

GREAT DAYS IN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

If we look back through history, it is easy to see that the level of freedom we have enjoyed in the United States since the founding of the nation is certainly not typical. Those of us who have only lived under such blessed conditions often find it difficult to comprehend living in a society in which the people do not enjoy freedom, especially when we realize that the vast majority of mankind has not enjoyed the liberties that we have as American citizens. The fact that a free society such as ours exists – and has continued as long as it has – is truly remarkable.

We might wonder what had to happen in order for the principles of freedom to take root and flourish in the West generally and in the United States specifically. In the book, *7 Tipping Points that Saved the World*,¹ authors Chris Stewart and Ted Stewart highlighted seven events in human history that were critical to the birth and development of a free society. Had the outcomes of any of these events been different, our generation may have never known the freedoms we know now.

Throughout history, there have been pivotal events that have vastly altered the futures of individuals, tribes, nations,

¹ Chris Stewart and Ted Stewart, *The Miracle of Freedom: 7 Tipping Points that Saved the World* (Shadow Mountain, 2011).

and civilizations. The present has been shaped by the past with certain events being especially monumental.

While we might appreciate the great benefit of liberty and the advantage of living in a free society, there is something else that is far more important – eternal redemption and salvation from sin. Just as the blessing of freedom was made possible for us by several key events throughout history, the gift of salvation was brought about by several key events in which God carried out His scheme of redemption.

In this series of lessons, we are going to examine these *great days in history* – not in secular history, but days of spiritual importance – in order to help us appreciate and take advantage of God’s plan to bring us home with Him in heaven for eternity.

GREAT DAYS IN HISTORY

1

THE DAY OF CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven” (Genesis 2:4).

In this first lesson, we are going to go all the way back to the beginning – to the *day of Creation*. What happened on that day? What lessons do we need to learn from it?

The Background

God is eternal – If we begin with the Creation of the world, how can we go back further than that? When it comes to the history of this world, there is nothing further back – this was the beginning point. However, while this was the beginning of the *creation*, it was not the beginning of the *Creator*. God existed prior to the creation of the universe.

“Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2).

“Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting” (Psalm 93:2).

When Jesus prayed to the Father, He said, *“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was”* (John 17:5). Later in the same prayer, He said, *“For You loved Me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24). While the creation had a beginning point, God Himself has no beginning. When He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He said, *“I AM WHO I AM...Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’”* (Exodus 3:14). He identified Himself as *“I AM.”* This means He simply exists. He has always been and will always be.

God had a plan – The creation of the universe was not a spur-of-the-moment decision or an off-the-cuff type of endeavor. God determined to have a people for Himself, and this determination was made *before* He began creating the heavens and the earth. Paul wrote, *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him”* (Ephesians 1:4).

In fact, God even knew that having His own special people would require His Son to have to die on the cross. Jesus was described as *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8, NKJV). We are God’s people after having been redeemed by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). Even before the world was formed, the scheme of redemption had already been planned in the mind of God.

A point to remember – Keep in mind that the “day” of Creation includes the entire Creation week. While the text of Genesis 1 indicates that the days were literal, consecutive, 24-hour days, the term was used differently in the next chapter: *“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven”* (Genesis 2:4). In this verse, the “day” of Creation includes all six days of the Creation week in which He made the universe and everything in it. So we are not just looking at “Day 1” of creation; instead, we are considering all that God did in creating *“the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1).

The Events on That Day

God spoke the universe into existence – One of the remarkable facts about the Creation is that everything that was created was made when *“God said”* they were to be made (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). The psalmist emphasized this:

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6-9).

When John began his gospel record, he began with the same words as the author of Genesis: *“In the beginning...”* (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1). John started by introducing Jesus as the Word: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All*

things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:1-3). Jesus was credited with creating all things. Paul wrote, “*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him*” (Colossians 1:16). This one who created all things, who spoke all things into existence, was “*the Word [who] became flesh*” (John 1:14). When the Scriptures discuss the Creation, an emphasis is placed upon the power of God’s word.

God created the world in an orderly manner – The first chapter of Genesis explained what God created on each of the six days of Creation. However, it was not just that He made something different on each day; there was a pattern to the six days.

