

# From the Foundation of the World

Terry Swagerty

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From the foundation of the world, God has been doing much work on our behalf and He's made us privy to some of it. It's a privilege to know, and it's nice to know, that in spite of difficulties that exist in the world, things are going to turn out well, even though there might be a rough road ahead. I have an interesting article that I'd like to reference several times throughout the course of this sermon. I think it helps focus our attention on some of the challenges that exist in the world today. In September 1977, NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration), launched Voyager 1, a deep-space probe—1,592 pounds of robotic, high-tech stuff. The mission was to explore the outer portions of our solar system and then eventually go off into interstellar space. It's so marvelous that we are at that place in human development that we can send a spacecraft, unmanned in this case, way off into the outer portions of our solar system. That spacecraft, traveling at 40,000 miles per hour, is the most distant, man-made object from earth and the first one to leave the solar system.

Voyager 1 was expected to operate only until the Saturn encounter, and when the spacecraft passed by that planet in 1980, Carl Sagan, a well-known astronomer, now deceased, proposed the idea of the space probe taking one last picture of earth before it passed off into the outer reaches of whatever is out there. He acknowledged that the picture would have very little scientific value, as the earth would appear too small for Voyager's cameras to make out any detail, but it would be meaningful as a perspective on our place in the universe. So, indeed, it took a while. He made the proposal in 1980, but they didn't get around to actually doing it until 1990, because there were other projects backed up that took priority.

Finally they did get around to it, and between March and May of 1990, Voyager 1 returned sixty frames back to earth, with the radio signal traveling at the speed of light for nearly five and half hours to cover the distance. So Voyager 1 is out there, 3.7 billion miles from earth, sending back radio signals, and they were able to capture sixty frames. Three of the frames received showed the earth as a tiny point of light in empty space. Each frame had been taken using filters of different colors—blue, green, and violet, respectively—then the three frames were recombined to produce the image that became the famous, pale blue dot with which you may be familiar.

That was the image from Voyager 1 that came back, from 3.7 billion miles out into space. Looking back, what they captured that represented earth was a pale blue dot. Just how big a dot? When Carl Sagan gave a lecture at Cornell University in 1994, he was talking about this, so he would have had a big screen with large images, and he could have pointed to the pale blue dot. I don't have that today, but let's imagine a chess board—we're all familiar with one of those; they come in various sizes, but they're square, and they've got sixty-four squares on them—eight rows of eight. It's convenient

because the arithmetic is such that in these frames that were sent back from Voyager, each contained 640,000 individual pixels that composed the picture. That makes the math easy: 64 squares, 64,000 pixels, that's 1,000 pixels per square—a relatively small space. The question then comes up, how many pixels does it take to depict that small, pale blue dot? That's the wrong question. How many pale blue dots can you put in a single pixel? Eight, as a matter of fact. So you realize how tiny this thing was and it kind of boggles the imagination to think about the whole concept.

Here we are, 3.7 billion miles away, looking back at planet earth and there's just this little, pale blue dot, and it makes you think—at least it brought to my mind—the question asked by David in Psalm 8, where, perhaps from the hills of Bethlehem, while watching the sheep at night and looking up at the skies—no light pollution whatsoever—he asked, *What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him?* From how far, far away—from such a tiny little speck way out there, and that's just at the edge of our solar system—did David see into the heavens? He was looking at what? The galaxy? What we call the Milky Way? He was looking at stars, light years away, and here in our time, Voyager 1 was now looking back from the edge of our solar system. The closest star to our solar system is Alpha Centauri; it's 4.3 light years away. It would take light 4.3 years to travel from Alpha Centauri to the earth, at 186,000 miles per second. It boggles the mind to consider how utterly far off we are and how tiny we are relative to the overall scheme of things.

We come then to the reflections of Carl Sagan; it's interesting, because Sagan, in his lecture at Cornell University, focused on reflecting back on that image and what it meant to him. I think his comments are worthy of our time today. There are just a few paragraphs and I'll read from them. He started out by saying,

*We succeeded in taking that picture from deep space, and if you look at it, you see a dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. [He would have been pointing to the graphic that he had.] On it [that pale blue dot] everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you have ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of all our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, every hopeful child, every inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every 'superstar', every 'supreme leader', every saint and sinner in the history of our species, lived here—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.*

A mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. That's interesting, isn't it? Isaiah would make reference, in stirring up the people to return to God, to the nations being less than the dust on a scale. A whole nation—it doesn't provide enough mass, in God's view, to even move the scales in the slightest bit. The smallest mote of dust. What is man, that You are mindful of him?

