

THE FULNESS OF TIMES

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Colossians 1:12-17 – **Giving thanks unto the Father**, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: **Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And **he is before all things**, and by him all things consist.

Ephesians 1:1-4 – Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love...

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Did God have a beginning?

Psalms 93:2 says, “Thy throne is established of old: **thou art from everlasting.**”

Psalms 90:2 – Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.**

So then, according to the Bible, God always was, and always will be. To be “from everlasting, and to everlasting” would be to exist outside the boundaries of time altogether. God does not exist from point A, in the past, to point B, in the future. He simply exists. It could be said that, from our perspective, God dwells in an eternal moment – He just IS.

Exodus 3:13-14 – And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? **And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.**

John 8:51-58 – Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that

*honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am.** [He did not say, I was]*

*Micah 5:2 – But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been **from of old, from everlasting.***

The “child” was born in Bethlehem, and that was His beginning, but the “Son” was “from everlasting.”

Grasping the idea of God’s eternal existence allows us to recognize that His everlasting nature is expressed by the very fabric of the universe and increases our ability to appreciate the complexity and grandeur of His creation:

Psalm 19:1-3 – The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

*Psalm 102:25-27 – **Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:** and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and **thy years shall have no end.***

John 1:15 says, “John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: **for he was before me.**”

- “*he was before me* – This can refer to nothing but His pre-existence and can be explained only on the supposition that He existed before John, or, as the evangelist had before shown, from the beginning. He came “after” John in His public ministry and in His human nature, but in His divine nature He had existed long before John had a being – from eternity” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

John 1:1-3 – ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.***

- Marvin R. Vincent, one of the most prominent Bible scholars of the nineteenth century, held the position that, in John 1:1, the phrase “*in the beginning,*” takes us into the eternity preceding time:
“*In the beginning was* (ἐν ἀρχῇ ᾗν). With evident allusion to the first word of Genesis. But John elevates the phrase from its reference to a point of time, the beginning of

creation, to the time of absolute pre-existence before any creation, which is not mentioned until verse 3. This beginning had no beginning (compare John 17:5; Ephesians 1:4; Psalm 90:2). ... 'In Genesis 1:1, the sacred historian starts from the beginning and comes downward, thus keeping us in the course of time. Here he starts from the same point, but goes upward, thus taking us into the eternity preceding time' (Milligan and Moulton). ...The beginning (*arche* - ἀρχή) must refer to the creation - the primal beginning of things; but if, in this beginning, the Word (*logos* - ὁ λόγος) already was, then He belonged to the order of eternity" (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 1946, p, 24).

As has been shown, God always was. He has no beginning and dwells outside of the limits of time. Therefore, when the biblical writer states, "In the beginning," he may be referring to the beginning of time itself, being necessary for the initial existence of man and the physical universe in which he lives. There is a physical realm and a spiritual realm.

In the spiritual realm, there are angels. Did they exist before the foundation of the world?

Job 38:4-7 – *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? **Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?***

The "sons of God" are mentioned in Job 1:6 and are commonly understood to be angels. Their mention in Job 38:7 demonstrates that they existed prior to the creation of earth.

Were the angels created beings?

Ezekiel 28:13-15 – *Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in **the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.***

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Genesis 1:26-27 – **And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.**

What does it mean to be created in God's own image?

To be created in the image of God is to have a threefold nature and to possess eternal life.

God is eternal: Psalm 90:2; Deuteronomy 33:27 – *The eternal God is thy refuge...*

Man is eternal: II Thessalonians 1:7-9 – *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: **Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. I Timothy 1:16 – *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, **for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.****

The threefold nature of God is reflected in Genesis 1:1 (God), 1:2 (Spirit) and 2:4 (LORD God). The plurality of God is also apparent in Genesis 1:26 where it states, “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...” Again, in Genesis 11:7: “Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

The Threeness of man is reflected in I Thessalonians 5:23: “...and I pray God your whole **spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The “body” is flesh, the “soul” is self-awareness, and the “spirit” is God-consciousness.

Hebrews 4:12 – *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of **soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,** and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Genesis 2:15-17 – *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: **for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.***

What is meant by to dress it and to keep it?

Was death something that Adam and Eve understood?