- The creation of *light* on the **first** day (Genesis 1:3-5) corresponded to the creation of the *lights* on the **fourth** day (Genesis 1:14-19).
- The creation of the *sea and sky* on the **second** day (Genesis 1:6-8) corresponded to the creation of the *sea life and birds* on the **fifth** day (Genesis 1:20-23).
- The creation of *land and vegetation* on the **third** day (Genesis 1:9-13) corresponded to the creation of *land animals and man* on the **sixth** day (Genesis 1:24-27).

God could have created everything instantly, yet He created the world in stages. By doing this, He showed Himself to be a God of order and patterns. This is why, even today, God expects His people to worship “*properly and in an orderly*

manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40) and to *"hold fast the pattern"* that is found in His word (2 Timothy 1:13, NKJV).

God finished His creation – After the six days in which God created the heavens and earth and everything in it – which comprised the *"day"* of Creation (Genesis 2:4) – God's work in Creation was *"completed"* (Genesis 2:1). He then provided the basis for the Sabbath law (Exodus 20:8-11) that would be given later: *"By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made"* (Genesis 2:2-3). God was able to rest from His work because the Creation was completed.

This is significant because it shows us that God's work of creation is not ongoing. God is not out creating new species that did not previously exist, crafting new features into the earth that were not there before, or forming new men and women in the way that He did with Adam and Eve. His work in creating the universe was *"very good"* (Genesis 1:31). It did not (does not) need to be redone.

Key Lessons

God's power – The psalmist indicated that the physical creation serves as a witness to the existence and power of God: *"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands"* (Psalm 19:1). Paul made a similar point in his letter to the Romans:

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature,

have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

For all of man's knowledge, wisdom, and technological advancements, no one is out creating new universes. No one can come close to matching God's "*eternal power*" that was on display in His creation of the world. Furthermore, none of it was done by accident. He had a plan and perfectly executed that plan. The creation followed a particular order; and when He was finished, it was "*very good*" (Genesis 1:31).

God's providence – The fact that God's work in creation could be *finished* highlights His *providence*. After discussing Jesus' role in creation (Colossians 1:16), Paul wrote, "*He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*" (Colossians 1:17). The Greek word translated "*hold together*" or "*consist*" (KJV) is the same word that is translated "*formed*" in 2 Peter 3:5 – "*For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water.*" God "*formed*" this world and because of the perfect way in which He formed it, everything is held together as it needs to be.

In this perfect creation, God's providence is ongoing. The psalmist made this point: "*Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; You established the earth, and it stands. They stand this day according to Your ordinances, for all things are Your servants*" (Psalm 119:90-91). Because God's word is "*forever... settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89) and this word was used to bring about the physical world around us (Psalm 33:6-9), His faithfulness continues to be on display for all to see. This was what Paul meant when he told the residents of Lystra that God

“did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). God’s ongoing providence is a witness to His existence and care for mankind.

After the flood, God made Noah this promise: *“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease”* (Genesis 8:22). To this day, God’s promise is still being carried out. Even the mockers in Peter’s day acknowledged this, though they failed to appreciate the significance of it: *“Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation”* (2 Peter 3:4). These mockers were citing the fact that *“all continues just as it was”* as the reason why they doubted the promise of Christ’s return. In other words, they saw the ongoing providence of God but completely missed the point. God was keeping His promise that the earth would continue in its regular seasons and cycles; therefore, they (and we) could be assured that He will keep His promise that Christ would return. *“All continues just as it was”* (2 Peter 3:4) because that was how God designed this world to function. It will continue to work this way as long as *“the earth remains”* (Genesis 8:22).

God’s image – Man was made in the image of God: *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”* (Genesis 1:26-27). The fact that we have been made in God’s image means that humans have a *spiritual* nature. Notice what the wise man wrote:

“For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21).

As the wise man focused on life *“under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9; 2:17; 3:16; *et al.*), he described the similarity between men and animals – both live and die and their bodies return to the earth. However, there is a significant difference between them – at death, man’s spirit (breath) *“ascends upward”* while the animal’s *“descends downward.”* From an earthly perspective, there is no perceivable difference between the death of men and the death of animals. However, after death there is a difference. In the case of humans – beings who have been made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) – our spirits *“return to God”* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

This makes man unique. We are not highly evolved animals as the evolutionist believes; we occupy a special place in the Creation. David wrote, *“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty”* (Psalm 8:3-5). Because we have been made in the likeness of God, He cares for us in a way that goes far beyond how He cares for the rest of His physical Creation. It extends into eternity after our lives on earth are over.

