

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Bible Study

God's Redemption Plan; An Amazing Love Story

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Ever wonder why God created humans? Personally, I look at the history of mankind and wonder why He did it. We just never seem to get it right! We really can make a mess of things. God had a mighty big reason for creating us, but it had to be part of a careful deciding process.

For God to decide to create humans, let us assume that He had four possible choices from which to pick:

1. Just forget the whole idea
2. Create man in an environment in which ONLY good exists, without the possibility of evil
3. Create man in an environment in which BOTH good and evil exist, and deny man the ability to choose evil
4. Create man in an environment in which BOTH good and evil exist, and allow man to choose between the two

Consider these options carefully. Some of us might pick #2, or #3. Each of those would prevent a lot of problems.

Which option enables man to express love? It's #4, isn't it? Only when there is freedom to choose will LOVE exist. Do you see part of the reason God wanted humans?

Of all God's attributes, FATHER is one of His strongest. God created. God loves His creation. God wants man to love Him in return, but He will not force man's choice.

Think of a growing asparagus. If the gardener wants an environment in which ONLY asparagus can grow, and no weeds can grow there, he puts salt on the soil. In the wild, asparagus grows in salty swamps, and is fine with it. But, no other garden plants, weeds or otherwise, can tolerate the salt. So, a salty asparagus patch may be good for asparagus, but it is NOT healthy soil. Nothing else can thrive.

Only soil that can sustain ALL life - plants and bugs - is healthy soil. Same with people. If we lived in an environment in which no evil can exist, we would have no need, nor capacity for love. Our lives would be like trees, worms, fungus....just existence.

Genesis 1: 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

If God's word describes Him as love, then humans created in God's image must love. If humans had no capacity for love, we would NOT be a reflection of our creator.

1 John 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

So, God put His image on us, and in us. We are a reflection of God in this world.

Then...there is this pesky thing called sin.

What To Do About Sin?

If humans can choose to love God, we can also choose to love sin. So, why is there so much sin? It seems to be everywhere: sexual sin, financial sin, marital sin, stealing, cheating, blasphemy, murder....corruption! If there is one abiding theme through all of human existence, it is this:

Romans 3: 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one.

11 There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

As good as we may think we are, we fall hopelessly short of God's righteousness...His holiness. And, yet, He loves us. This is the most inexplicable aspect of the relationship between God and man;

Romans 5: 8 But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

How can God love the human race, that is altogether wicked, and yet sacrifice his only Son for our redemption? How can God, the perfect judge, also extend loving grace?

If pressed to answer this question in human terms, I can only look at the parent and child relationship. A loving parent does not hate his/her child when a mess is made, or a dish is broken, or an act is defiant. Love spurs the parent to embrace the child and explain right from wrong. Love causes the parent to punish acts of disobedience and willful wrongs. Discipline and punishment are then replaced with the warmth of love when the child turns away from their bad behavior. And, what is the parent's reward? It's that construction paper heart you stick on the fridge...right?

OH! By the way....every parent knows you don't do this just once in the child's life...but all through it! It takes CONSTANT attention, constant reminders, constant correction, constant forgiveness, constant reprimanding. It's not a one-and-done thing. THAT, my friend, is called GRACE. Samuel T. Francis penned a hymn in 1875 that tries to capture the love Jesus has for the sinner:

“O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free! Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me!”

Redemption Is Always a choice...OUR Choice

So, how deep and vast must God’s love be that it would constantly offer to redeem the sinner? Let’s look in the Bible at the First way God provided a plan of redemption for His people. First, let us realize that this redemption plan is always a choice. Just as Jesus’ work on the cross is an offense to some, to others, it is life eternal. Some reject Jesus, some love Him.

1 Corinthians 1: 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

God never crams His redemption down anyone’s throat. He offers it as a choice between a life of wickedness and a redeemed life of peace with God. In John Bunyan’s book: Pilgrim’s Progress, the main character often faced with two paths; one of which leads to sin and misery, and one which leads to God. It is an illustration of your and my life on this earth. God gives us a choice; we get to pick. God wants us to pick HIM, but will not force it.

The First Plan of Redemption Followed The First Sin

Let’s look at Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden:

Genesis 1: 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

God gave Adam an instruction that could be obeyed or ignored. The consequences of each choice were not optional; ‘you pick, then you live with what comes with it.’ God could have omitted that tree, but God wants man’s heart through love, not of robotic duty.

