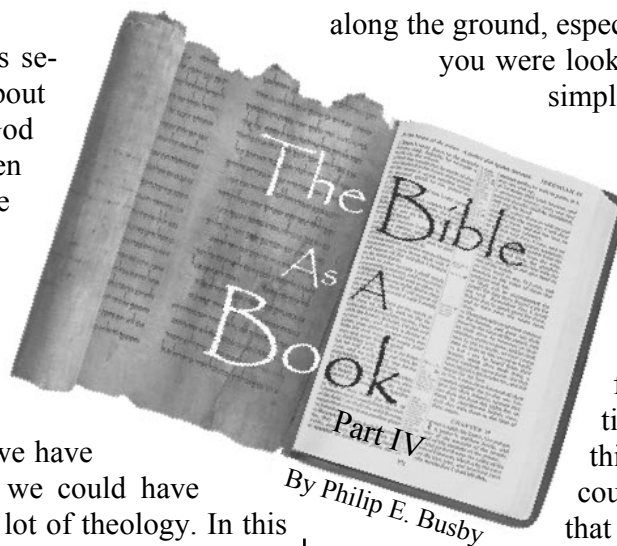


In part II and III of this series, we have been talking about the question, why did God choose to give us a written Word? With that, we have talked about why God did not give it to us right from the start of our creation. These discussions have taken us into some fairly deep water about the temple and the Garden of Eden. Mind you, we have not gone nearly as deep as we could have went, but we have covered a lot of theology. In this segment, I want to start by answering the question more point-blank. God gave us a written Word because He wanted us to see for ourselves the plan He put in place from the beginning!

It's often hard when you are too close to something to see it very clearly. A forest looks much different when you are walking in amongst its trees and the undergrowth, than it does when you are on a hill far away looking at the whole. In the southwest of North America there were native tribes which carved lines and made other markings on the ground which modern men had trouble figuring out. The first assumption was that most of these lines were roads. However, some of these roads seem to just go in a loop of sorts and come back to an adjoining road without taking you anywhere specific. Others of these roads simply went a distance and ended. People wondered where these roads were meant to take you and why they had such strange configurations. In the end, one of the problems was the misinterpretation that these lines on the ground were roads at all. The road assumption came mostly because the lines looked like roads, and some of them went on for very long distances. Investigators could not imagine what else they would be, but they couldn't figure out why people would take the time to build roads which go nowhere.

The answer to the quandary did not come until someone got in a plane and flew high above these lines on the ground; and from a bird's-eye view, it became obvious that the lines were not roads at all. Instead, these lines were giant pictures, but that fact could only be seen and fully appreciated by being high above them. When one was simply walking



along the ground, especially with no clue as to what you were looking at, the lines seemed like simple pathways, unorganized and senseless. It's still not understood how people of pre-aircraft days figured out how to draw such gigantic pictures, literally using the earth as their canvas; but they obviously found a way. As to the question of why they did such a thing, we may never know. Of course, people have speculated that these ancient artists believed

there was someone or something in the sky which could or would appreciate these drawings. Likely, something these ancient people worshiped. This may be very true, and it's certainly not out of the context of what we know even from the Bible about what many people believe. However, they may have been more "scientific" about this (if science is truly separate from religion) and were trying to be prepared to make contact with possible visitors beyond the sky. Even today, we spend millions of dollars sending electronic signals out into space hoping to make contact with something or someone out there! It's also possible that these ancient people just made these drawings because they could and wanted to. It's not like that has never happened before!

Getting back to my original point: it can be hard to see the forest for the trees. As we live and walk in this world and through this life, it can be hard to face what we face everyday and still know that God is out there working a plan which is far greater than the struggles we are going through each day. It can be hard to believe this all has a greater purpose, when at times, it seems it's all we can do to survive; or at other times, we have it all but it means nothing. God's Word is that bird's-eye view of time itself which enables us to see the bigger picture. It tells us the past and gives us a snapshot of the future. It lays out the fact this existence, and even our personal life, is all going somewhere; and not just someone, but The One Who created us, cares about us. At the end of the day, no matter how small or large a piece we feel we may play or not play in the grand scheme of it all, at least we know there is a grand scheme!