*The earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena.*

What follows next is particularly insightful, I think. When you look at the conditions that exist in the world, it doesn't seem like things are getting any better; there are all manner of difficulties in every corner of the globe.

*Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors, so that, in glory and in triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot.*

Here's the pale blue dot and we're willing to spill rivers of blood in order to be the masters of some fraction of it.

*Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable habitants of some other corner. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. Our posturing, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light.*

You're beginning to get the impression, certainly I did, that Carl Sagan looks at that pale blue dot and he's getting a bit morose here—what are the prospects; they don't look too good. He continues,

*Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.*

Wow—that's a pretty tough position, isn't it? He doesn't see any hope. He can see that there's going to be a need to save us from ourselves but he doesn't see any hope; there's just this little pale dot out there. I find it interesting (and Carl Sagan certainly is a good illustration of the point) how easy it is to look at the world and make an assessment based on our own understanding or ideas. What he's actually done here is dismiss the presence or existence of God. There's no help coming from anywhere, there is no God out there that's going to rescue us. It's up to us, he says.

*It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish that pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.*

I would like you to turn to Matthew 22, and what we have illustrated here is Carl Sagan's coming to grips with the two great commandments in the law. He has dismissed the first great commandment and embraced the second as our only hope. I think this is typical of human experience. Matthew 22, verse 35.

**Matthew 22:35** *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,*

36) *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”* (NKJV)

I don't know what the lawyer expected to gain, or what kind of advantage he was seeking in testing Jesus this way.

37) *Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*

38) *This is the first and great commandment.*

Then He goes on to say:

39) *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*

40) *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”* (NKJV)

Let's go back to Carl Sagan for a moment and notice what he says: “In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.” For him there is no God—God doesn't exist, so what is one to do? It's a real quandary here. ((laughs)) We know and understand that eternal life is—what? *To know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.* If you don't even believe that God exists, what are your chances? What are your options? It really is dismal. Sagan dismisses the first great commandment and immediately embraces the second, which is to love your neighbor as yourself. The second great commandment underscores our responsibility, as he says, to deal more kindly (and compassionately) with one another, and, “to preserve and cherish that pale blue dot—our only home.”

Now think about this for a moment; we have the two great commandments. Why is it that Carl Sagan is unable to see that there is a God? David, from his humble position, as I've guessed, on a moonless night on the hills around Bethlehem, with his sheep probably laying in the grass, looks up and beholds the wonder that is God's creation and the miracle that he sees. Carl Sagan, a learned astronomer, looks at our position and sees it as one of distance, isolation, and obscurity, with no hope. How does that happen? We're familiar with the principles but it doesn't hurt to review them. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians. In one sense we are in a privileged position. We have understanding that others do not. It's not to puff up our vanity in one way or another, but in writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them, in chapter 2 and verse 9,

**1 Corinthians 2:9** ... *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”* (NKJV)

It's a tragedy that educated and intelligent people feel that they have to depend only upon human resources to somehow make everything turn out all right, when in actual fact there is a work going on, that has been going on from the foundation of the world, that's going to make things right one day. So, you see, there are just certain things that we human beings, of ourselves, are not able to see and do not comprehend. I guess

we're all pretty much in the dark until God takes the scales away and gives us the opportunity to see and to comprehend.

10) *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.* (NKJV)

Do you want understanding, do you want to comprehend the meaning of this pale blue dot? Well, guess what? That comes from special revelation. God doesn't reveal things to people who don't want to have them revealed. What we find out about the knowledge of God is that it's very disruptive—have you ever noticed that? You get the truth of God and it just disrupts everything, turns your whole world on its ear. We could sit down and swap tales and tell war stories about all the things we had to do to adjust—simple things, like the practical application of the Sabbath day and what that did to your little world, and what your plans were for the near and far future.

