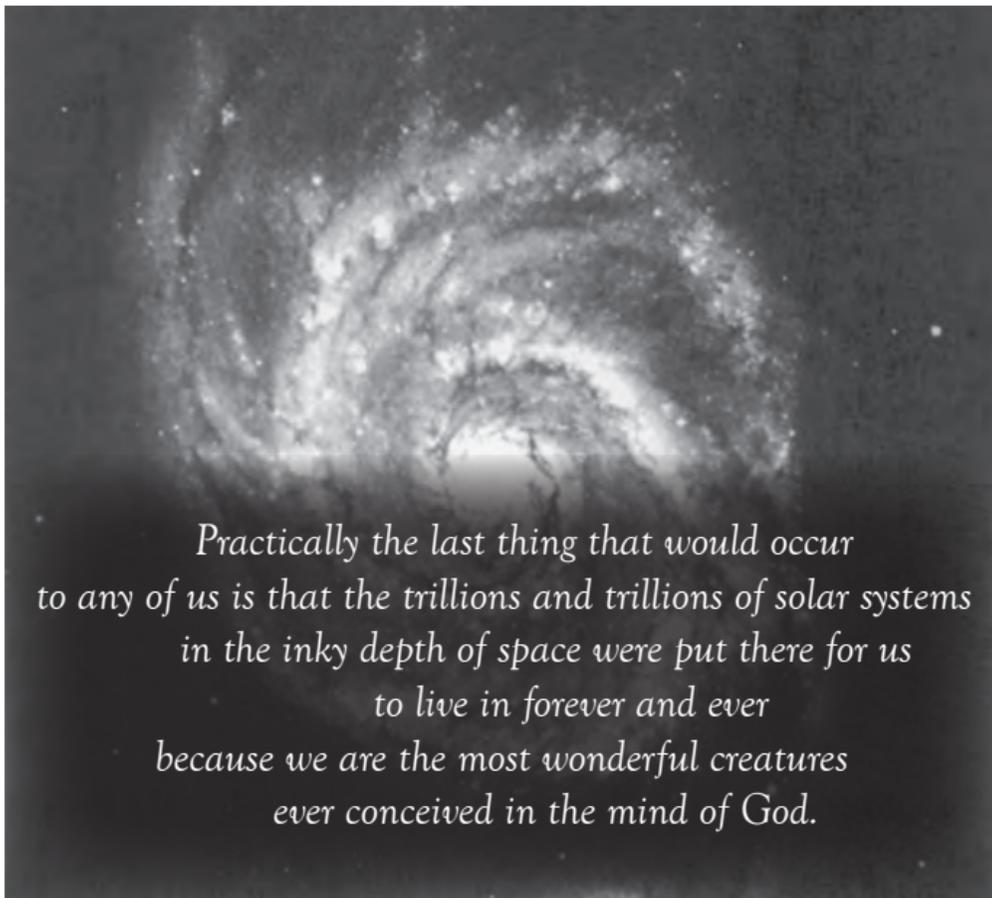


FREE

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE

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to any of us is that the trillions and trillions of solar systems
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to live in forever and ever
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I WAS PRETTY DULL TO THE UNIVERSE before that night as I lay on my back in the middle of the tennis courts on campus. I had always thought of the stars as points of light in something called the sky that hung over my head all the time. Every once in a while I noticed that they were up there, and maybe I was glad they were pretty. But that night I changed my point of view. Spread-eagle on a patch of grass, somehow clinging to this thing called earth, I felt myself suspended over a vast, deep darkness. I imagined myself falling into it, if the earth ever let go of me, and thought about how far I would fall. I got the sense that some of the stars were closer than others. I imagined that I would fall past these stars first, and then others, and

then others, and then others, and then others... In my mind, the stars rushed past me in the blackness like snowflakes under a streetlight.

The experience only lasted a few minutes, but the impression stayed with me forever. And I'm really grateful the earth didn't let go of me that night and drop me into space. I can't imagine how lonely I'd be right now if it had.

The universe is so enormous, people tell me, that just about the only thing that can travel through it is light. And light moves really fast. Someone said that if a hunter had a rifle capable of firing a bullet that traveled at the speed of light, and if that bullet would follow the curvature

of the earth once he fired it, then when that hunter missed a deer the bullet would pass by the deer, circle the earth, and go by the animal again seven times before it had time to react.

