

Chapter 4. Was a Messiah Promised?



Don't forget this, O guilty ones. And don't forget the many times I clearly told you what was going to happen in the future. For I am God--I only--and there is no other like me who can tell you what is going to happen. All I say will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. I will call that swift bird of prey from the east--that man Cyrus from far away. And he will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it and I will. Listen to me, you stubborn, evil men! For I am offering you my deliverance; not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save you, and I will restore Jerusalem, and Israel, who is my glory. Isaiah 46:8-13 LVB.

The first three chapters of this book give convincing testimony to the belief in Biblical (literal 6-day) creation as God stated (inspired Moses to write). The importance is not whether one believes in special creation, creation in six days, or “God did it through evolution,” as those issues are not a matter or condition of one’s salvation or redemption. The importance is that one sees that the Word of God is true.

If one looks at the evidence around us and concludes, “yes, God did it as He said, the Bible is literal truth,” then we are on the track of importance. If the creation account is true, the worldwide flood, tower of Babel, and so forth, might we believe all of God’s Word? Might the prophecies of the messiah be true? Will He still come, is He here now, or was He here already?

For this chapter and the next chapter, the Scripture shall speak for itself, with the exception of brief narratives. Let your ears hear the Word of God.

A PERFECT WORLD

Would a Perfect and Just God have a Plan? The creation was an obvious Plan. If God can bring all into being by his word in 6 days, He could have done it in one day, or a half-day. God took a week because He had to create time. Time had not existed before creation week. God established “signs, seasons, days, and years” (Genesis 1:14). When the work of creation week was complete on the sixth day, God declared His creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). On the seventh day, He rested.

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

At the end of day six, when the creation was very good, it was a perfect world. There was as yet no death (ruling out the possibility of struggle-and-death evolution), there was no sin, and no Satan. A fundamental question arises- if God is Perfect, He has a Plan, and creation is perfect, what happened? Scripture tells us God has foreknowledge. Why didn't He tweak things so that Satan and a third of the angels did not fall? Why didn't God omit the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden? The problem came not from God's planning, but from the free will He gave His highest creation:

He, Shaddai (the Almighty), is far beyond our reach. Supreme in power, in equity, excelling in saving justice, yet no oppressor (Job 37:23 NJB).

Perhaps the tree was a test that He knew we would fail. But in His promise to save us (or provide a way to save us) from destruction, He had to have a plan of create, sustain, save, and live with in glory forever.

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established. (Proverbs 19:21 RSV).

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11-13 RSV).

In the beginning, there was one simple commandment for us to obey: (*of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it* Gen. 3:3). We sinned against God because of failure from one temptation. Can we understand the ways of the Lord?

Even so, God loves us: *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.* (Genesis 17:1-2).

WHY NOT TELL US EVERYTHING?

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 8:7).

We don't need to know everything because God knows everything. We merely need to be faithful and obedient. Our guidance is His written word. If one verse of scripture declares the Lord almighty, must we find other scriptures to verify the first? No, but it sure is comforting- so many scriptures are included in this text "just to be sure."

God had to make (create) us, tell us what to do, and have a backup plan when we choked on our silver spoon. Our failures are called sins. As we know, the shedding of blood is decreed for the one and only way to be cleansed of our sins (Genesis 4:4). God also had a plan for a substitute who, as a lamb, would bear the sins of His people:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:6-7).

This passage refers to the Messiah who would come and bear our sins. The Messiah is promised many times in the Bible. In the next chapter, these scriptures will be listed along with scripture indicating fulfillment of the prophecies.

OTHER MESSIANIC PROMISES

The Messiah is promised throughout the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The Christians claim that Jesus Christ is the Messiah because of their beliefs that he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (see next chapter). The Christians also claim that many, if not most, of the Jews were looking for the "wrong" Messiah, the one that was to once-and-for all conquer their enemies.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a Messiah come and totally annihilate all terrorists around the world? How about in the last century to have defeated the enemies of the Jews and the enemies of the free?

The confusion between Christian Messianic beliefs and of many Jews is that Christians believe Messiah Act 1 came 2000 years ago to save us from sin. Christians believe that the Messiah Act 2 will occur when Christ returns to fulfill Biblical prophecy and conquer our (His) enemies. Further, the Christian belief is that many first-century Jews rejected Christ because He did not do what they wanted Him to do, and many were upset that while claiming to be the Messiah, He declared He also came to save the Gentiles. Many Jews of that day resented this.

Many Jews did believe, and were the first Christians. We often lose sight that Gentiles were not the first Christians.

Here are a few prophecies of the Messiah. More will follow in other sections of this chapter and the next chapter.

Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. (Micah 7:7-9).

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7).

When God promises us something, it has to be fulfilled. Only He knows when. If we want redemption, we must abide by his commandments and bide our time. He loves us so much that he made a loving plan with loving promises.

PROMISES

God has made many promises to His chosen people. He has always kept His promises. Following is a listing of some of His wonderful assurances:

Come and see the marvels of God, his awesome deeds for the children of Adam: (Psalms 66:5 NJB).

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. (Psalms 145:13).

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. (Psalms 91:2-3).