10 repeated) *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

11) *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?* (NKJV)

Carl Sagan was a great astronomer because of the spirit of man that was in him and the qualities that God gave him as an individual. When he died, at that stage of his life, he probably had as good an understanding of the greater universe as any human being on the face of the globe, and yet he couldn't see the deeper things of God.

11 continued) *Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.* (NKJV)

Well, if you don't acknowledge that God exists, then how can you know and comprehend the things of God? The simple answer is you cannot, so then you're left to your own devices. What do you think of the odds now, of mankind collectively coming to treat one another more kindly and compassionately, as we sort through our various challenges and bring heaven on earth? What are the odds? It's not looking too good.

12) *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.* (NKJV)

Once again, humankind has a yearning to make things right. We want things to turn out right, we want everybody to live in peace and everything to be nice, and many don't seem to find any answers in going to God (or some concept of God). You know what I've found over the decades now, in my own personal life, and the lives of others with whom I've been associated? We come up against the truth of God and we just have to acknowledge that God's purpose is not to satisfy our expectations. God doesn't care what my expectations are. God has His expectations, He has His plan and purpose laid out, and it's important for me to get in harmony with it, right? Is that such a hard

concept to wrap one's head around? You see, God isn't there to please us. We're called on to please God. God said of His own Son, this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. What would He say of you and me? Same thing—we are to please Him. Our lives are to be an example that God is happy to have. It's an interesting thing that we have to come to grips with, the fact that we ourselves are not in charge—it's God's business. Chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians, verse 26, a memory scripture:

**1 Corinthians 1:26** *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (NKJV)*

Really? That explains a lot. ((laughs)) Yes, I understand—I'm not mighty and I'm not noble and so on. I find myself now, after so many years, looking in the mirror, and what's looking back at me? I think, is that the new normal? Is that 100 percent or is that 50 percent? I shudder to think that that's 100 percent, because if it is, I have a severe attitude adjustment coming, see?

Just a little diversion here, sharing from my own experience: I had a pretty good run for sixty-eight years, and it went well. The most challenging things I had were at a time when my mother had to deal with them, and for me, personally, they weren't too difficult. But now, during the last seven years, there has just been a constant series of things to recover from—one right after another, for seven consecutive years. I still can't open my mouth as wide as I am used to because of the healing of this tooth extraction, which is probably a good thing—most human beings shouldn't open their mouths as far and wide as they do. ((laughs)) Maybe there is a lesson in that.

I'm coming to understand what God meant. Paul had this horrible thorn in the flesh, and he beseeched God three times to remove it and He didn't. What did God say to him? My grace is sufficient for you for my strength is perfected in weakness. I don't get that—do you get that? How does that happen? Anybody win the Super Bowl if they're weak? One doesn't win the Stanley Cup out of weakness. One doesn't accomplish anything, as mankind sees it, out of weakness. My strength is perfected in weakness. Of all the weakness I see around me, we must be due for a tidal wave of perfection at any moment now. I would hope so, and eventually we will be due for it. Verse 27.

*27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*

Yes, the day will come when the weak and foolish of this world will put to rest all the alternatives that have ever been paraded by the mighty as better than the right way.

*28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, [why?]*

*29) that no flesh should glory in His presence. (NKJV)*

There will be no flesh glorying themselves in God's presence, so we might as well get used to that idea and recognize that that's not the purpose.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—31) that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”* (NKJV)

Paul is quoting that last part from Jeremiah. So here we are; there's a reason why some people understand and some people don't. You know the principle. To whom does God look? To those who are meek and lowly. Chapter 14 of Luke—I made the statement earlier that the truth of God is disruptive. As in the example of Carl Sagan's reflections on this pale blue dot, he dismisses the great commandment; he just doesn't acknowledge that God exists. It kind of puts one at a disadvantage, doesn't it? But then he immediately embraces the second great commandment. That's what takes place in the world around us, and we see it often. Again, the nature of God's plan and purpose, as it works out on this earth—which is hostile to God—is when we come to grips with, or in close connection to, or in harmony with the truth of God, it's very disruptive to our lives. I want you to look at Luke 14; upon further reading, some of these things come a little clearer to us.