Traveling at this tremendous speed, it still takes four and a half years for the light of the closest star to reach earth. Scientists say it is 26 trillion miles away, whatever that means.

Anyway, both our own solar system and that nearest star are part of the Milky Way galaxy. I've been told that when we look up at night and see the Milky Way, we are on the edge of our own galaxy, looking in. And if we were able to travel at the speed

of light, it would take us a thousand years to get to the other edge of it. And that's just our own galaxy, one of the innumerable galaxies in the universe. If we tried to reach the nearest other galaxy, it would take us two million years, traveling at the speed of light.

Man dreams of space travel. I grew up reading books about it. But when you consider how vast the universe is, it is really sobering. I mean, really, how much space travel can man accomplish in his short life span with his little putt-putt rockets?

The most powerful instruments that man has invented to probe the edges of the universe have detected things called *quasars*. They are

incomprehensibly far away and, scientists tell us, are moving farther and faster all the time. Nobody really knows where these most distant objects are. We are only able to detect where they were when the energy that is now reaching us left them, countless ages ago.

So here we are, clinging to our warm, grassy planet in the suburbs of the Milky Way in an endlessly expanding universe, some of us wondering what we're here for, and others of us just trying to keep the grass mowed. Practically the last thing that would occur to any of us is that the trillions and trillions of solar systems in the inky depths of space were put there for us to live in forever

and ever because we are the most wonderful creatures ever conceived of in the mind of God.

One time, when I was little, I watched a science fiction movie about flying saucers that hovered over the earth and destroyed cities with beams of radiation. My mind fired with visions of space invaders, I took my magnifying glass out in the back yard and ruthlessly attacked an ant hill, frying the helpless little insects with concentrated sunlight.

After I carried out my fantasy, I got sick at heart over the senseless destruction I was responsible for. I was too little to think up excuses or justifications for what I had done. But I wasn't too little to know that there

was something horribly wrong with me.

Growing up didn't make things any better. Instead of hurting ants when I carried out my fantasies, I began hurting people. And not only that, they started hurting me. Some people said it was just normal that we acted this way, but their psychological views didn't stop the ache inside. I know that nothing I could do would make up for the hurt and the destruction I was responsible for.

So it is no wonder that I never considered the universe being filled with people like me. I hardly ever considered the universe, period. You start thinking about the universe and pretty soon you start wondering

about your purpose in it. You start thinking about how small you are and how big it is, and where it came from, and where you're going. You think about how long the stars have been around and how much longer you're going to be around. And then you start considering your life and how you've lived it, and it's amazing how all the things you're ashamed of start popping up.

I could never forget them — from the ants in the back yard, to the stupid comment I made in fifth grade, to that relationship in high school... all the lies, the greed, the unfaithfulness, the unkindness, the selfishness... I could justify, deny, ignore, rationalize, and avoid thinking about them, but I

could never forget.

Something always reminded me. I would try my best to be kind, and I hung around some pretty kind people, but something would always come up — the bottom line, the limit of my love, the place where self always took over... *always*.

I hated it, but I was stuck with it. Everyone I knew was stuck with it. And a lot of people I knew settled for it. But I couldn't buy the psychological garbage that tried to make *self* acceptable or even desirable. I knew better. All human misery came from self. It is like poison in our veins. Self is the *opposite* of love, and even though what we wanted was true love, what we had was *self-love*. We were stuck

with it, and we were powerless to do anything about it.

The only thing we could do was try to escape thinking about it — get stoned, get busy, or get into one more fantasy. The song said, "We are starlight, we are golden, and we've got to get ourselves back to the Garden." It felt good to sing it; it felt good to think that way; but we didn't have the slightest idea *how* to get ourselves back to the Garden. It was just another fantasy.

I had a longing in me for the Garden. I think we all did. It is deep in human beings — just like knowing how to smile. You don't have to practice smiling in front of a mirror to get it right. And you don't have

to study the ancient scriptures to sense the loss of what man had in the Garden.

Man, male and female, was created and placed on this planet as the highest and most magnificent of all creatures in the universe. In fact, he was made in the exact likeness of his Creator, and he lived in total dependence on his Maker for every thing. He needed God like a child needs his father. He didn't know what to say or do without receiving it from his Source. There were no barriers between the Creator and his creatures, and so there was also peace between the man and the woman.