Conclusion

God created this world and all of the good things to enjoy in it. This shows us His power and His care for us. However, this world and our lives in it are only temporary. So God made a plan whereby we could be with Him eternally. In order to take advantage of this, we need to be sure we fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

As this world stands *“according to [His] ordinances”* (Psalm 119:91), we must continue to obey His instructions today.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do we know that God had a plan to save us before He created the world?
2. Is the work of Creation ongoing?

GREAT DAYS IN HISTORY

2

THE DAY OF JESUS' BIRTH

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15).

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law” (Galatians 4:4).

After considering the day of Creation, we will now be moving to the *day of Jesus' birth*. This may seem like a big jump from the first day; however, we are not skipping the Old Testament. Instead, the Old Testament is the foundation for this lesson.

The Background

The fall – This was when sin was introduced into the world. God had given Adam clear instructions regarding what was prohibited: *“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;*

but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). Eve also understood the prohibition, as she was able to explain it to the serpent when he questioned her about God’s command: “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die”” (Genesis 3:2-3). Satan tempted her by twisting God’s words, promising a benefit for violating God’s law and claiming the punishment was nothing to be feared.

“The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also 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 loin coverings” (Genesis 3:4-7).

As a result of this, the perfect world in which Adam and Eve lived became marred by sin. Notice the changes that took place because of this event:

- Immediately after completing the sixth day of Creation, God declared that *“all that He had made...was very good”* (Genesis 1:31). After sin came into the world, the ground was *“cursed”* (Genesis 3:17).
- Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed

fellowship with God. There were times when *“the Lord God [was] walking in the garden in the cool of the day”* (Genesis 3:8), which would have been a welcome visit in the beginning. After the fall, they were separated from God as He *“drove the man out”* of the Garden and prevented him from returning. (Genesis 3:24).

- Before their sin, Adam and Eve had access to the tree of life. In the Garden they were able to *“stretch out [their] hand, and take...from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”* (Genesis 3:22; cf. 2:9). Because they sinned, they would die. God had previously warned Adam of this: *“But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”* (Genesis 2:17). After he sinned, God reminded Adam that this would be his fate: *“By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”* (Genesis 3:19).

In response to these changes that came about because of sin, God prophesied of the coming of Christ. Speaking to the serpent, He said, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”* (Genesis 3:15). From the beginning, the day of Jesus' birth was part of God's plan.

The promise to Abraham – The fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the seed of woman was given as a promise to Abraham: *“In your seed all the nations of the earth*

shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18). All nations being blessed through his seed looked forward to Christ. This was made clear by both Peter and Paul (Acts 3:24-26; Galatians 3:16). The Law of Moses was given as a *"tutor to lead us to Christ"* (Galatians 3:24). All of the Old Testament was given in anticipation of the arrival of the Messiah who would save man from sin.

However, the promise to Abraham was more than just that all nations would be blessed through his seed (Genesis 22:18). The Lord also told him, *"Kings will come forth from you"* (Genesis 17:6). David was given a promise regarding his descendants that contained a prophecy of the reign of Christ: *"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"* (2 Samuel 7:12-13). This is why many Old Testament prophecies – some of which have been included in this lesson – described the Messiah as a king who would descend from David. All of this was related to God's promise to Abraham.

Paul wrote, *"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus would be born into the world to fulfill the prophecy made in the Garden in the beginning and to complete the promise made to Abraham that through his *"seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 22:18).

Preserving a remnant – The Old Testament is a history of God's dealings with the descendants of Abraham –

particularly through Isaac and Jacob – leading to the fulfillment of the promise. The people were often punished for their disobedience, yet they were never completely destroyed. Notice the prophecy of Jeremiah:

“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. [...] Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, “The Lord our righteousness”” (Jeremiah 23:3-6).

While there are many noteworthy events that have been recorded in the Old Testament that provide valuable lessons for us (cf. Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11), this is the point we need to emphasize for our study. As all of the events were unfolding among the Jewish people, despite their disobedience, a remnant was preserved so that the promise to send Christ could be fulfilled. This would make salvation from sin available to the people of Judah and Israel (Jeremiah 23:6) as well as all of the nations (Isaiah 2:2-4; 62:1-2).

The Events on That Day

Jesus was born into humble circumstances – When Jesus was born, He was *“wrapped...in cloths, and laid...in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn”* (Luke 2:7). We know that the family into which He was born was poor

because they offered *“a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons’”* (Luke 2:24) – a provision for those who were too poor to afford a lamb for this sacrifice (Leviticus 12:8). Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4) – a town that was *“too little”* to be considered significant (Micah 5:2). He was raised in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23; Luke 2:39-40) – a town that was generally viewed with contempt (John 1:46).