**Luke 14:25** *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them ...* (NKJV)

Great multitudes had been following Jesus. He said to them, in response to their presence,

26) *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.* (NKJV)

What kind of an outfit is that? Do you see what Jesus is doing? He's demanding 100 percent allegiance to Himself and to the plan of God. Other sermons have been given on the subject that Jesus is on the earth to do the will of His Father—nothing more and nothing less. If you're going to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, He's very specific, and it's very personal, brethren. You must hate or love less by comparison, your father, your mother, your wife, your children, your brothers, your sisters—yes, and even your own life, also, or you simply cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the firstborn among many children. We have to place ourselves properly. What happens when the truth of God comes?

I used to think, back in the beginning, when I was just this standard, Orthodox Protestant kid growing up in my little hometown, as a Boy Scout, playing ball with the kids, going to the prom and all of that—okay, I'd come to an understanding that I don't have all the truth, and I'm beginning to make some corrections. So you start tossing in the Sabbath and the holy days and tithing, and you have to be careful, because you can't just put anything in your mouth to eat, and that sort of thing. Fortunately for me, as I look back

on it, I was single at the time, and I didn't have children or a spouse to have to deal with, but many people did and it cost them dearly to do things God's way. I thought, once we get things adjusted, I'm keeping the Sabbath and the holy days, and I've given up all those other things like Christmas and Easter. I'll never forget my grandmother looking at me and my brother, and saying, why do you want to go back into Old Testament bondage? Grandma, obedience is not bondage. What else could I say? Later on when the legalists were on our back, saying, that's legalism, I thought, well, obedience is not legalism either. Here's the thing; it's kind of hard to say, but stop and think about it; Jesus doesn't have any compassion for someone who chooses personal relationships—the second commandment—over the first commandment. There's no room to negotiate. We have got to put the first commandment first—you shall love the LORD your God with all of your heart, all of your mind, and all of your strength. That was then. I'm all adjusted now and everything is fine. ((laughs)) Right?

New understanding comes and we say, well, that shouldn't be hard—the church of God as a unit, as a whole, will just embrace it. Just wrap your arms around it and rejoice to high heaven that God has revealed yet additional information about who He is and what He's doing. Not so, and we have people listening right now—those in this room and elsewhere—who have had to go through some rather disruptive circumstances. You've had to examine your church community, people have had to go back again and decide, who am I going to put first? Am I going to put God first, or my parents and siblings—how about my children? The truth is the truth. What did we do when the Sabbath was an issue? It didn't make any difference what the kids thought, we had to keep the Sabbath and we went to the Feast. I never asked the school whether I could take my kids to the Feast. I said, we're going to the Feast; I'll see you when we get back. Some time has passed since then and now we have people who aren't interested in embracing the truth, they're more interested in maintaining the status quo—it's friendly here, it's nice here; nevermind what God is revealing about Himself, we'll just set that aside. We love one another and it's okay. Is it? We have to make a choice.

There are no excuses. God has the end in mind, and you and I do not. I would be happy to have drawn the line way back in 1965-68, by the time I had made some of those basic adjustments. I didn't realize that the bigger adjustments were still ahead. It's a serious thing. God is about doing His work. People like poor Carl Sagan have reduced our options down to a pale blue dot out there, hanging out, a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam—quite a picturesque description of our circumstances. We have these things we have to deal with and it's not always easy. God's knowledge is disruptive in a world that's not oriented toward Him. I focus on Sagan's perspective on the pale blue dot to help illustrate a couple of points. The one point being how easy it is to set aside the great commandment and then embrace the second, then think that everything is okay. Everything isn't okay.

The subject of the sermon is from the foundation of the world. Carl Sagan doesn't think there's going to be help—there's no evidence of help coming from anywhere. Actual fact, from the foundation of the world, God has been at work carrying out His plan and purpose, and He's right on schedule. Granted, I would like Him to wrap it up a little



sooner than He's going to, but that's His business, not mine. Let's turn over to Revelation 13:8. There are ten places in the New Testament where the term *from the foundation of the world* is found. I brought along for show and tell, Nelson's Concordance of Bible Phrases—a helpful volume. I prefer the book; you don't need electricity and it doesn't matter if your battery is dead or not, this is a reliable source. If you have online resources like Biblehub.com or Biblegateway.com or E-sword, there they are—ten of them, you can look them right up; page 199 and 200 in Nelson's Concordance of Bible Phrases. I'm not going to torture you by going through all ten of them, but we'll look at several of them and note the significance.

