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Conference

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Denver,
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GENERAL SESSION

MONDAY, JUNE 20, 8:30 A.M.

PLAIN PEOPLE LIFTED INTO GOD'S MARCH THROUGH HUMAN HISTORY:

The "With-God" Life Under the Hebrew Covenant

- I. **"In the beginning God..."** (Gen. 1:1)
 - A. This was *not the beginning of God*, but of the realm of physical nature. God as always been. Before the creation of the physical cosmos, God had a life. What did God do before he created: "He enjoyed Themselves."
 - B. Completing his work before the Cross Jesus prayed the Father to return him to "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was (John 17:5)...For thou didst love me before the foundation of the world.." (John 17:24)
 - C. At some point in the development of the construction of physical reality, spiritual beings already in existence sang and shouted for joy over what they knew of God and his great works. (Job 38:7) And when God Themselves had finished the initial form of creation he looked it over and said: "This is really good!"
 - D. All things created were created through the Son/Logos, who sustains everything in existence. (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2-3, Colossians 1:16-17)
- II. **Who is this God?** Unlimited power under unlimited love. Creative will-to-good. Omni-presence is infinite "With." God's creation and care for the created is the pouring forth of unlimited power to produce and sustain ever-increasing good.
- III. **"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image**, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping that that creeps on the earth'." (Gen. 1:26) God creates a being who creates within his creation. Dominion is rule for good, responsibility for things, the "natural" human condition.
- IV. **God's intent for human history**, this amazingly short period in cosmic time, is to bring into reality through freedom and redemption a magnificent community of loving persons who share his character and power, and will "reign with him for through ages of ages." (Rev. 22:5, Eph. 2:19-22)—The future of this universe.

V. The necessity for God to leave humans ‘on their own.’

- A. Only in this way is character to be formed.
- B. The cross and “Why hast Thou forsaken me?”
- C. S. Lewis quote.
- D. God’s intent for each of us is to grow to the point He can empower us to do what we want.

VI. The situation in the Garden—one of necessary freedom to choose and of a “distance” from God—and **the disastrous choice**. (Gen. 3:6) “...good for food, and...a delight to the eyes, and ...desirable to make one wise, she took....” The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. (I John 2:16)

- A. To disregard God and take the throne of my life.
- B. Outcome: Gen. 6:5 and Rom. 1:28-32.

VII. God’s “problem”—in a manner of speaking—How to be with human beings without destroying them (“No man shall see God and live. Ex. 33:20), and without eliminating their freedom to choose and to develop character into complete trustworthiness. He could have “stood over” Adam and Eve in the garden and prevented them from sinning, just as Jesus could have prevented Peter from denying him. (Luke 22:32) He could “stand over” you and me. But He doesn’t!

VIII. God’s solution: A covenant with a chosen individual, to create a tradition and a people as a presence in the earth, a “home address” for God, as it were, where anyone seeking him could find him.

- A. Abraham the “friend of God.”(2nd Chron. 20:7, Isa. 41:8) “Walk before Me, and be whole. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you.” (Gen 17:1-2) “I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.” (Gen. 18:19) “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3)
- B. David, who knew how to act and how to reign as king “with God,” for “God was with him.” (1st Sam. 18:12-14 & 28, 1st Chron. 29:11-13)
- C. Solomon: “And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.” (2nd Chron. 9:23)

D. Isaiah: “God says, ‘It is too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones in Israel; I will also make you a light to the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’” (Isa. 49:6)

IX. **Within Israel the sweetest of lives within the fellowship of God.** Psalm 23, Prov. 3:5-8. “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works. (Ps. 73:28). “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isa. 41:10) “Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, ...your eyes will behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left’.” (Isa. 30:20-21) Etc. etc.

X. By the time of Christ’s coming, **God’s covenant people were established** in the midst of the earth, without a king or earthly government, but with something far better: an active covenant with the living God, a character and a culture—children of Abraham, living in the Davidic hope of the Messiah. God’s plan for being with us, Immanuel, had proven amazingly successful. There was now a “bible” in the lingua franca of the day, Greek, that brought the whole story to this point before the literate world around the Mediterranean and beyond, especially in areas where the covenant people had been dispersed.