If Jesus left the riches of heaven for the riches of earth, that would be a significant sacrifice since the *“treasures in heaven”* are far more valuable than any *“treasures on earth”* (Matthew 6:19-21; cf. 16:26). Yet Jesus did more than this. While on the earth, He had *“nowhere to lay His head”* (Luke 9:58). Paul wrote, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9). Before we even consider His crucifixion, we can see Jesus’ willingness to sacrifice for us in the fact that He was born into this world in the first place.

Prophecies concerning Jesus – There were several prophecies before and after the birth of Christ that announced the significance of this event.

- To Mary – *“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 bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have*

no end” (Luke 1:30-33).

- *To Joseph – “But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us” (Matthew 1:20-23; cf. Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7).*
- *To the shepherds – “In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:8-12).*
- *To those in the temple (Simeon and Anna) – “And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would*

not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel' (Luke 2:25-32; cf. Isaiah 9:1-2). "And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continuing to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38).

Through these prophecies, God was indicating that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy in the Garden, the realization of the promise to Abraham, and the reason why the nation had been preserved throughout generations.

Honor was given to Jesus – Wise men from the east came to worship Jesus after He was born: *"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him'" (Matthew 2:1-2). When they saw Him, "they fell*

to the ground and worshiped Him [and] presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

Key Lessons

God's promise – As we noticed in the previous lesson, the plan to send Jesus predated Creation (Revelation 13:8). However, the promise was first given in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) – in the beginning. The promise was also given to Abraham (Genesis 22:18) – centuries before Jesus' birth. There are other prophecies contained in the Old Testament regarding Jesus. Notice just a couple of these that relate to the birth of Jesus:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2).

These passages show us not only that Jesus would be born, but that He would be unique. His arrival into the world would be miraculous; He would be different from everyone else who had been or would be born into this world; and His life's work would not be limited or stopped by death.

When God makes a promise, He keeps it. Paul told the saints in Rome, *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). When we study the Old Testament, we can be encouraged by the fact that God does what He says He will do. The Hebrew writer cited God's promise and oath to Abraham as *"two unchangeable things"* which guaranteed the promise, providing us with *"strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us"* (Hebrews 6:17-18).

When we consider Jesus' birth – in addition to all of the prophecies that were fulfilled by Him – we can see that God keeps His promises. Therefore, we can trust Him.

God's love – The love of God motivated Him to send Jesus into the world: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Sin ruined man's relationship with God (Genesis 3:8, 23-24). Sadly, man continues to sin. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Adam introduced sin into the world by violating the law of God, then *"all sinned"* by following his example (Romans 5:12).

Rather than rejecting us forever, God wants to save us (John 3:16). Peter said that God *"is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"* (2 Peter

3:9). Forgiveness of sins is available through the blood which Jesus shed on the cross (Ephesians 1:7). Sending Jesus to die for us demonstrates the great love that God has for us: *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

Jesus’ humanity – When Jesus came to earth, He *“partook”* of *“flesh and blood”* (Hebrews 2:14). He took on the *“form of a bond-servant”* in order to be able to die on the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). Yet while on the earth, He was still God in the flesh. Paul explained, *“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form”* (Colossians 2:9).

When Jesus lived in the flesh among men, He left a perfect example for us. Peter wrote, *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth”* (1 Peter 2:21-22). By going through this, He proved that He can sympathize with us. Notice what the Hebrew writer said about this:

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17-18).

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

As the Creator (John 1:3), Jesus did not come to earth in a position of ignorance, needing to find out what it is like for man to experience the hardships and temptations of life. As the omniscient Creator, He already knew what we endure and how our minds respond to such things. Instead, Jesus came to show us that He understands all of this in order to prove to us that He can sympathize with us and to demonstrate that it is worth every effort to defeat sin and please God. Seeing His example, we should respond by following Him.

Conclusion

God's plan from before the Creation was to send Jesus into this world (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8). Despite our sin, God loved us and wanted to save us; but this required His Son to come to earth and die on the cross. Jesus' arrival proved that God cares for us and is willing to do whatever it takes to redeem us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What event prompted God to make the first prophecy of the coming of Christ?

2. In what way was Jesus the fulfillment to the promise God made to Abraham?

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