What has God been doing since the foundation of the world that will confound the likes of Carl Sagan and others, when the day comes and their eyes are opened and they can see it? I suspect that when Carl Sagan's eyes are opened, and he can face the one true God, he'll accept it. He'll say, oh, that's the reason, that's how it's explained—wonderful. Let's go to Revelation 13; here's the first one. It's interesting the setting in which we find this one—from the foundation of the world.

**Revelation 13:1** *Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*

2) *Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. (NKJV)*

We saw in chapter 12 that the dragon is the devil—Satan.

3) *And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. (NKJV)*

Notice: All the world marveled and followed the beast.

4) *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; [that's the devil himself] and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (NKJV)*

Aha—this is it! We have found the supreme authority and no enemy can stand in our way! Is that what it sounds like to you? That's the setting.

5) *And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.*

6) *Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.*

7) *It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.*

Having the knowledge of God is rather disruptive. One of these days the devil and all of his armies are going to be directed against the saints, and it says the saints will be overcome.

7 continued) ... *And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.* (NKJV)

Here is your one-world government.

8) *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, [notice this] whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* (NKJV)

All people at that point in history are going to give allegiance to the beast except for the saints. Those people who are so aligned with the forces of this world—their names are not written in the Book of Life. Notice, the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world, back before there was any sin. When God was about to set His plan in motion, He recognized there would be a need for a sacrifice. Things weren't going to go perfectly smooth—just right down the line, everything in order—because when you give people the opportunity to choose, so they can decide what they're going to do themselves, lo and behold, it seems we have this proclivity to make the wrong choice—the choice being, will you do it God's way, your own way, or some alternative? There are only two choices; God's way and whatever else you can conjure up—that's all there is.

You look back on the beginning and even in the angelic world, Lucifer, when he was created, was described as this morning star of the dawn—bright and brilliant and glorious. He didn't need a devil to sin, he came up with the idea on his own. So what do you think human beings would do? Of course Adam and Eve were placed in the garden and God gave them a choice. You stop and look at it: God gave Adam and Eve the entire planet, save one tree. The entire planet, and yet the devil comes along and talks them into needing dominion over that one tree also. It just made sense to them—you know the story. Wait a second, how does this work? God knew that these kinds of things would happen. He had to give us an opportunity.

Is there one thing God cannot do? You've heard the provocative questions: Can God create a rock so big that He can't lift it? Nonsense, right? It seems as though (and I don't think it's an assumption, either) God cannot create, instantaneously, a human being with perfect, righteous character. Why do you think God suffers long with us? We've got a few more rough edges to knock off. It can't be done instantaneously; He knew there would be a time when there would have to be a sacrifice. The sacrifice was in place from the very beginning. He knew it would be needed. The day would finally come, and Jesus Christ would have to pay that price. It's not God's failure, it's the natural consequence of people choosing to go their own way, to set aside the one great commandment, and just pursue their own wants, one way or another.

Luke 11:50, in this same vein. We'll go back to the paragraph break rather than just break right into the verse—so let's go back to verse 45.

**Luke 11:45** *Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also."* (NKJV)

So Jesus is saying some pretty pointed things, and some of the people—onlookers, Pharisees, hypocrites and so forth—are taking it as a reproach.

46) *And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.*

47) *Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.*

48) *In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.*

49) *Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,'*

50) *that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation ...* (NKJV)

Jesus is here stating that God knew there would be a time of trouble. He would send a Prophet, a Messenger, to say, let's get it in order, because you're not going to like the end result of the route you're taking; it's time to turn it around before it gets to become really painful. So what do they do? They kill the Messenger—the Prophet—and ignore the message.

