good, God would have to deal with it. So, God planned a world in which there would be living beings having His image and a measure of free will. Invisible, supernatural beings (the angels, and others) and physical beings (humans). Evil came into existence in heaven in the person of Satan. He was in love with himself instead of loving the One who in love had created him. In God's foreknowledge, He also elected certain ones who would freely choose God's side, the side of good; but there would be a massive number of beings who would take the side of evil. And the Son said, "I love those who take the side of good and I will take them to unite with Me, and I will take their sin upon Myself and suffer the consequences." The Son did not love Himself but loved the Father supremely.

In due course, in the Garden, the evil one tempted, and exactly what had been foreknown occurred. The man loved his wife, deeply, passionately. She however yielded to the temptation of Satan, and the man, although aware of God's words of warning, nevertheless said, "I love my wife, and I want to remain united to her, and so I will take her sin upon myself and suffer the consequences." He disobeyed God. Adam thus reprised what the Son had said before the world was created. Adam thus is a type of Christ. Eve is a type of the beloved faithful who initially and necessarily sin but, freely taking the side of God, are forgiven and will be united to the Son in love. God ordained marriage as a figure of the union of the forgiven faithful with the Son. All those who refuse to choose to love God, who instead love themselves, are the physical embodiment of evil; they constitute what is called the "world."

In time, the Son became incarnate and reprised what happened in the Garden, fulfilling what had been planned in heaven before Creation. The incarnate Son thus is a 2nd Adam, but He is a faithful One who obeys the Father. He took sin upon Himself and suffered the terrible consequences. But God restored the Son to life! That is something that was totally unexpected. The Son loves the elect faithful and unites with them, imparting to them His supernatural life.

What happened (and will happen) on earth reprises what happened (and will happen) in heaven. And the ultimate victory over evil that God has ordained in heaven will, in time, occur also on earth. For now, in the same sense that the Son offered to sacrifice Himself for the honor of the Father in order to defeat evil, we faithful ones who are united to Him do the same in this physical creation. Like the Son, the "saints" love God more than they love themselves, and they obey Him.

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Immediately after the first couple fell into sin, their son Abel was murdered. His own brother, probably out of jealousy, deliberately picked up a rock and killed him who had chosen what was good. The first death in the Bible is an animal slain to cover the nakedness of that first couple. That was on page two of the Bible. The first human death occurred on the very next page. From the very outset of history, a conflict is occurring, between evil and good, between choosing death or choosing life. Evil seeks to overcome good, to replace it. How or will a good God overcome evil? God knew in advance that disobedience, sin, alienation and judgment necessitated a judgment, death, a separation. And so, in justice He issued a terrible warning, that death would result. And soon enough, that death He warned about became a reality. Let's not miss the severity of this: On page one, God created life. What we call "life" is really a miraculous thing. Even biologists don't fully understand how life is possible. God imagined life, and then He created it. Life is meant to be experienced in the presence of God. Yet God also ordained death. He warned of death as a judgment on the day that He created life. All existence seems to be entirely a matter of life . . . and death. Choosing good or practicing evil. Most people in the Western world today suppose that death ends our existence. That's absurd! God Himself breathed life into us, so life *has* to be eternal, extending beyond death into timeless eternity. Abel will be resurrected one day and live on for an eternity in the presence of God. (Maybe that slain animal will be raised too.) So something exceedingly big, something really huge, is missing on earth today, and it's this, We're all going to be raised from the dead to give an account of how we lived. *This more than anything should change how we live.* Where is the Church's witness that death doesn't end existence?

