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God Always Has A Plan

God had a plan for the redemption of men before Adam ever sinned. He made it possible for people of all generations to find a path to eternal salvation. He made sure that no one individual was excluded from the possibility of being born again. It's quite amazing how he carefully documents the details of how He rescued each group of people in each dispensation.

There is a beautiful piece of the puzzle concerning the Old Testament saints and how they were brought into their salvation. As Christians we often start simple: we accept Jesus because He is the way to Heaven. But as we grow, we become curious about the "why" behind God's ways. Don't be afraid to ask those questions. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful teacher.

From the beginning of human history, God has worked through different time periods. There were the time periods from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Jesus, from Jesus until He returns, and then the millennium. Jesus is the great turning point. The big question many wonder about is this: What did God do with all the righteous people who lived and died before Jesus came? There was far more time before Christ than after. Every child conceived from Adam until now has an eternal soul. So where did God keep those souls, and how were the Old Testament saints finally conformed into the image of the resurrected Christ?

Let's go straight to the Scripture that puts this in order. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 the Apostle Paul answers those who were saying there is no resurrection of the dead. He writes, *"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*

There is a clear order. Christ is the turning point. We who live after the cross wait for the trumpet to sound so we can receive our new eternal bodies. But the Old Testament saints were handled differently; they had to wait for the cross, at the moment of Christ's victory. There has always been a path to salvation for every single person, regardless of when they were born.

After the flood, with Noah's family ruling the entire future of the earth, God made a covenant for them and all who followed to be saved. It says in Genesis 9 that, as they settled on dry ground, God made a covenant where they would not eat the blood of animals (which was symbolic of Christ's blood to come), and not to murder another human. This was the qualifications that God asked Noah to share with every child who was to be born going forward.

No one was able to go to Heaven yet, so God had a holding place for everyone who died that was marked for Heaven. This holding place was called Paradise, later nicknamed Abraham's bosom. It was a beautiful place located right next to Hell. We see this in Luke 16. Lazarus, the poor man, was carried by angels to Abraham's Bosom, a place of comfort. The rich man was in torment on the other side. Then on the cross, the thief said, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."* Jesus answered, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*

When Jesus died and rose, He descended to Paradise. He proclaimed His victory, then led those Old Testament saints out. At that moment, they were conformed to His resurrected image, receiving glorified bodies just like His. They walked the streets of Jerusalem as living witnesses, and then Jesus took them with Him into Heaven. He led captivity captive and emptied Paradise forever.

Seeing this order fills me with awe at God's love, justice, and faithfulness. He never forgot the Old Testament saints. He kept them, comforted them in Paradise, and at the perfect moment conformed them to the image of His risen Son. They are now with Him in Heaven, enjoying the fullness of what they believed for by faith.

Meditate on these truths, my friend. The puzzle piece fits perfectly. The Old Testament saints were not left out; they were preserved and gloriously transformed when Jesus rose. We have a living hope in the same resurrection power. God has always had a plan of salvation for every generation, and He is more interested in people going to Heaven than to Hell.

Your Heavenly Father has used the same resourcefulness in planning out your life. He knew the exact generation and place where you would be born. He is not surprised by your external circumstances or your internal struggles. He has already made a path for you to follow to achieve victory. Keep praying out that will each day by praying in the spirit. Have faith, have hope in Him, and watch as His Will overtakes your life.

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