50 repeated) *that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation,*

51) *from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple.* (NKJV)

From the foundation of the world, God knew there would be times of trouble; He would send a Prophet to warn them, give them an opportunity to repent and turn around, they would kill the Prophet—the Messenger—reject the message, and now here we have what we have. It's no wonder that Carl Sagan would look at the circumstances and conclude that there's no help—nobody is going to bail us out of this, we have to do it ourselves. Let's turn to Matthew 25, another statement about *from the foundation of the world*. Carl Sagan and others can't see and understand what's going on, but God has been at work, His plan is in place, it's been going on from the foundation—way back in the beginning, and because mankind cannot see, cannot comprehend, therefore it doesn't exist—well, that's empty thinking. Matthew 24 and 25 represent what is commonly called the Olivet Prophecy; there are various parables here in chapter 25.

**Matthew 25:31** *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.* (NKJV)

Note that there is a time coming when help will come. The pale blue dot is indeed going to be rescued. The fulfillment, the fruition of God's Kingdom, is depicted here. It will eventually affect all people (and not just English-speaking people of Israelite descent). You understand that, right? Eventually all people are going to have the opportunity to live under God's Kingdom.

*32) All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another [you're going to have a choice—you have to do it God's way or not], as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.*

*34) Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, [notice] inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (NKJV)*

God had it in mind from the very beginning, way back before there was anything, that His Kingdom would eventually be set up, and there would be those who would inherit it. We have a choice, and we have the benefit of being able to make that choice now. I think back now on some of the things I fantasized over in my youth, and what I thought I was going to accomplish or what I would have liked to do—it all pales into insignificance compared to the opportunity to be a part of those who will inherit the Kingdom of God, which God has been preparing and working for from the very beginning. Of course, the familiar description of those who will inherit it:

*35) for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;*

From the foundation of the world, God's Kingdom is there—wonderful!

*36) I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' (NKJV)*

We think about this prison thing, imagining that these were people who were in prison because of righteousness and obeying God, and they got thrown in prison because of it—not necessarily. I have visited a number of people in prison down through the years. Most of them weren't there because of righteousness. They were there because they were unrighteous. They made some unsavory, bad decisions and find themselves there. So what? Oftentimes in that environment, people repent and they need direction. Talk about a lonely place; some of you out there in cyberspace, you're by yourselves and you're alone; I can appreciate that and I feel for you, and I wish we could do better. Take somebody who is in prison, and there for decades, who grew up in the church, perhaps, and under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and who knows what else, made some really bad decisions, now finding themselves in prison; you talk about a lonely place. Nevertheless, God is preparing His Kingdom. It's going to be available—one day it's going to come.

I remember an illustration of a point—I think it was in Vancouver, Washington—Ron Dart was there as a guest speaker, and he held up a hymnal and was talking about some of these events, such as the close of the age, and he said, you can tilt the hymnal at an

angle, and an angle, and an angle, and nothing happens, and then all of a sudden—is that the way it’s going to happen when they say, peace and safety, and then comes sudden destruction? Let’s be prepared because when it starts to happen, when it all starts to unravel, it will be too late to prepare. But there’s a Kingdom, and it’s been in God’s plan and purpose from the beginning, unbeknownst to the likes of Carl Sagan. Ephesians 1, and this will be the last one we touch on today. There are ten of them and some of them speak of similar circumstances, but this is particularly significant, I think. Ephesians 1; we’ll cover the first twelve verses. This is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus.

**Ephesians 1:1** *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God ... (NKJV)*

Note that right up front, we have Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. An apostle is one sent, pure and simple. Sent to do what? To take the gospel to Judea, to Israel, to kings and nations—the good news. This is the work of Jesus Christ, fulfilling the will of God; let’s note that from the beginning—it’s God’s will, and Jesus Christ’s stated purpose: I come to do the will of My Father, the works of My Father; the doctrine I bring is the doctrine of My Father, the words I speak are the words of My Father. So here we are as it applies to the Ephesians.

1 continued) ... *To the saints who are in Ephesus* [those called of God are called saints], *and faithful in Christ Jesus:* (NKJV)

We’re going to see these terms come up several times. Here it’s, “in Christ Jesus”, “in Him”, “in the Beloved”—we’re going to see that type of terminology several times, and Paul is going to focus on what that means, and we’ll take note of that while we’re here.

