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*Forgive Me for Waiting so Long to Tell You This*  
by David Servant

# TWELVE

## The Future is Ours to See

Why did God go to all this trouble to save us from sin, death and hell?

Surely the all-knowing, all-wise God, the Creator of our incredibly complex and still mysterious universe, the Designer of all living things, the One who has existed from eternity past has a reason for having created us. There must be some ultimate goal that God has been working toward-something He's had in mind for a long, long time.

The Bible plainly states that before the creation of the world God formulated a plan. That plan involves you.

God planned to have a big family, filled with His love, whom He could enjoy and who would enjoy Him. Their love for Him would be manifested by their deeds. They would live together forever in a perfect society and a perfect world. You can call it heaven; you can call it utopia; you can call it paradise-it doesn't matter. But some day, all of us who have believed in Jesus will be there.

So why didn't God just start things off that way? Why haven't we been experiencing that perfect world all along?

God did start things off that way-in the Garden of Eden with a perfectly beautiful paradise filled with everything humanity needed to live a God-pleasing and fulfilling life. What went wrong? The people God created refused to cooperate with His plan. They disobeyed, and disobedience was not, and is not, part of God's plan.

But that hasn't stopped God from planning. In spite of what people have done, God's dream *will* be fulfilled.

### **The Test of Love**

Why, then, didn't God create people who *would* cooperate? Now that is an easy question to answer. If God had created us all as robots, programmed to obey, with no freedom to choose to disobey, then He could *never* have had a family who loved Him or who loved one another. The foundation of love is *free choice*.

What makes my relationship with my wife so wonderful is that she didn't *have* to marry me, but she did. She *chose* to be my wife, and she *chooses* to continue to be my wife. And *that is love*. If there is no choice in that matter, there is no love.

How would God have felt with a race of robots? I'll give you an idea.

Sometime when you are feeling lonely, take a tape recorder and record your own voice saying, "*I love you. You are a wonderful person. Oh, how I enjoy being with you. Your conversation is so interesting. Your jokes are so funny. I'm so lucky to have you as my friend.*"

Then rewind the tape, fix yourself a cup of tea, and sit down and listen to what you've just recorded. Will hearing it give you a warm feeling down in your heart? Will you pull down the shades and hold that tape recorder close to your heart? Will you promise never to leave that tape recorder, to nurse it when its batteries get low, never to glance at a newer model in an electronic appliance catalogue?

Do you see what I'm getting at? What makes love so beautiful is that even though there was an option *not* to love, the choice was made *to* love. God didn't want a family of robots anymore than you want an inflatable wife or husband.

When God granted the creatures who were created in His image the privilege of free moral agency, He took a risk-by human standards that is. He risked the fact that some would choose *not* to love Him, and, therefore, would not obey Him. But there was no other alternative.

If You are God, and You want a family that loves You, then You must create people who can choose *not* to love You.

In a simple sense, that is the purpose of this present life. It serves as a test for every person: first of all, to see if each one will choose to love or hate God. It is easy to tell who loves Him and who hates Him. How? *By whether or not they obey Him.*

Of course, every person has initially chosen *not* to obey God, but God has mercifully given him an opportunity to repent and to be born again, and has done it justly by means of the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. You already know all about that.

Some people will no doubt say, "I love God, but I'll never become a Christian."

But Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). It's just that simple. People who say they love God, but don't do what Jesus says, are fooling themselves.

Eventually, the timer-bell rings, and each person's test is over. Then the grades are passed out at the judgment seat of God. There is no second chance after that. If you haven't decided to stop serving yourself and chosen to begin serving God in eighty or ninety years, you wouldn't change if you had eight *thousand* years. God can't wait forever. He wants to get on with His plan.

It's a fact that the older an unsaved person grows, the more *unlikely* he is to repent and believe in Jesus.

When my oldest daughter was only seven years old, she once said to me (after she had shared the gospel with one of her little neighbor friends), "Daddy, little kids are easy to make into Christians. Teenagers are a lot harder. And grown-ups are *really* hard." What she said has been proven statistically.

