

GARY KENT



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Have you ever stopped to wonder – really wonder – why it was that Jesus had to die to save us? Couldn't there have been another way? Surely God, the Creator of all, even of the laws that govern the universe, could have found an easier way. Why not just forgive us and make us pay a penance? Why not destroy the wicked and just rescue the good? Or even better yet – if God knew the future, why didn't He just avoid creating those who would fail in the first place?

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That question has been asked over and over again through the ages by people just like you and me. Why was it necessary? Even the angels in heaven and the holy created beings from worlds throughout the galaxies, have asked the same question and pondered the mystery of redemption.

It is a mystery that will be the study of the redeemed through the ages, but it's a mystery that we can begin to understand here, today. To do so, we must first go back to the beginning, to see where the sin that causes our death originated.

The Bible tells us that the law of love is the foundation of the government of God, and the happiness of all intelligent beings depends on their perfect accord with its great principles. From the very beginning of time, God created beings with the ability to

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discern and choose. He desired a service of love from all his creatures – a service that would spring from an appreciation of His character, for He takes no pleasure in forced obedience and grants to all the freedom of will.

As long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony in the universe. Creating intelligent beings with free will was a risk God was willing to take for the love and communion He could share with them.

But the Bible tells us, that which could have gone wrong, did. Of all the created beings, the loftiest and most elite were the angels – God's personal messengers – those surrounding the throne and sent on God's errands throughout the galaxies.

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Of all these angels, the one most exalted, the leader of them all, the one most honoured by God, was Lucifer. He stood in the presence of the great Creator next to His throne. The Bible tells us in Ezekiel 28:12-13 (KJV) that he was “...full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.” and that “...every precious stone was thy covering.” Imagine that! The prophet Ezekiel couldn’t find words to describe the glory and beauty that was Lucifer. Unfortunately, he continues saying in verse 15: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

In a universe of perfect harmony and love, little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says:

“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy

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beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness...” Ezekiel 28:17 (KJV)

And in Isaiah 14: 13, 14: “For thou hast said in thine heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;...I will be like the Most High.”

Though all his glory was from God, this angel came to regard it as his own. Not content with his position, though it was the most exalted, he ventured to covet the homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in all his affections and that of the angels in his charge, he endeavored to secure their service and loyalty to himself.

Now the perfect harmony of the universe was broken. Just imagine, if you can, the

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apprehension that came over holy beings who had never encountered feelings of jealousy like those expressed by Lucifer. The Scripture tells us the position he coveted was that of the Son of God – Jesus.

The Scripture tells us that both God the Father and God the Son were one, and both participated in the creation of all heavenly beings: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” John 1:1 (KJV). John is talking about Jesus, because in verse 14 he continues, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

Jesus was with God and He was God. Lucifer convinced himself that he should be one of them too. He coveted the title

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and honour of God, but he could never be God. He was a created being who could never become his own maker. His purpose became to dispute the supremacy of the Son of God and impeach the wisdom and love of the Creator.

The angels pleaded with him. Jesus presented before him the goodness and justice of God and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. To disregard it would bring dishonour to his Maker and ruin to himself. But Lucifer wanted more. He wanted more than the love and respect of the angels, who delighted in executing his every command. There was only one above him before God, and that was the Son of God.

“Why,” questioned this mighty angel, “should Christ have the supremacy? Why should He be honoured above me?” Just

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imagine with me if you will, Lucifer leaving the immediate presence of the Father and setting off to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels.

He worked in secrecy, for a while concealing his purpose under a guise of reverence for God. Can you imagine how easy that was for him? If we, who live in a world full of deceit and disillusionment, can sometimes still be deceived by a smooth-talker, how much more the angels who had never in their existence encountered deceit.

Lucifer insinuated doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was sufficient guide.

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The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honour. If he, the prince of angels, could attain this position, great good would come to the entire host of angels, for he would secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty they had enjoyed was at an end for an absolute ruler had been appointed to them.

Such were Lucifer's subtle deceptions that were spreading through the courts of heaven. Taking advantage of the loving and loyal trust of the angels, he artfully instilled distrust into their minds, then cunningly drew them to express their feelings, which he would later repeat as evidence that the angels were not fully in agreement with the government of heaven.

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The spirit of discontent grew, and while there was no open rebellion in heaven, a division of feelings imperceptibly grew up among the angels. The loyal angels could see only terrible consequences, and earnestly counselled the disaffected ones to renounce their purpose and prove themselves loyal to God by faithfulness to His government.

In great mercy, and according to His divine character of love, God had patience with Lucifer. The spirit of discontent had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element: strange, mysterious, unaccountable.

Lucifer himself had not at first been aware of the real nature of his feelings. For a time, he had been afraid to express the workings of his mind, yet he did not dismiss them.

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Every effort that love could devise was made to convince him of his error. For a time, he nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honoured, to confess his error.

A compassionate Creator, in yearning pity for Lucifer and his followers, was seeking to draw them back from the abyss of ruin into which they were about to plunge. But His mercy was misinterpreted.

Lucifer pointed to the long-suffering of God as evidence of his own superiority, an indication that the King of the universe would yet agree to his terms. If the angels would stand firmly with him, he declared, they could yet gain all that they desired. He persistently defended his own course, and fully committed himself to the great

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controversy against his Maker.

Rejecting with disdain the arguments and entreaties of the loyal angels, he denounced them as deluded slaves. Those he could not convince he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings, and to those angels who heeded the warnings and were disposed to repent and seek to be received into favour with the Father and His Son, Lucifer had another deception ready. He declared that the angels who had united with him had gone too far to return; that he was acquainted with divine law, and knew that God would not forgive. He declared that all who would now submit to the authority of heaven would be degraded from their position and stripped of their honour.