So, it is with your salvation. You have full freedom to choose Jesus, or not, and you must deal 100% with the consequences. Consider this: A man is preparing to go out on a Sunday morning. He can go to church, or he can play golf. The choice is his...so are the consequences.

And, so, the serpent (Satan) tempted Eve and told her that she would NOT DIE, if she ate of that tree. Instead, her eyes would be open and that she would be like God. Satan was an alternative:

Genesis 2: 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Here is the first sin of humanity; they CHOSE to rebel against God. God then punished the sin: He cursed the serpent – made him crawl on his belly to be trampled under the foot of man, He caused woman to suffer pain in childbirth and He cursed the ground that man must toil in it through his life. Then, God banished them from the garden....but NOT before providing redemption for their sins:

Genesis 2: 21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

In response to the first sin, God invoked penalty for that sin. No matter how well we might conceal a sin, there will be consequences! God loved man so much that he provided redemption from sin. He sacrificed an innocent animal to cover man's sin. This sacrifice was a picture of God's ultimate plan for man's redemption through His Son:

Romans 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Before we go on...

When we read the Book of Genesis, we see that MASSIVE events are covered very briefly. There is not a lot of detail behind much of the book. Keep in mind that Genesis was written by Moses around 1400 BC, and it was initially written for the readers in his day. These 'first generation' readers were knowledgeable on much of what was being written, so an encyclopedic description was not necessary. Further, pen and paper did not exist. Inscripting (engraving) on clay tablets was the common way of creating written records.

This is why there is "room" for atheists and smarty-pants doubters to try to poke holes in the creation story. They stuff the cracks with their ignorance and junk science. Every serious scientific endeavor aimed at the Genesis accounts ultimately produces agreement. Yes, that's right. Modern science agrees fully with the creation record in the Bible, as long as it's real science. Science that is driven by an agenda is not science at all.

More On This First Redemption Plan

God confirms the importance of His redemption plan when Adam and Eve's two sons, Cain and Abel, offer their gifts to God:

Genesis 4: 1 Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

Adam’s and Eve’s first two sons heard God speak to them! God confirmed that redemption for their sin required a sacrifice of an innocent life. So costly is sin! Abel obeyed God’s instruction and Cain disobeyed it. After God admonished Cain, Cain could easily have traded the harvest of his fields for Abel’s livestock and then obeyed God’s plan for his own redemption. He did not do this. Out of envy, Cain lured his brother into the field and killed him.

This First Plan Of Redemption Led Up To The Days Of Noah

In Genesis Ch 5, we see the first family tree; from Adam to Noah. In this family tree are listed the fathers who had “many sons and daughters.” Most of them are stated to have lived between 700 and 950 years! The one exception was Enoch:

Genesis 5: 21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. 24 Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

We aren’t told how, or why, Enoch was taken away. We are told that Enoch walked faithfully with God. Because God spoke with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, we may assume that He also spoke with their extended families. When it came to taking Enoch, we can assume that it was an event that was witnessed by others.

Phase Two Of The Plan Of Redemption

A few generations after Enoch, we come to Noah.

Genesis 5: 28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. 29 He named him Noah and said, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.”

It was common for a child to be named either for the role s/he WOULD play, or the role s/he HAD played. Lamech gave his son the name Noah (meaning “rest”) because he had apparently

received a prophesy of what his son would do in his life. (more evidence of God speaking to these people)

However, God had become so saddened over the wickedness of man, that He wanted to destroy all of them:

Genesis 6: 5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. 7 So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

For all of God's regret over the wickedness of man, ONE MAN found favor in God's eyes. Because Noah stood alone in his obedience to God, that lone man stood in the gap for all of humanity. Sin had entered the world through one man; Adam. The wrath of God upon the wickedness of humanity was stayed through this one man, Noah.

God did not just TAKE the righteous man unto Himself, as with Enoch. God saw that righteousness could actually abide in the heart of man because Noah DEMONSTRATED IT. God held back His destruction of life on Earth and put in place another phase of His of redemption plan.

Genesis 6: 13 So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

16 Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.

17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.

18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.

19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.

20 Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.

21 You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Most of us know what followed; God sent a great flood waters that were so cataclysmic, they destroyed all flesh on the earth (outside the ark) and completely reshaped the face of the planet. God had commanded Noah to bring onto the Ark the pairs (male/female) of creatures to be sheltered inside the ark.

Did you know that, once the ark was loaded and ready for its journey, God did not command the door to be closed for seven more days?

