



## Introduction to “Covenant and Creation”

### Review of Previous Article

The God, YHWH, liberated the Habiru from their enslavement in Egypt and chose them to be his messengers to mankind. God’s central message was his intention to move beyond command, possession and domination, which exclude a truly human relationship. He longed to covenantally relate to his Creation as a human “I” to a human “thou,” as one human “Self” to another human “self.” God therefore chose Israel as trustees to convey his purpose to the world. This purpose was that *he would become human in order that mankind also might become truly human.*

The First Temple was a metaphor of God’s promise to become human. Tragically, the Chosen People never grasped his purpose. Israel was finally exiled, and the First Temple was destroyed. After the Exile, Second-Temple Judaism drifted even further from its commitment to God’s intentions. It abandoned God’s promised, personal human presence for the supposed indwelling presence of divine law within obedient “Chosen Ones.” It replaced God’s “paramanence” (with us, to us, for us) with divine immanence (within us, possessing us, controlling us). Thus, Judah abandoned the hope of relational, human “otherness.” This loss of “otherness” inevitably compromised God’s own age-long struggle to endow mankind with true, human self-consciousness.

Only by his human manifestation as Jesus Christ could God ultimately reconcile mankind’s profound rejection of the “other.” Only that event could answer mankind’s fundamental need for genuine self-consciousness — which accepts the “other.” Only that human manifestation could inaugurate the fulfillment of the promised covenant — the promised human relationality. So it was that Jesus assured his disciples that he — the ultimate “Other” — is not our enemy but our covenantal Friend (see John 15:15).

### Overview of This Article

From the beginning the One-and-Only God, YHWH, has been committed to covenantal or relational co-existence with “others.” Such co-existence

necessarily required God to embark on his mission of creating “others.” Ultimately, God desired the company of “colleagues” with whom, to whom and for whom he could consciously relate. God therefore launched the historic journey of creating humanity for himself and for “others.” In order that the mutual relationship between himself and Creation might be free and responsible, God permitted the possibility of both good and evil — of acceptance and rejection.

Thus, history has revealed the existence of both good and evil. There have been “naturocentric” good (e.g., sunshine, planting, harvest) and evil (e.g., disease, disaster, death), anthropocentric good (e.g., mutual support, compassion, giving) and evil (e.g., immorality, violence, murder), and theocentric good (e.g., loving God, witnessing to God) and evil (e.g., attempted possession of God, hatred and murder of God). Meanwhile, throughout history God has been engaged in emptying himself (*kenosis*) of uncreation so that both he and mankind might become human and thus co-exist with each other in mutual, covenantal presence. At the same time, mankind has been engaged in the attempt to empty itself of Creation in order to achieve uncreation and thus to contractually possess divinity.

Mankind’s millennial efforts to contradict the divine intention have now reached a crisis. On one hand, mankind’s attempts to achieve departure from the created order through rapture or death threaten to terminate Creation through the global exercise of violence. On the other hand, God has inaugurated his own true humanity as Jesus Christ and is now prepared to consummate Creation with the full and eternal transformation of humanity into his own image. Thus, the time has come for representatives of mankind to understand, accept and celebrate God’s human intentions.

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