



THE ETERNAL JOURNEY IV:

Paying the Price

IN HIS INCARNATION AS JESUS CHRIST, God fulfilled his promise to become human. In this act of unfathomable love, he determined to terminate his “alter ego,” which represented the attributes of command, possession and power necessarily used by God in the initial Creation.¹ By terminating these attributes that are contrary to the freedom of human relationality, he purposed to advance the first or proleptic (anticipatory) Creation to willing and loving interactive covenantal relationships for all eternity.

While the necessary introduction of dictated command, possession and power was contrary to the freedom of human relationships, God also permitted “free process” for Creation in the interest of future covenantal relationality.^{2,3} Nevertheless, this combination inevitably led to the emergence of natural and moral evil in the first Creation.⁴ So it was that, to accomplish his purposes, the Incarnate God justly accepted the burden of his responsibility for all evil (Isaiah 45:6, 7).

Overcoming Command, Possession and Power

Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus Christ explicitly manifested God’s loving concern for all humanity and all Creation. He recruited disciples and followers. He fed the hungry. He comforted the sorrowful. He cleansed lepers. He healed the sick. He forgave sinners. He raised the dead. And he accomplished his immeasurable goodness irrespective of all such distinctions as race, age, gender and religion. Finally, he submitted to suffering, torture and painful death to pay the ultimate price for all the mistakes and sins involving command, possession and power that, by his permission, Creation had committed, was committing, and was yet to commit.

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In the climactic act of Calvary, Jesus Christ inaugurally bore the old Creation to death and extinction (John 3:14). And by his resurrection from the grave on the

third day, he inaugurated a new and triumphant era of Creation, defined by the attributes of covenantal relationality — such as faith, hope, love, mutual support, kindness and praise (John 15:15). Thus God overcame his previous, though initially necessary, resort to command, possession and power.⁵ And thus he intended to convey the new era to all humanity and all Creation.

Misunderstanding God's Gift

On the 40th day after his resurrection, Jesus Christ met with his disciples on the Mount of Olives and shortly thereafter ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9). Meanwhile, however, he assured them that he would be with them always (Matthew 28:20). Just 10 days after his ascension, as the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost, God as Jesus Christ bestowed upon them the gift of tongues (Acts 2:1-11). By this gift they were able to communicate to all humanity and thus could quickly convey God's promises and their fulfillment.

Unfortunately, many regarded the gift of tongues as their own possession and the evidence of their privilege to exercise command and power. For nearly 2,000 years this tragic mistake has been perpetuated by the world's power structures — including political, corporate, academic and religious.

What was granted as a gift to be received, accepted, returned and shared was profoundly misunderstood as the right of command, possession and power — the very attributes that Jesus Christ died to terminate. Now the time has come to expose this tragedy and to readdress what God promised, what he accomplished, and what he longingly intends to reciprocally give to all humanity and all Creation.

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Endnotes

1. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008); “The Divine Struggle for ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ III: Command,” *Outlook* (December 2009); “The Divine Struggle for ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ IV: Possession,” *Outlook* (January 2010); “The Divine Struggle for ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ VI: Empowerment,” *Outlook* (March 2010).
2. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008).
3. The emerging relationality of Creation required a free rather than a dictated response. Thus, in the interest of future relationality, God granted Creation the right of “free process” to order its own existence in accordance with “natural” laws. Of course, free process led to such deviations as the “natural evil” of disasters, disease, death and extinction as well as “moral evil.” Yet God has permitted these aberrations in order to teach the universe the consequences of negative actions. See John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 84.
4. See note 3.
5. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World IV: The Gift of God,” *Outlook* (February 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World V: The Gift Abused,” *Outlook* (March 2008).