

The Lord's Plan of Salvation, Part 1

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主の救いの計画(1)
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Ecclesiastes

3:11 He made everything appropriate in its time. He also placed eternity within them—yet, no person can fully comprehend what God is doing from beginning to end.

[International Standard Version]

Psalms

90:2 Before the mountains were formed or the earth and the world were brought forth, you are God from eternity to eternity.

102:27 But you remain the same; your years never end.

As was just mentioned, today's subject is, "The plan of the Lord", that is to say, "The plan of the Lord that covers from eternity to eternity." I would like to discuss with you briefly about the plan of salvation.

As is written in the Ecclesiastes, he made everything, not 99 per cent, but completely and in its appropriate time. Furthermore, no person can fully comprehend what God does from beginning to end.

Moses, of course, said practically the same thing; "Before the mountains were formed or the earth and the world were brought forth, you are God from eternity to eternity." It is impossible for us to comprehend the greatness of this Lord God no matter how hard we think.

David said, "But you remain the same; your years never end." Needless to say, the Lord has no beginning and no end; he is eternal. He is the one who cares about nothing but the eternal happiness of human beings. His purpose is to make us better understand the Bible, which consists of his word, so that we love him more and more.

I would like to begin with the eternity before the Creation of the universe; then, talk about the trinity of the Lord God, what the Lord did before he created the whole universe, how the devil emerged into this world, and the purpose of the Creation. I would like to discuss these things briefly with you today.

Of course, even before stars came into existence, the eternal God was present. Even before the Sun began to cast its light on the surface of earth, the Lord God who had no beginning was present. The

important thing is that the Lord God was not created by someone. He is the one who creates all things. The life of the Lord was not created by anyone. Thus, there is no beginning, no end to this life.

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning, God created the universe.

This verse pulls us back to the past that was an immeasurably long time ago. Nobody knows for sure when it was that God created this whole world. Still, we all know that the Lord has created it. The Bible clearly states that it was not made by coincidence. In the Hebrew language, the word 'god' is not used in a singular form but in a plural form. Isn't it interesting? But it is really so. The word 'created' is written in a singular form.

Genesis

1:26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, to be like us. Let them be masters over the fish in the ocean, the birds that fly, the livestock, everything that crawls on the earth, and over the earth itself!"

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

In these verses, the expressions, 'us' and 'our' are used, which are plural forms. This tells us undoubtedly that the Lord God was in the Trinity already at this time of the Genesis.

Here, we can see God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There are not three gods, but one God, as explained in the Bible. The Bible says that there are three personalities of God, but there is only one God. Indeed, it is not possible for us to fully understand this. The people of early churches already used triangles as their symbol to represent this concept.

They say that a triangle was created first among all geometric shapes. In a triangle, the number one and three are harmonized well and they form one shape. Let us look at triangles. A triangle has three edges and three vertices but it is still one shape. We can find this revelation of the Lord God in the Bible regarding the triune God. According to that, although the Lord God is one, he has three personalities, which are distinctive from each other. This revelation regarding the Lord can be explained this way;

Firstly, three personalities in the Trinity are clearly distinguished. Secondly, each personality of the Trinity is representative of God. Thirdly, these three personalities in the Trinity are unified into a single character and this unified character is called the God.

It is one but three. This indeed is incomprehensible.

The meaning of the Trinity can never be grasped rationally. From the human capacity, we try to consider the God as either one thing or three things. However, in our powers of comprehension, it is impossible to understand that both are true.

However, the Bible tells us that they are both true. That is to say, the God is one but he is three. Let us try to explain this nature of the God, the Trinity using an example. It is absolutely impossible to understand the wisdom of the Lord God with human intellectual ability.

The secret of the Trinity can be likened to, for example, the sunlight and heat. We can't keep watching the Sun with the naked eye for a long time. Our eyes are blinded even after a few seconds. What will happen if we come very close to the Sun? We will be burnt to death. However, the Sun casts its light on the ground, which makes this world visible to our eyes.

And the heat that comes from the Sun wraps all of us all around and helps us grow. Although light and heat are two different things, they cannot be separated from each other. Likewise, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have their own distinctive personalities and missions and they are still one entity.

Furthermore, the Trinity can be compared to three states of water. Let us say a pot is filled with water. If this pot is heated up with fire, the water evaporates and turns to steam. When it is left in a cold room, it turns to ice.

Although they look the same when they are water, they turn to three different forms. That is to say, although water, steam and ice are totally different in form, they are still the same. The uniformity of the God can be understood from the following verses;

Exodus

20:3 You are to have no other gods besides me.

20:4 "You are not to make for yourselves an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above, or on earth below, or in the water under the earth.