### **Foreknown but Not Foredone**

God has known from eternity past who would choose to repent and believe in Jesus and who would not. The Bible says that our names have been written in a book called *the*

*Lamb's book of life* "from the foundation of the world" (see Revelation 13:8, 17:8). If you have just become one of God's children, He knew it was going to happen ages ago.

So, you might ask, "If God knew who would choose to serve Him, then why didn't He create everyone at once, take the ones He knew would serve Him to heaven, and send the ones to hell whom He knew wouldn't serve Him?"

The answer is that God only foreknows the outcome of each individual's test once each person has actually experienced a test. Only that which is known could potentially have been foreknown. Let me give you an example.

Suppose you suddenly found yourself possessing the gift of knowing in advance the outcome of every professional football game. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Let's say that you correctly predicted the outcome of every professional football game this year, and it was documented by the highest authorities.

Then let's imagine that someone makes the suggestion, "Hey, why should we go to all the trouble to play the games anymore? Why risk the players being injured? Why expend all that effort? Let's stop playing football games and just let our friend here, who is never wrong, tell us in advance the outcomes of the games that would have been played!" And let's say that everyone agreed it was a good plan, and all football games that season were cancelled.

Then, on national television, instead of the first football game, a camera is pointed at you, and the sports announcer asks, "Okay, since you always have the ability to know the outcome of every football game before it is played, who would have won this football game today?"

What will you say? You will say, "I don't know. In order for me to foreknow who will win, the game must be played at some point in time, or else there is nothing for me to foreknow."

Can you see it? The game must be played so that a winner is determined. Then there is something to know about who won and lost. And then, if you have the ability, there is something to foreknow.

## **Out of Time**

It is difficult for us to comprehend the fact that God does not live in the realm of time. He has no beginning and no end, and, therefore, time is not of His realm. The only way to remotely imagine His realm is to view a fold-out time-line from a history book.

On that time-line, you can see the age of the dinosaurs, the burning of Rome, and the landing of the first man on the moon. But imagine a little ant walking on that time-line. At any given moment, he can only see one event as he travels the line. Yet from your perspective, you can see it all.

That is somewhat how God sees things. He knows the end from the beginning. To Him, all is *right now*. What we call history, or the future, is now, to God.

People sometimes ask, "How will God be able to judge every individual person? That would take years and years. Will we have to stand in line for centuries waiting our turn?" They are speaking from a time orientation.

God has all eternity to judge everyone, but it will take no time at all because there will be no time. That is also why we'll all be able to enjoy His personal fellowship for eternity. You'll be able to spend as much time with God as you like, and so will everyone else, because there won't be any time to think about.

Now, back to our time-line. Certainly, ten thousand years ago, God could have looked down the eons of time to your life and seen how you reacted to your test. (Which He did

and wrote down what He saw.) But unless you are tested at some point in time, there would be nothing for God to look at down through time and see!

It is at the time of your test that the knowledge of whether you passed or failed became available to God to know, and, thus, to foreknow. That is why He didn't create everyone all at once and bring the ones He knew would serve Him immediately to heaven and send the rest to hell.

For us, time is running out, literally, and will one day stop forever. But you can see that from God's standpoint, His plan has already been fully consummated. That is why, many times in the Bible, the future is described as if it had already happened. Sometimes, God allowed His prophets to see things happening that are yet to happen (from our perspective).

### **The New Earth**

One of those fortunate people who saw into the future was the apostle John. God let him see the new earth of the future as it was freshly re-created. That will be the time when, as far as we presently know, God's plan will be fully consummated, and time will stop. Let me quote to you John's description of what he saw and comment as we go:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea (Revelation 21:1).

This shouldn't surprise us because Jesus promised that "heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24:35). I assume that the heaven to which He and John referred is not the heaven where God presently lives but the atmospheric heaven. There won't be any air pollution then!

