

FROM THE FOUNDATION

A Devotional Meditation on BEREISHEET (IN THE BEGINNING)

Genesis 1:1-6:8; Isaiah 42:5-43:10;
Jeremiah 31:15, 31-34; Matthew 1:1-25; John 1:1-5; Revelation 13:7-8

Our great hope is that God has a plan for his creation. That hope helps us cope with all the suffering and pain of this life. If there is a reason for it, then we can endure it even if we don't understand the reason. It's enough to know that we serve a God who knows the reason and makes all things work out for good at the right time.

There is an idea in Jewish biblical commentary that God created everything on the first day, but each element of creation was put in its place on the day it was commanded. In other words, everything has been in existence from the beginning, but awaits the proper time to be called forth.



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John the apostle is one Jewish writer who applies this line of thinking to God's plan of redemption and Messiah Yeshua's role in it. He makes the case in the opening words of his gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5 ESV

In Revelation 13, John writes about Yeshua as the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world. He also writes about the holy people of God whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world. It's not clear from the Greek text whether John meant that the Lamb had been slain at creation, or the Book of Life was written at that time. Either translation is correct. The important point is that redemption has been the Creator's plan all along.

Another Jewish writer who understands this is Matthew. His gospel is full of quotes from the prophets and psalms to show how Yeshua fit the ancient promises of who the Messiah is and what he would do. The first quote is from Isaiah 7:14. Matthew includes it at the beginning of his gospel, when he reports the angelic message given to Joseph, the fiancé of Yeshua's mother, Mary:

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus [Yeshua], for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel
(which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:21-23 ESV

With this quote, Matthew linked the story of Yeshua's birth to the promise of a redeemer who would restore Creation. That's what the name, Immanuel, is all about. God was with our first ancestors in the Garden, but they chose a different path and had to be separated from him. All of us who came after them have the tendency to make the same choice. If left to our own devices, we would end up like that generation in Noah's day who imagined only evil and filled the earth with violence. That was not a condition we humans could fix on our own. We needed reprogramming from the Creator to reset our hearts and minds.

The reprogramming is what scripture calls the New Covenant. As Jeremiah 31 tells us, the New Covenant God makes with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, and with all who join them, involves giving us new hearts and writing on them his Torah, or Law. When that happens, those who take part in the Covenant will be the people of God and will know the Creator as our first ancestors knew him.

Matthew indirectly references the New Covenant by quoting from Jeremiah 31, indicating the terrible price God paid to bring the Covenant into effect:

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.

Matthew 2:16-18 ESV

Isaiah also speaks of this price when writing of Israel's redemption:

But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my eyes,

and honored, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.

Isaiah 43:1-4 ESV

This sounds cruel, but what if there is no other way? What if, in order to redeem all peoples, God has to preserve a chosen people as his channel of redemption? Maybe that's how this makes sense in the end. We're not there yet, so we have to hope in the Author of the story. He's the only one who can tell us the end from the beginning. He's been doing that all along.