20:5 You are not to bow down to them in worship or serve them; because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the iniquity of the parents, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me,

20:6 but showing gracious love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

20:7 "You are not to misuse the name of the Lord your God, because the Lord will not leave the one who misuses his name unpunished.

Deuteronomy

6:4 Listen, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord

alone.

5 You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

The next two verses reveal that the God has three distinctive personalities.

Matthew

28:19 Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

28:20 teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age.

Jesus purposely used different words; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul also distinguished the three personalities of God in his letter to the Corinthians;

2 Corinthians

13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus the Messiah, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Jesus similarly said;

John

14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have told you.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, these three personalities are all called the God.

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning, God created the universe.

John

1:1 In the beginning, the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1:14 The Word became flesh and lived among us. We gazed on his glory, the kind of glory that belongs to the Father's unique Son, who is full of grace and truth.

The Holy Spirit is also called the God.

Acts

5:3 Peter asked, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money you got for the land?"

5:4 As long as it remained unsold, wasn't it your own? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? So how could you have thought of doing what you did? You didn't lie only to men, but also to God!"

It is written that they lied to the Holy Spirit. It was also said that they lied to God. The very first verse of Genesis states, "In the beginning, God..." The Gospel According to John begins with, "The Word was God," in chapter 1, verse 1, and it continues in the verse 14 as "The Word became flesh". In other words, it became human.

Furthermore, as we read these verses from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5, we clearly realize that they called the Holy Spirit, God. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, these three personalities have existed since the beginning of eternity.

Thus, for these three personalities, there was no beginning. Although these three personalities are ranked equally, they each have their own mission, which is different from the other.

God the Father is called the Creator. God the Son came down to the world to become the savior. God the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. Still, these three personalities of God always work together. They work in perfect harmony.

Let us examine this fact through two major events in the Bible. The Creation is explained as;

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning, God created the universe.

We are aware of the fact that the Lord God created all things by the Word, the Word was Christ and all things were created by the Word.

John

1:1 In the beginning, the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1:3 Through him all things were made, and apart from him nothing was made that has been made.

Genesis

1:2 When the earth was as yet unformed and desolate, with the surface of the ocean depths shrouded in darkness, and while the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters,

The Bible says that when the Spirit of God, in other words, the Holy Spirit, was covering the surface of the waters, it had the strength to create all living things. We can also see from the Bible that in the great work of salvation, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit worked as one entity, which could never be separated from each other.

2 Corinthians

5:19 for through the Messiah, God was reconciling the world to himself by not counting

their sins against them. He has committed his message of reconciliation to us.

Galatians

3:13 The Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, "A curse on everyone who is hung on a tree!"

Hebrews

9:14 how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead actions so that we may serve the living God!

That is to say, the Father God, through the Lord Jesus and with the strength of the Holy Spirit, has opened the way to the salvation for all human beings. Just like they worked together on their two greatest accomplishments in the history of the universe, which are the Creation and the Salvation, these three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are now working together for the personal salvation of each one of us.

By the intention of God the Father, by grace of the salvation of God the Son and through the strength of God the Holy Spirit that gives life, we were saved and were newly reborn. John wrote;

John

1:12 However, to all who received him, those believing in his name, he gave authority to become God's children,

1:13 who were born, not merely in a genetic sense, nor from lust, nor from man's desire, but from the will of God.

1 John

5:12 The person who has the Son has this life. The person who does not have the Son of God does not have this life.

Paul too wrote to brothers and sisters in Rome;

Romans

8:2 For the Spirit's law of life in the Messiah Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death.

What kind of meaning does the Trinity have practically on our lives of faith? To the Lord God, who works on us through three distinctive personalities, we have to make our intention clear and it is not acceptable to stay vague and unclear.

Clear recognition of the Trinity of the Lord God makes our lives of prayers firm. By the work of God in three forms, our lives shall be renewed, strengthened and complemented. So far, we have

discussed three points regarding the Trinity. As we used to sing, "God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!"

Now, let us move on to the next subject; what was the Lord God doing before the Creation began? Of course, no one has an answer for this question—what the God did before the Creation of the world. When Martin Luther, who led the Protestant Reformation, was asked this question, he allegedly said, "Before God created the universe, hiding behind a bush, he was devising a whip for punishments for people who ask stupid questions."

Of course, there was no bush before God created the world. After all, what Luther wanted to say was that such a question was itself meaningless. Many people want to know the work the Lord God has done before the Creation of the world.

I guess that they just want to satisfy their curiosity. However, if they are still serious about getting the answer to this question, they should look into the Bible to find it. The Bible gives seven answers to this question.