As far as he was concerned, he would never again acknowledge the authority of Christ. The only course remaining for him and his

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followers, he said, was to assert their liberty and gain by force the rights which had not been willingly accorded to them.

God permitted Lucifer to carry forward his work until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for the plan to be fully developed, that its true nature and tendency might be seen by all.

Lucifer had been highly exalted and greatly loved, so his influence was strong. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but also all the worlds he had created. Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in his rebellion, he could certainly convince the inhabitants of the worlds.

His deceptions were so artful and cloaked in secrecy that it was very difficult to dis-

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close to the angels the true nature of his work. Therefore, until fully developed, it could not be made to appear the evil that it was. His disaffection would not have been seen as rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully understand Lucifer's character or see where it was leading.

In the great struggle that ensued, Lucifer cast doubt on the plainest statements of God, and his high position so closely connected with the divine government gave greater force to his representations.

On the other hand, God could only employ such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not – flattery and deceit. He stated that what God wanted by seeking the submission and obedience of the angels was merely the exaltation of Himself. This

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terrible accusation hung like a pall over the whole universe waiting for confirmation or rebuttal.

Imagine if you'd been an angel in heaven, and Lucifer came to you with his concerns. You could have told him, "hey, buddy, I hear you, but I've got something good going here, I don't want to rock the boat. You might have a point, but I'm not interested because God has been good to me."

That would not have been a good enough answer for God. He wanted no doubts concerning his character, his motives, to cloud our minds and those of the heavenly beings.

To destroy Lucifer and his followers would only have cemented the doubt in the minds of many. God knew that unless Lucifer's

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plan was fully carried out, that doubt would remain forever.

The Bible tells us there was war in heaven – a literal war of the galaxies: “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:7-9 (KJV)

One-third of the angels were lost to Lucifer, whom after his fall from heaven is called Satan in the Bible. Satan immediately set out to achieve his goal of bringing the worlds around to his way of thinking. Un-

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fortunately, we were the first to fall – you know the story of his deception of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The results of Satan's promised so-called "freedom" has been enough to inoculate the rest of the universe against his great deception. The Apostle Paul says "...we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Corinthians 4:9. (KJV) The devastation caused by the departure from the law of love has been staggering – suffering, anguish, wars, famine, hatred, murder, disease and death – to name a few. The whole world groans under the weight of the curse.

But what was to become of this world, which was still in its infancy when Adam and Eve fell? Was everything lost? Were we doomed to live out our miserable existence

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and die without hope? No. God the Father and God the Son had made provision for just such a contingency:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (KJV)

But how do we know this wasn't an emergency plan thought out at the last moment? - Because Peter tells us so in 1 Peter 1:20 (KJV), speaking of Christ's sacrifice, “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, ...”

But now we come back to our original question – why was this plan of redemption necessary? Why couldn't Adam and Eve have been forgiven and reinstated as before their fall? Because the issues were

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much bigger than that. They too had been contaminated by doubt and mistrust of God; and those doubts have been repeated in the minds of every son and daughter of Adam since the beginning of time.

There is an accusation pending before the universe. Is God fair? Was Satan justified in his complaints? That is the big question that this world – our planet – is slowly answering as the events of Lucifer's experiment unfold. We are under quarantine, a planet infected by sin. But who could rescue us and at the same time put to rest the ever-present accusation of Lucifer?

God the Father and God the Son knew there was only one way – only the Maker could restore what He had created. But how? The law of the universe demanded that we die, as Satan and his angels will when their time

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comes. God the Son would die for us and satisfy the law. But to do that, He would have to risk His own life.

He would have to leave His throne of glory and the adoration of the heavenly beings, and come down to this world, contaminated by the most virulent disease of sin, be exposed to it, be rejected by those He'd come to save, take upon Himself all the sins ever committed and to be committed by human beings, and die, crushed by the weight and darkness of the sin on His shoulders. Even God would turn away at the last moment, unable to see and bear the iniquity carried by His Son.

We cannot fully understand what Jesus gave up for us, or endured, when He came to suffer and die. But on the cross that day in Golgotha, when the inhabitants of the

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whole universe watched in horror as Satan with the host of evil angels excited the crowd and instigated the cruelty of the soldiers, they then understood what they previously had not.

Had Satan and his angels been destroyed immediately, it would not have been apparent to the heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained – a seed that would have produced deadly fruit. But now, Satan's disguise was torn away. His motives were laid open before the universe. He had revealed himself a murderer by shedding the blood of the Son of God. He forever uprooted himself from the sympathies of the unfallen beings.

In the beginning, he had declared that the law of God was faulty, that justice and mer-

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cy could not meet, but they both met at the cross. In the beginning, he had alleged that Jesus wanted submission and obedience merely for self-exaltation, but instead, He humbled himself to the lowest death on the cross.

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which in the past may have filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice and power. When we behold God through the sacrifice of his beloved Son on the cross, we understand the significance of the endearing title, "Our Father."

Confronted with the question, "Why the cross?" we can understand in the light of

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the great controversy between Jesus and Satan, that God in His wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. There was no other way.

The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vastness of space – the Son of God – humbled Himself to save the human race. The fact that He should lay aside his glory and humiliate Himself for the love of man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.

The whole universe will exclaim as we read in Revelation 5:12 (KJV): "...Worthy, is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

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Have you ever stopped to wonder - really wonder - why it was that Jesus had to die to save us? Couldn't there have been another way?

As you read this booklet, you will discover that, in the light of the great controversy between Jesus and Satan, God in His wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. There was no other way.



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for **The Incredible Journey** ministry. He has spoken and produced numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

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