There was true love. The woman trusted the man and loved him so much

that all she wanted to do was support him and submit to his direction. The man cherished the woman and cared for her with absolute love and wisdom, directly guided by the One who created them both.

They were placed in a garden, a paradise called Eden full of every good tree and every good fruit. There was only one tree there of which they could not eat — and their Source warned them that eating from it would result in their death.

Of course, they had no idea what death was like. We barely understand what death is today. All they knew is that they were to have children and expand the borders of Eden until it filled the entire planet. And then

what? There was a tree in the garden which had the power to give them everlasting life. If they ate from that tree and continued having children, eventually the planet would fill up with immortal human beings.

Of course, they couldn't all stay here. But in the heavens there were countless solar systems and planets. Eventually the universe would start filling up with creatures who perfectly expressed the character and nature of their Source. And Divine nature, which is spirit and therefore invisible, would be able to be seen through human nature, which is both spiritual and physical.

But our Source had an enemy. One of the most powerful angelic rulers in

the universe — a spiritual creature so intelligent and mighty that we can scarcely comprehend him — had a fantasy that he wanted to carry out. The prophet Isaiah described that fantasy: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.’”

This angelic ruler was not content to exercise his authority *under* his Creator. He wanted to usurp the authority of God altogether. He was bringing rebellion into the universe.

The eternal, uncreated, all-powerful God would have had no problem in destroying his enemy

the moment he conceived his first evil thought. But our Source did not desire to prove who was the stronger. He had a plan by which the creature, man, would expose the evil nature of the enemy and subdue him. Thus a created being would deal with the rebellion of a created being. Just as man was to subdue the earth and rule over it, so he would subdue and rule over the enemy. And the way he would carry out this most important task was through his relationship with his Creator, by trusting and depending entirely on him.

But the enemy is a genius. Taking possession of a serpent, he transformed its appearance into something fabulous and intriguing

and approached the woman in this form. His attack was aimed at her trust, persuading her that her Creator’s intention towards her was not kind and good. If she ate from the forbidden trees said the serpent, she would not die, but rather become equal to God. And that was why, he suggested, God had commanded them not to eat of it.

She was completely deceived by his slander, ate from the tree, and offered some to her husband. But he was not deceived.

It’s hard to imagine what the man went through that day. He knew for certain that his wife was cut off from him, in rebellion against their Source, headed for death. All hope of doing

what they were created to do was gone. Without the woman, there would be no children, no subduing of the earth, no ruling over the enemy, no filling the universe. The horrible reality of division had suddenly appeared in paradise. The glory was gone. The wonderful, intimate, trusting relationship between man and woman had disintegrated. The woman would be going to death — alone. The man would be left behind in an empty paradise — alone.

Impulsively, without depending on his Source for direction, he took the fruit from the woman. Fully knowing the consequences, yet unwilling to be separated from his wife, he ate, and plunged himself into rebellion and

death with her. It was the greatest act of natural love the world has ever seen.

From that moment on, the entire human race was doomed. Man had chosen to obey the enemy, making himself and all his seed slaves to the evil that was now inside of them. Just as the seed of a thorn bush cannot produce grapes, so the seed of fallen man could only produce human beings enslaved to the enemy. Humanity, created in the likeness of divine nature, had taken on the enemy as their source. The earth, given to man to rule, now lay under the domain of the evil one. And every person from that time on was doomed to disobey the Creator and wind up going to

death.

Death — if we really knew what it was, we'd do anything to avoid it. The horrifying loneliness of being cut off... our imaginations can't even grasp it. No eyes to look through, no ears to hear with, no hands to reach out and touch anyone else who's not even there. No smell and no taste — nothing to distract the mind from dwelling on all the things you're ashamed of. No justifications, now, and no psychological arguments to explain away your unkindness, your selfish deeds, and all the hurt you caused, and all the time you wasted, and how you missed out on what you were created for... And when all this horror gets over with, there's still a

judgment to undergo to see if you can escape the *second* death — the one that goes on forever and ever.