As we talked about before, this is also why God

did not give us His Word in the beginning. In the beginning, and even for a time after the flood, it should have been obvious that God was there. In the time before the flood, man was not that far removed from the Garden of Eden. Many may have even known where its entrance was. They wouldn't have been able to get past the flaming sword and the Cherubims charged with guarding the Tree of Life, (Gen. 3:24) but knowing it was there was enough to remind them of where they came from. After the flood, there was no doubt God was enacting a plan. The only people who made it through to the other side of that flood were those who had been listening to it. However, it was not long after that, man began to build false religion and society ideas which would take from, and in many cases overshadow, the basic institutions God had created man to observe. At the Tower of Babel, man cared more about accomplishing something great as a whole; and the individual began to diminish in importance. Even the family structure became less important. The leadership of a father was dwarfed by the leadership of a ruler of the land. The truth of God, and what He created us to be, was being replaced by the worship of heavenly bodies which were said to tell us our future. (Gen. 11:4)

However, it doesn't matter how many theories man comes up with, the truth remains, to this day, important! We were and are meant to live as God created us to live, not just by our own thoughts and fleshly compulsions. Each individual and the outcome of their life is important to God. Now, God did create a male human and a female human which together had the ability to bring a countless number of other humans onto this planet; but this means, man has never been alone even if he totally rejects the presence of God in his life. In fact, there are so many people living on this planet at this point and time, there are those who worry that the world is over populated with humans. There are even those who call themselves environmentalists who will specifically help fund abortions, because they believe the planet needs to have far fewer humans on it than it does! This, of course, is one of the insane heights those who engage in earth worship will go to in order to "protect the planet," instead of valuing individual human life - and why not? What good is it to worship something physical if you are going to simply let it be "destroyed"?

That is what each individual has to choose in this life. What is of the utmost importance to you? Now, the fact there are those who worship this earth and will go to any extreme to "protect" it, does not mean we should not be, and are not supposed to be, good stewards of what God has given us. Loving God first and loving our neighbor as ourselves is what all the law and prophets hang on. (Lev. 19:17-18, Deut. 6:4-5, Matt. 22:36-40) If we love God, we will take care of what He has created. If we love our neighbors, we will respect their right and the right of future generations to a planet not stripped of its resources and polluted with our toxic trash. However, the point many people miss, whether they believe we should be environmental or not, is the simple point that individual human existence is what is important, not the "saving of the planet!" Every human counts and will give account to God for what they have chosen to do here, but how do we know what we should choose if we never understand why we were created?

The fact there are a lot of people on this planet means, as alone as some of us feel at times, it may not truly be possible to ever be alone! That is a fact of physical existence, but even Adam before Eve was not truly alone. We have The Creator of all things to have a relationship with. It was for this purpose that we were created, and it is to this purpose that we must strive. I like to say we were created to commune, and I believe the basis of God not wanting man to be alone (Gen. 2:18) points to this fact. God created us to commune with Him, but not because we are forced to. God did not want even Adam to commune with Him just because God was the only thing which kept Adam from feeling like he had nothing to satisfy that communing urge he was created to have! So, God gave Adam not just another human, but created the institution of marriage. Why? Because marriage is not just about giving us someone to be with, but about a committed relationship which can produce even more humans. This is why we should strive to work out marriages for better or for worse.

In this day and age, and really in many days and ages gone by, humans have had trouble with the concept of marriage; and it's one of the reasons we have trouble with the concept of what God wants from us. We try to sidestep solid commitment in marriage through our laws or in the actions which some societies allow in marriage; but regardless of

what you personally may have experienced in marriage, stop and think about the concept. "For better or for worse..." is a statement we put in our marriage vows - or at least we used to - because it really is the concept in a nutshell. We shore up the idea by saying things like, "...for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health..." but the, "For better or worse..." part really says it all! We should have an understanding that what we are saying is not just, "I love this person!" Because love, in a lot of people's minds translates into "like," or some strong combination of like and want. "I like this person, and I want to be with this person." The problem is that "like" and "want" can be very fragile and/or fleeting! What you like today may not be what you want tomorrow.

Remember when you were a child? There were things you wanted, and you wanted them so badly, you almost couldn't stand it. Some of us got the thing(s) we really felt this way about and some of us didn't. In any case, there is a very high percentage chance that whether you ever got that thing or not, as an adult that thing doesn't even begin to mean what it did back then! Sure, you may be bitter to this day that you never got it; and if you obtained it, you may still think fondly of whatever it was. However, the memory of how good or bad it made you feel back then is what really lingers. Having that item for what you wanted it for back when you were a child, likely has no relevance to you now. For those of you who got the item, it's likely you no longer even have it. For most, who do still have it, it's likely in some forgotten corner of a storage area; and no matter how much you treasure the item, it's probably not something you touch often or at all. Instead, it quietly sits on a shelf or in a display case. My point is simply this, time has a way of changing things!