And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee. (Jeremiah 1:19).

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. (Isaiah 30:18 RSV).

Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. (1 Kings 8:56).

God has always been true to His people, but it is often only a one-way street, as we shall examine in a later chapter. As the Lord God wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets with his finger, the Israelites built a golden statue to worship. Not only were they often fickle, their actions often defied logic.

CHOSEN BY GOD: PROMISE IS NOT WITHOUT DUTY

God chose the Israelites to be His people because they alone loved Him. They were also expected to communicate salvation to the majority (Gentiles). Here are some of God's promises to His people:

⁷The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: ⁸But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; ¹⁰And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. ¹¹Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. ¹²Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: ¹³And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. ¹⁴Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. ¹⁵And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. (Deuteronomy 7:7-15).

And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; (2 Chronicles 15:12).

²⁴For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

⁴⁷The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. ⁴⁸It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me. ⁴⁹And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. ⁵⁰Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. ⁵¹He is the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore. (2 Samuel 22:47-51).

That He loved the Jews is obvious from those Scriptures, yet his people behaved like children who require constant attention. He freed them from bondage in Egypt, on the way to a promised land they disobeyed and were chastened. Then they re-started on the right track, for a while, and the next thing you know they are in trouble again. “Tommy, don’t do that! That’s better, that’s a good boy. Hey! Why did you start that again? Get in your time-out chair!”

COMMANDMENTS & OBEDIENCE

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous

God: (Exodus 34:14)

Re-read the preceding verse. Put yourself in Moses shoes. You have returned from the mountain where you stood in the glory of God. God has given you ten laws. The first of the ten is “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The second is “thou shalt not make any graven image.” The first thing you see is your people worshipping a golden calf, violating both of these commandments. No wonder he broke the tablets! Read these commandments:

If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. (Joshua 24:20).

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:5).

And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: (Nehemiah 1:5).

Still, the Lord loves His people. To what purpose? All of His people from the Old Testament stories are long deceased. What gift, what redemption did God have for them? It was not necessarily a great life on earth in those times. They suffered, yet believed. While they were in Egyptian bondage, many died and never saw deliverance, salvation, or redemption. What did God mean?

DELIVERENCE FROM ENEMIES

Not only does God promise to save His people from their enemies, He offers hope to a weary nation. It is not difficult to understand why the human mind seeks a Conquering Messiah.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. (Exodus 14:13-14).

Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. (2 Chronicles 20:15b).

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. (Deuteronomy 31:6).

I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. (2 Samuel 22:4).

Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies. (Psalms 60:12).

For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. (Deuteronomy 20:4).

God is not merely promising victory, but to accompany us into battle, whatever or wherever the battle is. The only names given are those of past enemies. The Lord will honor His promise no matter who is the foe.

DELIVERANCE FROM SINS

The more important issue (at least to Christians, and I speak from that viewpoint) is deliverance from sins. The creation was about 6000 years ago. Our life spans are but a spec of that timeline. But how long is eternity, and we look for salvation to be eternal. What good is it to win the battle with your enemies of this life, but lose the war and spend eternity apart from God?

God promises a Redeemer, a Savior- the Messiah.

Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people, for you love to be merciful. (Micah 7:18 LVB).

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. (Isaiah 44:22).

There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:21b-22).

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17).

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. (Psalms 62:5-7).

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. (Psalms 34:22).

Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalms 86:4-5).

Eternal life is the conclusion of the promises of God and of the purpose of the Messiah. The Messiah was indeed promised and part of God's plan.

Who is the Messiah? If you saw Him, would you know Him?

Read on.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement	v
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgments	xi
Foreword	xiii
Introduction	xvii

PART I THE CREATOR

Chapter 1. The Breath of Life	19
Chapter 2. Out of Eve, Out of Ararat	37
Chapter 3. Can the Bible and Science Compromise?	51

PART II THE MESSIAH

Chapter 4. Was a Messiah Promised?	73
Chapter 5. Is Jesus Christ the Messiah?	85

PART III THE EFFECT OF A CREATOR GOD ON OUR DAILY LIVES

Chapter 6. God's View: Does It Matter What We Believe?	107
Chapter 7. Abortion: Which Children Should Live?	123
Chapter 8. Homosexuality: Adam and Eve, or Adam and Steve?	133
Chapter 9. Marriage & Divorce: Till Death Do Us Part	143
Chapter 10. Racism & Prejudice	155

PART IV WHERE ARE WE GOING FROM HERE?

Chapter 11. Eternity: Is There an Afterlife?	171
Chapter 12. Should Churches Keep Up With the Times?	193
Chapter 13. The Covenant and Promises	201
Chapter 14. Why Have God's People Suffered?	211

PART V DEPART IN PEACE

Chapter 15. Satan: The Enemy	229
Chapter 16. Summary & Conclusion	237
Appendix A: Biblical Creation & Evolution Scriptures	253
Appendix B: The Messiah and His Purpose Scriptures	261
Appendix C: The Messiah, Salvation, Angels, Heaven, Eternal Life	283
Appendix D: The Bible on Daily Living	295
Appendix E: Chosen People and the Covenant Scriptures	309
Outline	323
Recommended Reading	327



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