It's easy to talk about death when we're not facing it. And it's hard to understand from a distance. But those who come close can sense the horror. It's amazing what a person would do to live one more minute — the compromise he would give himself to when the dread of death comes upon him. They say that some of the people in Nazi concentration camps would offer to help with the exterminations, just to prolong their own lives one more minute.

It's hard to understand how, in spite of the ugliness inside of us, our Creator still loves us. When the man

and woman gave themselves over to the enemy and totally wrecked their Maker's plans for eternity, he did not react to them in wrath, but in compassion. The fact that men would die did not please our Maker. He wanted to provide a way out of death for them and all men. And though he told them what the consequences of their deeds would be — how the ground would be cursed, how childbirth would be painful — he also promised that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the serpent. And, before he exiled them from the garden, he tenderly took the skin of an animal (probably a lamb) and fashioned garments for the man and the woman to shield their naked

bodies from the harsh environment they were going to have to live in.

Thousands of years passed and we human beings continued in our predicament. To the logical mind, the situation seemed hopeless. God had promised that a human being would crush the head of the serpent, but all human beings were born under the dominion of the enemy, helpless to cast off their bondage to *self*, for it was part of their very nature since birth. And even though many of them hated the corruption inside them and struggled against it, they were unable to have total victory and to cast off the rule of the evil one.

Then it happened. The divine Spirit came upon a woman — a virtuous,

pure Hebrew maiden named Miriam – and a child was conceived in her womb. This was not just another human being from the fallen seed of man. This human being was conceived from an unfallen human seed, provided by the same Creator who had created the first man in his unfallen state. In fact, the Apostle Paul called him the “second man” or “last Adam.”¹ And just as Adam,² he also was called the Son of God.

So he was born of a woman,

but not of fallen seed of man, that he could fulfill the promise that “the seed of the woman” would crush the serpent’s head.

In this little baby the eternal Word of God took up residence in human flesh.³ He was not born under bondage to the enemy. He did not have the corrupt nature inherent in man’s seed. He was the beginning of a new race of man, a new creation. By the great, unfathomable wisdom of God, there was once again hope

that man could do what he was created to do.

The name of this man was Yahshua,* and his primary purpose in life was to die. He lived a perfect, selfless life, completely obedient to his Source. He proved to be a true Son, never even having one *thought* independent from his Father’s will. And his purpose in living a perfect life was mainly that he could take our place in death. If he had disobeyed even once, he would have gone to

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:45-47 ² Luke 3:38 ³ John 1:14 * **Yahshua** is the Hebrew name of the Son of God. It is what his father Yoceph (Joseph) and his mother Miriam (Mary) called him when he was born, as recorded in Luke 1:31 and Matthew 1:21. The footnote for this verse in the NIV New Testament reads: *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua.* In Hebrew, as in old English, there is no “J” sound, and the name is more accurately rendered *Yahshua*. It means “I am powerful to save,” since it is constructed from *Yah*, the name of the Father (as in *Hallelujah*, meaning “Praise Yah”), which means “I AM,” and *shua*, which means “power and authority to save.” We call him *Yahshua* because that is truly his name.

death for his own rebellion. But since he was not born into rebellion and never once gave in to the schemes of the enemy, he was able to be a substitute for us all. Despite intense pressure to compromise, despite mockings, beatings, betrayal, and even death itself, he never once acted independently from his Source. Where the first man failed, the second man, Yahshua, succeeded.

The enemy, in his desperate attempt to get him to disobey or in any way violate his submission to his Source, made one fatal mistake. He killed him. Yahshua was an *innocent* man, not even born under the enemy's rule like the rest of humanity, and so the evil one had no right to put him

to death. It was murder. The enemy now has been judged, and all his legal rights to authority over mankind have been stripped from him.

Now, any person who wishes can escape the control of the ruler of this world by coming under the authority of Yahshua. The enemy no longer has any power to make people disobey their Creator. Freedom is available to anyone who trusts in Yahshua. The only way the enemy can keep people under his sway is by lying to them.

Yahshua has brought judgment to the ruler of this world. The enemy has been sentenced to eternal torment in a lake which burns with fire and sulfur, and is awaiting execution. But Yahshua didn't come to judge the

human beings. He came to rescue us. And so the one who trusts him is not judged, but will escape the judgment that awaits all mankind.