People will often say that you should not marry until you are this age or that age because studies have shown that you will marry a completely different person if you marry before that age than if you marry after. I happen to believe this is a very true statement, but it can be thwarted. Some people aren't the age their last birthday says they are; or maybe a better way to put it is to say, they simply have not come to the same place others have come to by that point in their lives. This is not to say one is more mature than another. Maturity comes in many different facets and on many different levels. It's kind of related to the

saying, "The man whose goal is nothing will have no trouble accomplishing it." Whether you have reached a place where you are ready to make a good choice in marriage or not can have a lot to do with a lot of things outside of just what age you currently are.

So, what I'm further driving at is that time has a way of constantly changing things, and one of those things is simply, "perspective." That's why having a certain shiny bicycle or doll can mean everything to you at one point in your life; and at another, it may not even enter your mind. So, I say again, like and want are fragile things! This is why we say for better or for worse in our vows. We can marry the person of our dreams, but sometimes dreams change. What is even worse is that more often than not, things are not all we think they are at the time. When we marry, we are not getting a guarantee that the person is everything we think they are. People lie, people misinterpret, people misunderstand each other, and yes, people even change! The bottom line is, we don't know if a marriage will make us happy or not, and we won't know until each day passes. Some people build a good marriage out of something which started out badly. Some people have great marriages which after a time just fall apart. For better or worse is not an all encompassing idea. Often our feeling about our marriage wavers back and forth. We never truly know if what makes us happy today will remain or make us happy tomorrow. Thus, for better or worse means we are taking on a relationship for the sake of a relationship. It's no doubt foolish to take on one which you can almost certainly say will never make you happy or be peaceful; but it's even more foolish to take on a marriage if the challenge, marriage can be, is not something you want in your life!

The problem is, we just aren't taught that marriage is a challenge in the same way climbing a mountain is a challenge. It's not that marriage is without reward; but at the same time, it can be a lot of hard work. Instead, most are taught marriage is a fairy tale; and when it doesn't turn out to be a fairy tale, people often give up on marriages which could have been some of the best there has ever been. If they had just gone into it accepting it as a challenge, they could have been prepared to fight for the relationship, not just about the relationship. We would learn to strive not against each other, but for each other. If we would go into marriage with the right

perspective, the everyday would make more sense. The fatigue would often seem more like that which comes from accomplishment, not just the draining of our lives. Of course, there would also be far less people who would choose marriage; and contrary to popular belief, that would be just fine! In fact, it's certainly better than all the marrying, divorcing and abusive marriages we have today; and it certainly would leave far fewer children left without parents to guide them. We need to start making sense of things, and information is the key. Because people are not looking at things from the bigger picture, they often kill their chance at better rather than worse.

One of the greatest things we glean from God's Word is the prophecies which show us God was and is way out in front of all that happens in the here and now. This is one of the reasons God gave us more than just those first five books of the law! No matter what it seems like in the here and now, we should understand by reading God's Word that He knows what is going to happen. Now, far too many "teachers" and "preachers" lead people to think prophecy is in the Word so we can know specifically what is out in front of us. Certainly from the days of the Tower of Babel, man has wanted this kind of guidance; but the Bible gives very little of it in reality. Mostly, what prophecy gives us is the opportunity to see that as time unfolds, God knew all along how it was going to unfold. Nothing man does surprises God; and therefore, nothing man does can overwhelm God or catch Him off guard! Sure, prophecy shows us the future from the standpoint that it tells us God ultimately wins; but what is a promise if we have no idea that it's true? The fact we can look at such ancient words in the Bible and see the world has unfolded just the way God said it would, gives us the backup we need to know we are not just believing in a fairy tale. No matter how bad we think this life is or can be, God is not just allowing us to suffer in vain. We may not understand it all, but God knows what He is doing in allowing us to go through it. If we call upon Him continually and seek to hear His voice, we can rest assured we are gaining ground in some form or another. (I Pet. 1:1-9, Rom. 8:25-28)

It is man, not God, who has complicated our lives so badly, that especially the individual can be simply lost in the crowd. God gave us a written Word which would take us above the crowd in a way which shows

us the true, bigger picture, not just the one man attempts to draw. The point in doing this was not so God can point out to us our individual destiny, like some kind of fortune teller, but the fact man and all his grand plans can't stop us from being what God created us to be. (Rom. 8:35-39, Matt. 24:15-24) This gives us the freedom to pursue an individual relationship with our Creator and make Him Lord of our personal lives in spite of the opinions and actions of others. This we must never forget!