Genesis 7: 4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

God allowed seven days for others who would believe on Him and be saved. None others entered. Keep in mind that God spoke to these people! We see evidence of it through the scriptures up to this point. Why would they refuse their heavenly father when they could talk with him? So powerful is the lure of sin!

And, Did You Know THIS?

God also had Noah do something that is not often told in the stories of the Ark and the flood. God told Noah to bring SEVEN pairs of every kind of clean animal (which may be eaten) and its mate, and only ONE pair of the unclean (which may not be eaten) animals....why?

Genesis 7 : 1 The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. 2 Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, 3 and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. 4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.” 5 And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

The number “7” in the scriptures has very strong significance. Numerology (study of numbers) is one of the things about reading the Bible that we often don’t understand. God did not inspire the Scriptures to be written in English, originally. It was translated from an ancient language into English...so, we find meanings within the Bible that are often not obvious. Numbers can be that way.

Seven is the number of completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual). “Seven” gets much of its meaning from the seven days of creation, the seventh day; Sabbath, etc. There are 860 references in the Bible to the number seven and derivations such as ‘seventh’ and ‘sevenfold’. All mean perfect, or complete.

So, what ‘perfection and completeness’ was being represented by God telling Noah to take seven pairs of “clean” animals and birds on the ark? They were to be used for people food, and to honor God through sacrifices to cover their sins. God expected Noah’s family to be obedient

to His redemption plan, and these animals were key parts of that plan. After the waters had receded and the Ark rested on dry ground....

Genesis 8: 20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21 The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

So, God not only requires a sacrifice of innocent blood to cover sin, it must be a “clean,” or perfect life that atones for that sin. This is a constant prophesy of the Son of God throughout scripture, and each plan of redemption is a picture of Christ!

There is another layer to this; God provides the sacrifice. God told Noah to take the animals required for sacrifice and honor to God, and then God provided them! That’s almost like a judge telling you the penalty for your offense is fifty thousand dollars, and then giving you the money to pay it!

God’s Paradigm

“Paradigm” is not a common word, but it has strong meaning when describing the actions of God. From Websters:

Definition of paradigm

1: EXAMPLE, PATTERN. Especially: an outstandingly clear or typical example

God’s paradigms are His patterns of doing things. His paradigm for redemption is:

- All humans are born into sin, inherited from Adam and Eve. There is not one who is not sinful.
- The consequence of sin is death
- Humans are incapable of resolving their sin. We cannot be “good enough” to pay our own debt
- Though we are sinners, God provides a way of redemption; an innocent life must be the ransom
- Man may choose, or reject, God’s way of redemption

God left the door of the Ark open for seven days to allow more to enter. None accepted, and they were destroyed.

Jesus, God’s Ultimate Redeemer

From the beginnings of humanity, God has provided a way for the sin of humans to be redeemed. It is out of His love that Jesus became the human form of the God of the universe. All who believe that Jesus is the son of God will be saved. All who reject Jesus will be like those who did not enter the Ark with Noah.

Many hear the redemption story of Jesus and ask; “What about those who have never heard of Jesus?” When we look all the way back to Adam and Eve, we see that God loves humans so much that He always provided a way.

God put into the heart of every human a void that can only be filled by Him. Even the most wicked person, who never heard the name of God spoken, knows right from wrong. It is the inborn conscience that seeks God. Consider these words of Jesus;

Matthew 7: 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Every person who turns to God for forgiveness of sin will be saved.

God’s Perfect Timing

Jesus is God’s greatest and most perfect expression of LOVE to humanity. So great is God’s love for you and me that he sent Jesus, His only son to redeem us:

John 3: 16 For God so love the world that He gave his only son that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Jesus was the ‘long awaited’ Messiah that was prophesied (fore told) throughout the history of the Jewish people. Everything about the Jewish people was about being faithful to God and looking forward to the Messiah (Jesus).

When the time was perfect, Jesus was born into the world, and went to the cross so that all of humanity could be saved from sin:

Ephesians 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, 4 as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love 5 He destined us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, 6 for the praise of the glory of His grace that He granted us in the beloved.

All of the animal sacrifices required prior to Jesus POINTED to Jesus as the one true savior of mankind.

Ephesians 1: 7 In Him we have redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace 8 that He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, 9 He has made known to us the mystery of His will in accord with His favor that He set forth in Him 10 as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

Just remember; redemption is a choice. It’s your choice.