When Yahshua returned from death, he demonstrated that the power of the enemy was broken forever. When he died, he died as a substitute for all. And when he was raised from death, he showed that death had no more sting. All those who were held captive through the fear of death to do the will of the enemy could now be released. All mankind was now free from bondage to *self*. Anyone, no matter how wretched and shameful his life had been, could now be forgiven and enter into Yahshua's realm and escape the

realm of darkness and death.

The great tragedy, however, is that many people — *most* people in fact — will not trust in Yahshua or believe in his victory over death. They will not follow Yahshua, but will continue to follow a loser. In fact, some of the evil one's most avid followers are those who deny his existence. And all those who follow the evil one will end up where he is. This is the tragic part, for our loving, kind, patient, and generous Creator never intended for human beings to suffer eternal torment along with the evil one. In fact, he even sent his Son to take our place in death so that we wouldn't have to experience death of any kind.

Eternity is a long time. If a little bird were to take a grain of sand in its beak from the seashore and somehow manage to fly it to the farthest quasar in the universe, and if it returned and repeated the process until all the sand of the oceans, both from their beaches and bottoms, were gone, eternity would just be beginning.

Yahshua has made it possible for the original purpose in creating man to be fulfilled. Divinity took on humanity in Yahshua, even taking our place in death, in order that we human beings could be forgiven and cleansed of our corruption and take on Divinity.

Those who love and trust in Yahshua will obey him and follow him

and the Divine Spirit will come to them and dwell eternally in their spirits. Not only are human beings restored to the exact likeness of their Creator, but he even takes up permanent residence within them, so that they can fully and perfectly represent him throughout eternity.

In this age, we who are disciples are being changed on the inside to become completely like Yahshua. This is accomplished through the closeness of living together in communities as parts of a tribe of Israel. Through our love and unity the God of peace will crush the Enemy under our feet. At that time, Yahshua — who is waiting for us in the universe — will return for us and our mortal, flesh-and-blood

bodies will be changed to be like his immortal body. Every tear will be wiped away. Sorrow, pain, and death will be no more.

Finally, all who have waited in death will be raised to life again and will be judged, according to what they have done. Many of these will, in the mercy of our Creator, be allowed to live. And the universe itself will be changed — so that immortal man can inhabit an immortal universe, one in which the stars no longer blow up or collapse in on themselves.

How long ago do you think that God first conceived of man? The answer is that man has *always* been conceived in the mind of God, according to his *eternal* purpose. There was never a time when he didn't think of you, even though he has waited until now to bring you into existence. But his kind intention towards you is that you would carry out his ultimate purpose. This is the purpose that we have left behind everything to be a part of. ♦





Eternity is a long time. If a little bird were to take a grain of sand in its beak from the shore of the ocean and somehow manage to fly it to the farthest quasar in the universe, and if it returned and repeated the process until all the sands of the seas and oceans were gone, eternity would just be beginning.



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Like a Beehive

Have you ever watched a beehive? It is fascinating seeing thousands of little bees working together to produce honey. As you come near the hive, you can hear an exciting buzz as they go about the many tasks necessary to keep the hive alive. The workers are responsible to collect nectar and guard the hive. The young bees keep the hive in good condition, feed the larvae, and support in other household chores. There is never a dull moment in the busy life of a little bee.

This is much like the life that we have. No matter what we do, we love to do it together. Daily we gather to thank our Master for His salvation, and to hear Him speak to us through one another. This gathering keeps alive a genuine love and care for each other. As we work, we take advantage of the daily situations, guarding ourselves from the selfishness and pride that would come in to separate us and take away our love. Our children are a vital part of our life. We not only homeschool them, but we work with them to accomplish the simple tasks necessary to maintain a family life. Our life is not a dull routine of chores, but is full of the warmth that comes from the sweet fellowship of friends speaking their hearts to one another.

But there are a few things that differ in our life from that of a beehive. One is that we are not driven by instinct or controlled by something separate from our own will. Each of us is here because we chose to leave behind our own separate lives to increase the life of this hive. Our life is not enclosed like the hive of a bee, nor do we have a stinger to harm any uninited guests. We welcome anyone to experience our life with us. Please come and see what it is like to be part of a beehive of people expressing the warmth and love of our Creator. 🐝