John also said there would no longer be any sea. That doesn't mean there won't be any lakes or ponds-just no oceans.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:2-4).

This "New Jerusalem" that John saw, according to other scriptures, is presently in heaven. Again, this shouldn't surprise us, as Jesus promised us He would go to heaven and prepare a place for us:

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2).

So we know that one of the things Jesus has been doing for the past 2,000 years is working on preparing a place for you and me in God's house-probably located somewhere in the New Jerusalem.

In that city, there won't be any coffin-makers or undertakers in the yellow pages! Neither will there be any sorrow nor pain. I can't comprehend that, but I can believe it and anticipate it!

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son" (Revelation 21:5-7).

Anyone who is spiritually thirsty qualifies to drink freely from the spring of the water of life. There is a literal spring of the water of life in the New Jerusalem, but this statement also applies to the Christian's new birth. It is just one more way of saying that anyone can be saved, pass from spiritual death to spiritual life, and be born again. Notice it is free, unmerited and undeserved, and offered to all. Those who drink will become God's sons. And what will become of those who refuse to drink?

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, *their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone*, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8; emphasis added).

Praise God that we don't have to fear spending eternity in that terrible lake of fire.

### **Our Future Home**

As John's vision progressed, he was given a closer look at the New Jerusalem, our future home:

And he [an angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels....

And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal (Revelation 21:10-12a, 15-16).

This is a big city! It would cover more than one-half the surface of the United States! And it is 1,500 miles high, being either a gigantic cube or a triangle!

And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass....And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass (Revelation 21:18, 21).

God obviously spared no expense when He built this city. There won't be any need for road-repair crews!

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:22-23).

That doesn't necessarily mean that there won't be any sun or moon in heaven. But this city won't need either because the glory that radiates from the Father and the Son will shine through the entire city-right through the walls of transparent gold. Can you imagine how it will look?

God once allowed three men, Peter, James, and John to see Jesus as He will appear in His glorified state. Jesus had told them they would soon see Him as He will look in His kingdom, and six days later they did:

And He [Jesus] was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light (Matthew 17:2).

Mark, in his Gospel, described Jesus' garments as becoming "radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3). Luke stated that Jesus' clothing "became white and flashing like lightening" (Luke 9:29). Someday you'll see Him just as Peter, James and John did!

### **What Will We Do in Heaven?**

Let's continue reading John's account of the New Jerusalem:

And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:24-27).

So there will be kings living on the new earth who will visit the capital of the world and do homage to God and His Son who reside there. No one who is a liar will enter there-which all of us were until we were born again. *Liars aren't born again.*

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:1-5).

Who fully understands all that these verses are saying? No one, but some day we all will.

Maybe you've wondered: What will we be doing throughout all eternity? At least two things: We will be *servicing God* and *reigning*. As Jesus promised, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). He meant that literally!

Heaven will be a place of unimaginable beauty and unimaginable peace, joy, and love. It will be the place that God planned for us ages ago.

### **Heaven's Friendships**

There is more I could say on this subject of heaven, but let me interject one more thought from Scripture.

Jesus said that in heaven there will be no marriage (see Matthew 22:30). That is why, in our marriage vows, we say "till death do us part." The idea of no marriage in heaven may not sound so good to those of us on earth, especially if we're enjoying the blessings of a Christian marriage.

We can safely conclude, however, that God has a good reason for leaving marriage out of heaven. There must be something better to replace it.

Two possibilities exist. Could it be that the love and transparency that we can only experience within marriage on earth is something that we will experience with everyone in heaven? Could it be that everyone there will be "best friends"?

Or, will human marriage be nonexistent simply because all of us will be wholly and supremely devoted to our Lord, the One who has completely captured our hearts?

### **Last Words**

If I don't have the opportunity to be your friend on earth, then I'm looking forward to being your friend in heaven. We'll have to get together for a thousand years and get to know each other! See you then!