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Most people, even theologians and church leaders, scoff at the Bible's Flood narrative. That's tragic. That global flood follows logically from the seventh day of creation, the day that God rested. That seventh day anticipates a Day of the Lord that is yet to come, a day of *shalom* and blessing, of rest, harmony, and joy as well as peace. But it'll also be a day of terrible judgment. Just as God destroyed His own lovely creation in the past due to evil, He'll do it again some day in the future, except not by a flood next time. God is holy and in justice demands that evil be disposed of. Yet He's merciful. That global flood is proleptic of future salvation thru judgment. God saved righteous Noah and his family in an ark from the violent waters below, just as God will save His elect from future terrible judgment, as well as that coming Day of the Lord, by being *in Christ*. Before God created, He envisioned a plan of salvation thru judgment, a plan that necessitated His own suffering and loss, but that would result in blessing and glory for many. What does the Flood mean? It means this: God is dangerous. But He is good. What He's done in the past, He'll do again in the future, only on a more vast scale.

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After the Flood, the survivors multiplied and formed 70 different families. But, surprisingly, they learned *nothing* from the judgment of the Flood, about which they certainly had direct and immediate knowledge. They rebelled against God in a deliberately arrogant and spiteful way. Rejecting God's command to spread out, they intended all to remain in the plain of Shinar and there build a vast and splendid civilization. And the emblem of their greatness would be a massive tower reaching high into the sky. The tower would symbolize their greatness. It would represent their scoffing at God's judgment of sending a flood as judgment by being tall enough to be able to survive a flood – without needing God's provision of an ark. The tower would perhaps be where, at the top, temple prostitutes would flaunt that peoples' wickedness right before God's eyes. They would exalt wickedness, literally, to a height between heaven and earth. The tower would be a counterfeit Eden, where God originally resided, perhaps where their vicious gods, ghastly wicked supernatural beings, would reside and govern their city. They would not have God governing them from heaven. That tower represented not just pride and not just rebellion against God, but florid hatred of God. So God "came down" in judgment and scattered that people across the face of the earth. And they took the hatred of God with them everywhere they went. Except for the offspring of Abraham, that is, the people of Israel and those who cling to Israel's Messiah and God, all the people on earth are still – to this day – living out that hideously godless condition of Genesis 11, still ruled by those powerful, invisible evil beings. That includes America. God will "come down" again one future day to judge the Gentile peoples on earth still living out their hatred of God. "Civilization" is just a thin veneer of biblical values purloined from the Church, a patina on the surface of society that's able to fool everyone but God.

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The Prologue ends with the call of Abram. What's lost is the understanding that his response is nothing less than a miracle. What else to call it? God said, "Go." And Abram, alone among countless millions of totally godless people, obeyed God. He got up and went. And Abram then trusted God and depended on God against all odds, repeatedly, all his life. Why would he do that? Are we missing something? I suggest it's that Abram was elect. God chose him to be His agent of blessing. After all, in sovereignty, God is free to act as He wills with His creatures, according to His holiness, wisdom, love and justice. Abram was proleptic of all who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. That includes us, if we're in Christ. And if we're in Christ, we're expected to live a life as Abram did and be as Abram was, trusting in God's promises and obeying His word. "Abraham believed God" means he obeyed God, trusting Him, depending on Him. "Believing God" means acting on what God has promised or said. God's will is for all the ungodly Gentile peoples in our neighborhood and elsewhere on earth to hear the Gospel and (hopefully) to respond in faith. May we be as faithful as Abraham was, who when God said, "Go," he went. And when God said, "sacrifice whom you love," that is, suffer personal loss, Abraham went to do that very thing that God commanded. Because just as He called Abraham so that the knowledge of God would go to the world of lost Gentiles, He's called us to that task. That's what God from heaven has willed for us here on earth to do.

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Reader, what God willed in heaven played out on earth in those early chapters of the Book of Genesis that are called "the Prologue." The O.T. reprises those early chapters in one way or another. (The great statue of Daniel 2, and the sequence of Gentile empires, for example, reprises the Tower of Babel episode.) The redemption chronicled in the N.T. reprises those early chapters in Genesis as well. We today have the exalted privilege of fulfilling God's eternal will and being part of God's great cosmic program to defeat evil and live out the good, which is His life. May we be faithful!