

A Christian Meta-narrative



By Millard Erickson*

This meta-narrative represents one way to explain the story of God in a way that can be used to help people come to faith in Jesus Christ.

In the beginning God. Before anything else was, there has always been one Supreme Being God. Existing as three persons who nonetheless constitute a perfect unity, this God was sufficient within Himself. He lacked nothing for His satisfaction or joy. His nature being essential love, as unselfish concern for the other, His triune nature enabled His love to be fulfilled within Himself, needing no external object. Yet, in His outgoing, altruistic nature, He chose to bring into existence finite entities. He created a physical universe, together with light and energy. He constituted it with certain natural laws, which produced a regularity of action. Beyond that, He furnished the physical universe, populating it with plants and animals. He furnished His presence, the place called heaven, with spiritual beings, angels, who worshiped and served Him. And He created human beings, capable of knowing and obeying Him, to dwell on His earth. And when He completed this creation, He looked upon it and pronounced His perfect judgment, "It is good."

Initially, God's plan for humanity proceeded smoothly. The first man and his companion, the woman, were happy to obey God and have fellowship with Him. They accepted their responsibility of naming and governing the creatures. They were satisfied to be His children. Then, however, a disruption of the perfect relationship occurred. At some unspecified time, but apparently after the completion of the rest of the universe but before this human disobedience, a rebellion had taken place within God's angelic forces, led by one of the number who aspired to be equal with God. Those who had participated in this unsuccessful coup were cast out of heaven, and from that time have lived, not to obey, but to oppose, the causes of God.

It was not that some small element of sin existed that infected and contaminated otherwise pure beings. Rather, when they used their freedom in a way contrary to its intended purposes, a relationship was broken and became twisted and perverse. Not as a new substance,

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but as a distorted relationship, sin became a genuine reality in the world. And one of the efforts of this supreme demon, Satan, was to pervert the rest of God's perfect creation, beginning at the very pinnacle, with humans. So it was that he planted the seeds of sin in the mind of the first woman, Eve, creating doubt about the correctness of God's statement and leading her to eat the fruit of the one forbidden tree, in violation of God's prohibition. Eve soon encouraged her husband to do the same, and he quickly followed.

When this happened, however, severe disruptions occurred throughout the entire creation. Nature, which had been the servant of the humans, now at times became their enemy. Evils such as disease and death, which had previously been only potential, now became realities. Humans became enemies of other humans, and treated them with cruelty and exploitation. The human beings' natural tendency came to be to focus on their own wants and desires, at the expense either of God or of other humans. At one point the wickedness became so repugnant to God that He resolved to send a flood, which destroyed all except a few righteous people, Noah and his family, as well as the animals he had brought into the ark, the great boat God had commanded Noah to build for his deliverance.

Out of the rapidly growing human race, God selected one person, Abraham, and made a unique agreement with him. Abraham and his descendants were to be God's special covenant people, those who would have a unique relationship with Him. He gave them a particular land to be their home. He delivered them from bondage to another people, the Egyptians, and brought them back to that sacred land, giving them victory over the people who occupied it. Again, however, His people turned from Him, following false gods instead, and God allowed them to be taken off into captivity. Even then, He remained true to His promise, and delivered them from that captivity, to return to the Promised Land.

The nature of the spiritual economy that God had created was that sin, as a violation of God's law and the relationship with Him, brought liability to punishment. To die without having been forgiven and restored by God was to be subject to eternal death, which meant endless separation from God for fellowship with whom one had been created. No human being could offer anything to God to negate this punishment.

God, however, decided in eternity that when this point came, He would do for humans what they could not do for themselves. And so the triune God determined that one of Him, God the Son, would, without ceasing to be divine, add humanity to His deity and be born into the human race. This He did, being born in Nazareth as Jesus, the son of a virgin, Mary. He lived a life of perfect holiness and obedience to the Father. Then in an act of perfect self-sacrifice, He died an undeserved death, thereby taking on Himself all the guilt of all humans who had ever lived or ever will live. Any human who voluntarily acknowledges to God his or her own sin, turns from and accepts this sacrificial provision, is immediately forgiven, granted eternal life, restored to fellowship with the Father, and welcomed into the church universal.

This kingdom is present wherever persons voluntarily and genuinely give their allegiance to God. It is only incomplete during the earthly life of any given individual, and within the human race, only a portion actually make God the king of their lives. Someday, however, it will be complete, when Christ returns and brings all things into submission to Himself.

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