

A Short History of God's Work in the World

Have you ever wondered how the books, stories and teachings of the Bible fit together? There is one main storyline running throughout the pages of Scripture. Following is a very short summary of "his" story and its gracious impact on us.

Creation (? B.C.):

"In the beginning, God. Before anything else was, there has always been one Supreme Being, God. Existing as three persons who nonetheless constitute a perfect unity, this God was sufficient within himself. He lacked nothing for his satisfaction or joy. Because his very nature is love (an unselfish concern for another) and because he is three-persons-in-one (thus fulfilled within himself), he did not "need" to create anything. Yet, in his outgoing, altruistic nature, he chose to bring into existence finite entities. He created a physical universe, together with light and energy. He constituted it with certain natural laws, which produced a regularity of action. Beyond that, he furnished the physical universe, populating it with plants and animals. He furnished the place called heaven with spiritual beings, angels, who worshiped and served him. And he created human beings, capable of knowing and obeying him, to dwell on his earth. And when he completed this creation, he looked upon it and pronounced his perfect judgment, "It is good."

Sin:

Initially, God's plan for humanity proceeded smoothly. The first man and his companion, the woman, were happy to obey God and have fellowship with him. They accepted their responsibility of naming and governing the creatures. They were satisfied to be his children. Then, however, a disruption of this perfect relationship occurred. At some unspecified time, but apparently after the completion of the rest of the universe but before this human disobedience, a rebellion had taken place within God's angelic forces, led by one of their number who aspired to be equal with God. Those who had participated in this unsuccessful coup were cast out of heaven, and from that time have lived, not to obey, but to oppose, the causes of God.

It was not that some small element of sin existed that infected and contaminated otherwise pure beings. Rather, when they used

their freedom in a way contrary to its intended purposes, a relationship was broken and became twisted and perverse. Not as a new substance, but as a distorted relationship, sin became a genuine reality in the world. And one of the efforts of this supreme demon, Satan, was to pervert the rest of God's perfect creation, beginning at the very pinnacle, with humans. So it was that he planted the seeds of sin in the mind of the first woman, Eve, creating doubt about the correctness of God's statement and leading her to eat the fruit of the one forbidden tree, in violation of God's prohibition. Eve soon encouraged her husband to do the same, and he quickly followed.

When this happened, however, severe disruptions occurred throughout the entire creation. Nature, which had been the servant of the humans, now at times became their enemy. Evils such as disease and death, which had previously been only potential, now became realities. Humans became enemies of other humans, and treated them with cruelty and exploitation.

Noah (? B.C.)

The human beings' now perverted natural tendency was to focus on their own wants and desires, at the expense either of God or of other humans. At one point the wickedness became so repugnant to God that he resolved to send a flood, which destroyed all except a few righteous people, Noah and his family, as well as the animals he had brought into the ark (the great boat God had commanded Noah to build for his deliverance).

Abraham (c.2000 B.C.) /Moses (c.1500 B.C.)/Joshua

Out of (the subsequently) rapidly growing human race, God selected one person, Abraham, and made a unique agreement with him. Abraham and his descendants were to be God's special covenant people, those who would have a unique relationship with him. He gave them a particular land to be their home. He delivered them from bondage to the Egyptians (through Moses) and brought them back to that sacred land, giving them victory over the people who occupied it (through Joshua).

The Kings (David (c.1000 B.C.), Solomon, et al.)

Again, however, God's people turned from him, following false gods instead, and God allowed them to be taken into captivity again

(to Babylon). Even then, he remained true to his promise, and delivered them from that captivity, to return to the Promised Land.

Babylon (c.600 B.C.), Persian (c.500 B.C.), Greek (Alexander the Great c.400 B.C.), and Roman (c.100 B.C.) Empires

The nature of the way God spiritually organized the world he created was that sin, as a violation of God's law and the relationship with him, brought liability to punishment. To die without having been forgiven and restored by God was to be subject to eternal death, which meant endless separation from the God with whom one had been created for fellowship. No human being could offer anything to God to negate this punishment. God, however, decided in eternity past that when this point came he would do for humans what they could not do for themselves.

Jesus (B.C./A.D.)

And so the triune God determined that one of him, God the Son, would, without ceasing to be divine, add humanity to his deity and be born into the human race. This he did, being born in Nazareth as Jesus, the son of a virgin, Mary. He lived a life of perfect holiness and obedience to the Father. Then, in an act of perfect self-sacrifice, he died an undeserved death, thereby taking on himself all the guilt of all (his people) who had ever lived or ever will live. He then physically rose from the grave conquering death and sin and after showing himself to his disciples and many others he ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father. As he promised he sent his Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to indwell, encourage and guide his church. And he has also promised that he will physically return one day to gather believers of all the ages to be with him for eternity on the new earth.

Any human who voluntarily acknowledges to God his or her own sin, turns from and accepts this sacrificial provision of Christ, is immediately forgiven, granted eternal life, restored to fellowship with the triune God, and welcomed into the church universal.

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