2) *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

So God the Father is directly involved, as is Jesus Christ. You’re going to see in Paul’s letter, salvation does not come through God the Father or Jesus Christ; it doesn’t happen that way—you have to be involved with both of Them otherwise it just doesn’t work. Notice verse 3 in particular.

3) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... (NKJV)*

This is inflammatory in some people’s minds. This is some of that knowledge that is disruptive. There are translations of the Bible that ignore the statement, blessed be the God of Jesus Christ. They just acknowledge that God is His Father. It says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has a Father? Jesus Christ has a God? I didn’t say it, Paul said it. Am I going to believe it or not? There’s only one Most High God, there’s one Living God; Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, but I tell you, this is rather disruptive information in the church of God community these days.

3 repeated) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places* [notice] *in Christ ...*

We cannot pursue the will and work of God apart from Jesus Christ. As we saw, He was crucified from the foundation of the world. Now here's the statement:

4) ... *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love ...* (NKJV)

Think about that. Before the foundation of the world, it was determined that there would be people chosen in Christ Jesus. That would be the pathway. I stop and meditate on that for a moment. This goes back to the foundation of the world, the very beginning. It was determined that out of this hodgepodge of humanity there would be some who would listen and be responsive to God.

5) ... *having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ...* (NKJV)

This is God who predestined these things, and chose us in Him, that is, in Christ. It's kind of exciting; it goes all the way back to the beginning—you happen to be the fruit of what God started, back before the foundation of the world. That is kind of exciting. I would rather be special in the eyes of God than special in the eyes of any various segments of the world.

6) ... *to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.* (NKJV)

Made us accepted in the Beloved.

7) *In Him ...* (NKJV)

Now notice, here's the part that Jesus Christ plays most prominently, and in other things as well.

7 repeated) *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*

8) *which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence ...* (NKJV)

So there is a redemption. God is the Redeemer, God is the one who loved the world and sent His only begotten Son, to be sacrificed on our behalf, whose blood was shed—from the foundation of the world this was determined. We are the beneficiaries of that. Verse 7 again:

7) *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ...* (NKJV)

God knew there would be sin and there would have to be a remedy for it, and this is it. Verse 9.

9) *having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,*

10) *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

Jesus Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. Jesus Christ has been designated as the head of the church; the firstfruits will come through that source, the church of God. Firstfruits—wonderful—and it's all in Him, as He says; it's part of the work that God is doing. Jesus Christ is central to that work.

11) *In Him [Jesus] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,*

12) *that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)*

From the foundation of the world, it says. Back in verse 4, He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame with Him in love. So stop and think about it now. Again, there is another half dozen of these statements, from the foundation of the world. God has always been involved, from the very foundation of the world; before there was anything, God had in mind what He was going to do, how He was going to carry this out, and it's going according to plan. Somebody like Carl Sagan or other observers would look at the situation and see only chaos and hopelessness, and yet at the same time, God has been perfectly at work, doing what needs to be done.

Brethren, we're in the midst of the holy day season. It's the time of God's intervention, the time of reconciliation, when the Kingdom of God will be established, when the firstfruits will be harvested, the Great Harvest takes place, and evil is removed. Think about it; this is the time of the year when the answers come. Carl Sagan couldn't see any intervention from abroad. We need some kind of intervention, some kind of rescue. Well, rescue is coming. We're part of that rescue, we're in that season of the year now, when we celebrate the fact that there is a Kingdom of God, and God has been about putting that plan to work, from the very, very beginning. It's a great privilege to be a part of that.

In spite of your weaknesses, in spite of your pain and agony, it is a privilege to be among the few (if you will), and later to be among the many, who will be a part of this great plan and purpose of God. It's good to take a recess from our aches and pains, and just focus and recognize what a wonderful opportunity and blessing we have. From the foundation of the world. It is a great privilege to be a part of God's calling, and to understand what others mightier and more noble than ourselves do not. It's a season of joy, a season of anticipation, when the work of God will finally come to fruition, and we'll be a part of the solution to take the peace that is of God to the whole world. I consider it a privilege and I trust you do too; I trust now that we can go forward and observe the festival, and celebrate the day when God will intervene to save us from ourselves, and bring about His Kingdom for all.