Genesis 3:1-7 – *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: **But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.** And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.** And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, **she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her;***

and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

What happened to Adam “in the day” he ate thereof?

Genesis 3:22-24 – *And the Lord God said, **Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil:** and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: **Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man;** and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

Genesis 4:1-2; 25 – *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ... And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.*

Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born (Genesis 5:3) and Adam died after living 930 years (Genesis 5:5).

So, Adam did not physically die in the day he ate of the tree, but, spiritually, he had separated himself (and consequently all of humankind) from the LORD God. This separation is the equivalent of spiritual death. **This separation is the death that Adam was warned about in Genesis 2:17.**

Romans 5:12, 18-19 – ***Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... ...Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;** even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

After the Fall, the spiritual death sentence came upon us all (Romans 3:23). Satan wanted all of humankind to be followers of him and he thought that he had succeeded in permanently separating humankind from their Creator. But God had a plan whereby we might be reunited with Him. Part of the Godhead (The Word) was made flesh, and, being free from sin, was uniquely qualified to serve the death sentence on behalf of all of us.

Galatians 4:3-7 – *Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: **But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into*

your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

“them that were under the law” - Sinners, who, through Adam, had violated the Law, and who were exposed to its dread penalty.

*John 1:10-14 – He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,** (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

- There is an important truth to understand about Jesus Christ and the incarnation. When He stepped out of eternity into time and took on human form, He suddenly took on an existence that was lower than the angels. As the Creator, the Son of God was the One who created the angels and the whole spiritual realm, but after His birth into humanity He was restricted to time and space and became “a little lower than the angels.”

*Psalm 8:5 – When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For **thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,** and hast crowned him with glory and honour. [RSV says, “a little lower than **God.**”]*

*Hebrews 2:5-7 – For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? **Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;** thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands... [RSV says, “**angels**”]*

*Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

We have an opportunity to reverse the spiritual death in this life, and to avoid the second death (eternal separation). The second death can be defined as an unending separation between God and all who reject Him. If a person physically dies in a state of spiritual death, they will be eternally separated from God. All of us were created in the image of God and being in His image, we will never cease to exist. The big question is, where will our eternity be spent – in the presence of God, or separated from Him? Will we, by faith, accept the gift of God and ever be with the Lord? Or, will we reject the gift or put off making the choice until it is eternally too late?

The plan of salvation – Daniel 9:26 says, “**And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...**”

Philippians 2:5-11 – *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.** Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

John 17:4-5 – *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, **O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.***

Jesus chose to die on the cross, not for Himself but for all of humankind. He suffered and died not only physically, but also, even though He was without sin, suffered the spiritual death for us, being separated for a time from God the Father. In all of this, God had a purpose and a plan from before the world began:

I Corinthians 15:20-22 – **But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**

John 12:23-27 – *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.** If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. **Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.***

I Corinthians 15:42-45 – **So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, **The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.****

I Corinthians 15:1-4 – **Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you**

first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures... [These are the things we must acknowledge]

Galatians 3:6-14 – *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.***

“The curse of the law” – the penalty of spiritual death inherited through Adam.

II Corinthians 5:21 – ***For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***

John 3:14-21 – ***And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.***

Mark 16:19 – ***So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.***

Luke 24:51 – ***And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.***

Acts 7:55-56 – ***But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.***

We, as believers, have a heavenly calling and, in due time, will be present with the Lord. We will receive our glorified bodies and will live with Him where He is.

I Thessalonians 5:9-10 – *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but **to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.***

Ephesians 2:1-7 – *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. **But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 3:17-20 – *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, **who mind earthly things.**) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ...*

I Corinthians 15:51-53 – *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: **for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.***

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 – *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Ephesians 1:6-10 – *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein **he hath made us accepted in the beloved.** In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he*

*hath purposed in himself: **That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him...***

- *“The fulness of times – When the times were fully completed; when all the periods should have passed by which he had prescribed, or judged necessary to the completion of the object. ...**The plan stretched from before "the foundation of the world" to the period when all times should be completed;** and of course, all the events occurring in that intermediate period were embraced in the plan” (Barnes' Notes on the Bible).*

Genesis 3:15 – And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Colossians 3:1-4 – If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