Firstly, it is written that the Father God created the Holy Angels before the foundation of this earth was laid.

Job

38:4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of my earth? Tell me, since you're so informed!

38:5 Who set its measurement? Am I to assume you know? Who stretched a boundary line over it?

38:6 On what were its bases set? Who laid its corner stone

38:7 while the morning stars sang together and all the divine beings shouted joyfully?

The Lord God asked humans who are insignificant, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of my earth?" Who is the Lord God? What did he do?

The second thing that can be said according to the Bible is that before heaven and earth began, the Lord God already had the eternal fellowship of love with his son, the Lord Jesus. Let us look at this confession of Jesus, which can be found in these famous words of prayers by him;

John

17:24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, which you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

17:5 So now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

The first verse tells us that since before the beginning of the world, the Lord God loved Jesus. It is written that before the world began, the Lord God glorified Jesus.

John

1:1 In the beginning, the Word existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1:14 The Word became flesh and lived among us. We gazed on his glory, the kind of glory that belongs to the Father's unique Son, who is full of grace and truth.

Since before the foundation of the world, the Lord God was with Jesus and had fellowship with him according to these verses. What did the Lord do before the Creation? Before the earth came into existence, God the Creator created Holy Angels. Furthermore, he already had an eternal fellowship of love with his Son even before the universe began.

Thirdly, before the world began, the Lord God had planned the personal salvation for each one of us.

Revelation

13:8 All those who had become settled down and at home, living on the earth, will worship it, everyone whose name had not been written in the Book of Life belonging to the lamb that had been slaughtered since the foundation of the world.

After all, they come to worship the devil. Of course, the Lord God has already identified, before the foundation of the world, those who will be honest and humble enough to accept the salvation he would offer.

Indeed, this is beyond our imagination and we cannot get a picture of this. However, this is how God is. If we can totally understand him, he is not God anymore. Before the world has begun, the Lord God has already clearly identified, for example, which ones of those five billion people living now in the twentieth to twenty-first centuries would be saved.

Fourthly, before the world began, the Lord God already had the plan of salvation for the churches.

Ephesians

3:9 and help everyone see how this secret that has been at work was hidden for ages by God, who created all things.

3:6 The gentiles are heirs-in-common, members-in-common of the body, and common participants in what was promised by the Messiah Jesus through the gospel.

It is shown in these verses that people from any country can be saved and those who are saved will belong to church, which is the body of the Lord Jesus.

Fifthly, before the world began, the Lord prepared the kingdom for the people who belonged to him.

Matthew

25:34 Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who have been blessed by my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Pay attention to these words, "from the foundation of the world."

Sixthly, before the world began, the Father God designated his Son, the Lord Jesus, as the mediator in the plan of salvation he already had in mind. The Lord God has accomplished all his plans through his son, the Lord Jesus. It is written that even the creation of this world was done by the hand of the Son, Jesus. Paul explained this fact in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Colossae;

Colossians

1:16 For by him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether they are kings, Lords, rulers, or powers. All things have been created through him and for him.

The Creator, the Lord God, created all things through Jesus, by Jesus. Back in the time when there was no human at all, the Lord God already knew that sins would arise. It was for this reason that he designated Jesus as the savior. Peter explained this fact in his letter;

1 Peter

1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver or gold that you have been ransomed from the worthless way of life handed down to you by your ancestors,
1:19 but with the precious blood of the Messiah, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect.
1:20 On the one hand, he was foreknown before the creation of the world, but on the other hand, he was revealed at the end of time for your sake.

Finally, and seventhly, from the beginning of eternity, God has determined to accomplish the work of redemption through his son, the Lord Jesus. This fact is explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews as follows;

Hebrews

9:14 how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our

consciences from dead actions so that we may serve the living God!

We can see from this verse that the Lord Jesus has been tied to the cross from everlasting. The death of Jesus on the cross that took place long after the creation was an offering of himself to his God through the eternal Spirit.

We have read many words from the Bible today. All these words are full of authority and are not merely recorded in the Bible to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. They are also not present merely to complement our knowledge on the history of world salvation.

These words are written to show us the greatness of the love of the Lord God. Indeed, even before the foundation of this world, God as the perfecter cared about the voice of you and me. Even before the waves raged, the sea roared and the land was formed, he already began to think of us. It is unthinkable and beyond our imagination, but it is written in the Bible.

It is a wonderful fact for which you can never be thankful enough, isn't it? There is an abyss in the hearts of all human beings that can never be expressed in words. All we can do is to fall on our knees at his feet to worship him and to entrust our lives to the Lord God, who loves all things.

End