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Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

A Study of the Messiah **- The Whole Theme of Scripture -**

It is still surprising to hear premillennialists suggest that God, when He sent Jesus, fully intended to establish an earthly kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital city, and suggest that God was *surprised* that Jesus was rejected and killed; that the resurrection and the establishment of the church were divine improvisations, a “plan-B” cobbled together at the last minute when the Jews rejected their king and derailed God’s plans.

These premillennialists, such as LaHaye and Jenkins, authors of the best-selling *Left Behind* series of novels, suggest that God has “stopped the hands of the kingdom clock” and has inserted the church as a parenthetical institution, until He can get things in order again, restart the clock (with such events as the Rapture), and bring Jesus back to establish the earthly kingdom like He’d always intended to do.

Nothing could be further from the truth (in the first place, God doesn’t make mistakes!) This crazy view of things ought to thoroughly discredit the notion of premillennialism without one ever

having to spend time unraveling all the other problems with the many specifics of the doctrine. In Acts 2:23 Peter calls the rejection and crucifixion of Christ “the predetermined plan” of God. There is a humungous host of passages, some of which we will look at in the weeks to come, such as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 and Isaiah 49:6, that foretells the rejection of Jesus and the establishment of His glorious kingdom during the days of the Roman Empire, and describes it not as an earthly kingdom but as spiritual kingdom, where men could have union with God. Premillennialism is utter false teaching—you would do well to steer clear of it!

To say no more of that, let us understand that the sacrifice of Jesus and the establishment of His church were the culmination of an eternal plan that was worked out fully in the mind of God long ago. Consider these passages:

...that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord... (Ephesians 3:10–11).

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering 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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity**, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus... (2 Timothy 1:8–10).

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 would be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:3–4).

For He was foreknown **before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you... (1 Pet. 1:20).

In fact, if I understand these passages correctly, it seems that God had the plan of salvation worked out from before the creation of Adam and Eve, in fact, from before the creation of the world! Stop and fully appreciate this astounding truth! It is one of the amazing insights into the love of God that He knew, before He created,

- That we would, in the Garden, reject Him and sin
- That we would need salvation (the only other alternative is destruction)
- That the cost to Himself to provide this salvation was the sacrifice of His own Son.

Knowing all this, yet He created us anyway. This is beyond grasping. Maybe that's why Paul prays that we would "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:18–19). Perhaps we can grasp a bit of it as mature parents by confessing that even though we now know how expensive, time-consuming, stressful, painful, and heart-wrenching it is to raise children, we would still bring them into the world. Yet, this is still only a partial appreciation for what love motivated God, since my children and I are both on the same level as human beings, and since I have not been required to sacrifice a child to save one.

This Plan of Redemption is the Theme of the Bible

God revealed the germ of that plan to mankind immediately after Adam and Eve committed the first sin. And from that point forward, God set His plan into motion, revealing more and more about how and through whom salvation would come about, preparing the world for the coming age of righteousness.

The Bible is a book of history, but history focused on redemption. I have heard it described as not anthropological history, but soteriological history (*soter* means "salvation"). During the days of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Malachi, there were bigger, more important, more advanced nations on the face of the planet. Yet, the Bible doesn't tell

the history of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, or Rome, except as intersects with the history of a small, stuck-in-the-middle family of Abraham's descent, eventually called Israel (Deut. 7:7–8). God promised these people that God would send the Savior to them, and that they would in turn save the world. Sometimes the fulfillment of that promise hung by a thread, due to external or internal threats. But God always came through.

This story of redemption provides the Bible a unity, a story, which is missing from other so-called scriptures, and argues powerfully for its superior nature and divine origin.

The Koran, for instance, is a miscellany of disjointed pieces, out of which it is impossible to extract any order, progress, or arrangement. The 114 chapters of which it is composed are arranged chiefly according to length. It is the same with the Zoroastrian and Buddhist Scriptures. These are equally destitute of beginning, middle, or end. They are for the most part collections of heterogeneous materials, loosely placed together.

How different everyone must acknowledge it to be with the Bible! From Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book is in a real sense a unity. It is not a collection of fragments, but has an organic character. It has one connected story to tell from beginning to end; we see something growing before our eyes. There is plan, purpose, progress; the end folds back on the beginning, and when the whole is finished, we feel that here again, as in primal creation, God has finished all His works, and behold, they are very good (James Orr, *The Problem of the Old Testament*, pp. 31–32).

Jesus is the story of the Bible. He is on every page! —*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

“Jesus was the perfect combination of conviction and mercy. We won't be successful followers of Him unless we learn to become like Him. Both errors—conviction without mercy or mercy without conviction—will cause us to fall short.” —*Gardner Hall*