For even the Jewish nation was not looking for a humble child to be born who, in meekness, would simply offer Himself as The King of Kings. They were looking for a mighty conquering hero who would free them from the oppression of the current governing system. Jesus was not, at that time, the picture the religious leaders of the day had in their minds of who The Messiah should be, even though the prophecy does, all line up. There was to be a great prophet who would come as a leadoff to the coming of The Messiah. (Mal. 4:4-6, Matt. 17:10-13) This was John the Baptist! "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." John 1:8 After John the Baptist had been thrown in prison, he sent his disciples to follow Jesus by telling them to go ask Him if He was The One or if they should look for another? When they did this, Jesus told them to go tell John: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matt. 11:2-6) The political circumstances of the day may have made it hard for people to see Jesus was The Messiah, but His works told them otherwise. It was at this time, and based on these observations, that people needed to go back and read the Word for themselves once again. They may not have understood that The Messiah would come in this way, but after considering the Word again, they should have said, as the Samaritan woman at the well said to her fellow towns people, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:29 Even Jesus' disciples did not understand He would be crucified; but after He was, they needed to think upon the prophecies they already knew about the Passover Lamb being slain, and the symbolism of the sacrifices they had done at the temple all their lives!

In truth, the written Word tells us a lot in order to

emphasize just a few simple dynamics! It tells us, in the beginning of man's existence, even before there was male and female, God took the time to plant a garden: meaning it was not just a place where nature had taken its course, but a place where the elements were specifically placed by God's direction for the purpose of providing a specific "home!" When we read the Bible, it is easy to miss this point; but it's crucial to our understanding of why we are here and what we were created for. Humans are special, and God wanted a place where they knew they could always come and commune in a very physical way with His presence. We can't go to that place today. Why? Because sin brings destruction and separation from God!

God told a man, well into his old age, that he would have a son. He and His wife laughed within themselves, but it happened nonetheless! Not because they were able to come up with a plan of their own, but because it was God's will! (Gen. 16:1-18:15) This son would be the father of a nation God would call His own. This nation would be given instructions for building a physical place among them where God's presence would once again reside in a very physical way, but it would not last forever. The tabernacle they originally built would be neglected. The first more permanent temple they built would eventually be destroyed by the Babylonians. The second temple they built would be desecrated by the Greeks, and eventually built over the top of by an ungodly king, for political reasons. Even that temple would eventually be destroyed by the Romans, and centuries of fighting and bloodshed would not see a new temple built, even to this day. Why? Because sin brings destruction and separation from God!

Almost two thousand years prior to where we are now, The Messiah was born in the flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of The Father, (John 1:1-14) but He does not still walk the earth with those physical feet. He was mocked, beaten, and nailed to a cross. Then His body was laid in a tomb. However, The Messiah, being without sin, would not stay in that tomb. He would leave to present Himself to The Father as The Pure Passover sacrifice we all needed. Then He showed Himself to us once again, but only for a time. He did not stay here. Instead, He left this world to go and prepare a new place for us where sin cannot

abide, so that where He is there we might be also. (Luke 13:23-29, John 14:2-6) Why? Because where sin abounded, grace did much more abound! (Rom. 5:20)

This is why God gave us a tangible written Word. There is a plan which God has had since the foundation of the world. He did not just put us in a garden which contained the choice of taking on the responsibility of the knowledge of good and evil, with the idea that if we faltered, He would simply throw us away. It's not God's will that any perish, but that all come to repentance! (II Pet. 3:9) Thus, Jesus is not just a coincidence or an afterthought, but part of the plan which would continually make a way for us to know and commune with God! (Heb. 9:24-28, I Pet. 1:18-20, Rev. 13:1-9) The Word of God was not given as an afterthought, but as a blueprint to future generations which, because of time and space, were too far removed from the Garden of Eden to even know with certainty that it ever existed! The Word may not create the Garden of Eden on this planet, but it prepares us to live in the new one! (Rev. 22:1-7, Ps. 119:9-16)

The written Word may not maintain a physical temple on this planet, but it can be our temple! By opening it, we can enter into the presence of God. By reading it, we are hearing His voice. By living it, we are walking with God. When we study God's Word, we are receiving nourishment from the Tree of Life, and learning what to do about the fact we have already taken of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It's our pillar of cloud by day and our pillar of fire by night. (Ex. 13:21-22, Ps. 119:105) It's our inner chamber of solitude and rest from a world filled with sin. Best of all, we can follow it into eternity; because when it tells us it will never pass away, it is not just telling us it will always exist, (I Pet. 1:24-25) but that the Word is, what it is to truly exist!

Let's stay in God's Word!