

The Greatest Story Ever Told

“Dad, tell me a bedtime story!” “Well, Katie, what kind of story would you like me to tell you?” Dad asked. “Tell me the greatest love story ever told Dad!” “Ah,” Dad said, “the greatest love story! I’ll tell you not just the greatest love story but the greatest story ever told! And, I want you to know that it is a real story that is going on right now. In fact, it has been going on for all of eternity past and will continue for all eternity in the future! It tells of the love of a father for his son and the love gift this father gave to his son. But, I’ll warn you, it is also the account of the greatest sacrifice love ever made as the son gave his life for his father’s gift! This is the greatest story ever told!

“First of all, I have to be honest and admit that you have heard this story many times before. However, I will bet that every time you have heard it told, it was told from man’s point-of-view; that is, it was told to emphasize the benefits to man. Believe me, we need to tell that story, the gospel message, and God commands us to tell the gospel to all men! However, I think it is also important for us to tell the gospel from God’s viewpoint! Without His story, there would be no gospel for us to tell mankind!

“Let’s get started. I have to take you all the way back before the beginning of time! We have to go back into eternity past when all that existed was the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. For all of eternity past God the Father and God the Son were in an intimate relationship that is best described as being face-to-face (Jn.1:1). His Son, whom we know as Jesus Christ, was the object of His Father’s love for all of eternity past, and is often referred to as God’s “beloved Son” or, more literally stated, as “the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).

“Now, in eternity past, God the Father freely chose, by His own good pleasure (Is. 46:10-11) and will (Eph. 1:11), to give the Son of His love a gift expressing that love - a kingdom of His own (Col. 1:13). This kingdom would be comprised of people made in the very image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). These people would be personal, spiritual, eternal beings with moral responsibility. They would spend eternity with God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit as adopted children of God (Eph. 1:5) where, as joint heirs, they would see and share in everything that God has given His Son (John 17:24; Rom 8:17). They would worship and adore the Father and the Son!

“However, in God’s perfect plan for His Son, God was going to allow mankind to confirm its place in this plan, that is, to choose to follow God’s plan so that His Son would have a people who had chosen to love Him. To do this God permitted His creation to fail, and, in that, permitted mankind to fail. Now God, in His perfect knowledge, knew that man would fail, that man would fall in sin. So, in His plan, God chose to show mercy and compassion by providing a means by which His fallen creatures, mankind, could be bought back from sin. God asked His Son to go (1 John 4:10) and save men from their sins by becoming a man and paying the price for sin (John 17:4; Phil 2:6-8). That price was death. The Son willingly chose to carry out His Father’s plan (John 10:17-18) so that He could reign over an eternal kingdom of people redeemed through His act of sacrifice. And, yes, the Holy Spirit was fully involved in this plan as both the Father and the Son would send Him to be their Helper in the execution of this great plan.

“Finally, God completed His plan by choosing, from all of humanity, those people that He wanted to include in His gift to His Son. In eternity past, God completed the arrangements

for this gift by writing the name of each person that He would give to His Son in a book called the “Book of Life (Rev. 17:8; 20:15).

“Are you with me so far? Now, the whole Trinity began to carry out this plan when they created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1). Of course, man was the object of all of God’s creative work, the crown of creation. God created Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). However, soon after God created all things, an angel, Lucifer (now known as Satan), sinned against God, and then led Adam and Eve into sinning against God (Gen. 3:1-6). On the very day that Adam and Eve fell in sin, God let it be known that He would crush Satan (Gen. 3:15) and so began to introduce His plan to buy back mankind from sin so that He could deliver His love gift to His Son.

“As the history of mankind began to unfold, God also began to reveal His plan. To King David, God promised that His Son would be born to David’s descendants and would sit on David’s throne and have a kingdom with no end (2 Sam. 7:11-16). Through the prophets God foretold the suffering of His Son (Is. 53), and the subsequent glories to follow (Is 11:6,9; 1 Peter 1:10-11). In the daily life of God’s people, there were many symbols that pointed to God’s plan. God required His people to carry out bloody sacrifices of animals in a foreshadowing of His Son’s future saving sacrifice. In fact, almost every aspect of the Tabernacle and, subsequently, the Temple represented aspects of God’s plan (Heb. 9-10).

“According to the plan, the day came that God sent His Son to earth to sacrifice His life (Gal. 4:4-5). God’s Son willing set aside His full rights, privileges, and powers as God and took on humanity (Phil. 2:6-7) in order that He might accomplish the saving work for which the Father had commissioned Him (Heb 10:7). In His days on earth, Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom His Father had given Him (Matt. 13). He preached about the love of the

Father for His children lost in sin (Luke 15:11-24) and how He was here to seek and to save those lost children (Luke 19: 10). Jesus was fully obedient to His Father's plan, all the way to dying on a cross to pay the price for sin (Phil 2:8; John 17:4). He did all of this for the joy of eternity with His Father and with His people (Heb. 12:2). By raising Jesus from the dead the Father put the stamp of His unqualified approval on the finished work of the Son; thus, Jesus would be able to save those whom the Father had given him (Rom 4:24-25). God highly exalted His Son, Jesus, and gave Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the honor of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

“As the next step in God's plan He sent the Holy Spirit to minister on earth (John 14:16-17; 16:8) while Jesus became the advocate in heaven for His people (1 Jn. 2:1). The Holy Spirit empowered a little band of insignificant, ignorant, and weak, but believing, men and women to spread the gospel to the world for Jesus. So, how does the process work? First, the Holy Spirit calls Christians to share the gospel with non-Christians and guides them their work. Second, the Father draws his chosen people to Him (John 6:44) with the result that they “come” to Jesus (6:37). Third, God gives each of His chosen people the faith to believe the gospel (Eph. 2:8-9) Fourth, Jesus receives and holds onto each person who has accepted the gospel and has become a follower of Him (John 6:37, 39).

In all history every true convert to Christianity came by the regenerating grace of the Spirit of God and His effective application of the gospel (1 Cor. 12:3). No one has ever come by his own free will (Rom 3:11-12)! And, in addition, the future of each believer is secure. Christ is their Advocate to God (1 John 2:1) and the Holy Spirit indwells the believer forever (John

14:17). He is the seal serving as a down payment that guarantees the future inheritance of each believer.

“Finally, the day will come when God’s plan calls for Jesus to return to earth. There are many events that will unfold at that time, but it is important for you, Katie, to know that Jesus’ return will signal that God is preparing to bring this story into its last chapter! You see, through all of these events, Jesus’ kingdom will be established and He will raise each of His Father’s gifts to eternal glory with His Father and with Himself (John 6: 39,40)! This kingdom will be in heaven, where all of God’s adopted children will see the full glory that is His (John 17:24; cf. v. 5) and share it (Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:2).”

“Dad?” Katie asked, “Will Jesus come back for us tonight?” Dad smiled and replied, “Well, as I always say, ‘God only knows and He isn’t telling – yet!’” Dad closed his Bible and off they went to bed.

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