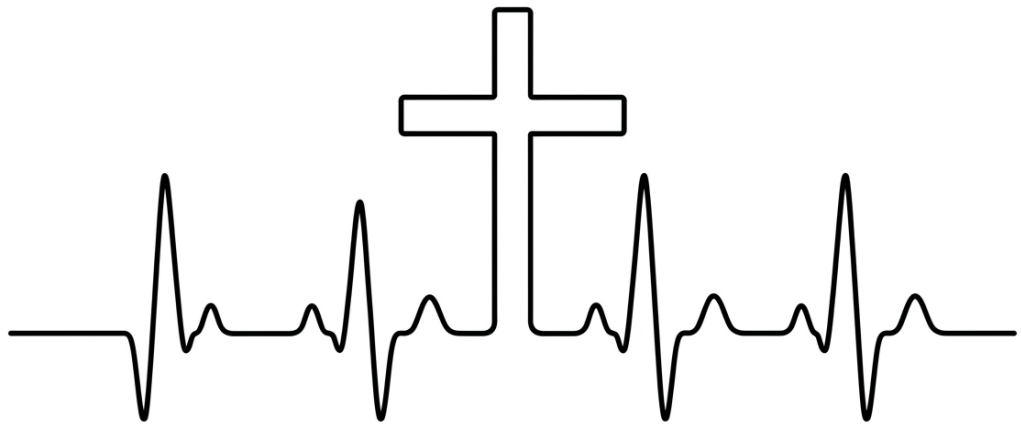
Heartbeat of Heaven



The Lambskin Scroll
Revision R

Before

Before there was dust, before a single star ignited, before time itself began, there was God.

Not lonely. Not incomplete. Not waiting for something to love.

The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit existed in perfect communion. Love was already there. Indeed, the universe exists because of Love. Love does not exist because of the universe.

And within that eternal communion was a purpose so magnificent that the whole of creation would become its expression.

God would share His Love.

There would be a creation, a people, a family, and a Bride. There would be communion between the Creator and those made in His image.

The Word through whom all things would be made was already the One through whom all things would be reconciled.

Before creation, the purpose of redemption was already known.

I picture that eternal purpose as a scroll, held securely in the hand of God. Not merely a decree, but a covenant of Love. An eternal *Ketubah*, the marriage covenant of the Bridegroom and His Bride.

And within that purpose was a willingness to pay a cost that no created being could ever pay.

Then came the words:

Let there be.

The First Bride

God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him.

He placed him in a garden, a meeting place between the physical creation and the presence of God.

Adam was not created to be a stranger to his Creator. He was given responsibility, authority, fellowship, and a place within God's creation.

But he was alone.

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, opened his side, and brought forth the woman who would become his bride.

The first marriage was not humanity's invention. It was God's.

Body and Bride. Communion and covenant. Two becoming one flesh.

They were naked and unashamed.

There was no need to hide.

But then came the serpent.

The woman was deceived. Adam was not deceived, yet he ate what God had forbidden.

Their eyes were opened, and they discovered their nakedness.

They hid from the One whose presence had been their joy.

The covering was lost. Shame entered. Death entered. The garden was closed to them.

Yet God did not abandon His creation.

He clothed them.

Even in judgment, Love was already pursuing the lost.

And the promise concerning the woman's offspring was spoken in the very garden where the fracture occurred.

The Veil and the Heartbeat

Humanity now lived with a terrible separation.

The creation remained, but communion was broken. The human family could not restore itself to what had been lost.

No tower could reach high enough. No human effort could reverse the Fall.

Yet the eternal purpose of God remained unchanged.

The heartbeat of Heaven continued.

I imagine that heartbeat as the rhythm of Love moving through the great divide, calling humanity toward the One it could no longer approach by its own strength.

The scroll remained in the hand of God.

The Redeemer had not been invented in response to a disaster. The eternal Son was already the One through whom redemption would be accomplished.

What had been purposed before creation would unfold within creation.

And the unfolding would be astonishingly personal.

A Man Who Heard

Before the first star appeared, before the earth was formed, before Adam drew his first breath, God already knew His purpose.

What prompted that purpose remains within the mystery of His eternal wisdom. God was not lonely. He lacked nothing. Within the eternal communion of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Love was already complete.

Yet God chose to share that Love.

And the universe came into existence.

The universe was not the purpose itself. It was the magnificent creation within which God's purpose would unfold.

He would create beings in His image, capable of knowing Him, loving Him, and participating in the communion He desired to share.

Not merely servants fulfilling commands, nor subjects standing at a distance from their Creator.

A family.

Sons and daughters who would know their Father. A people among whom He would dwell. A Bride who would share everlasting communion with the Bridegroom.

The language changes as the story unfolds, but the eternal Love behind it does not.

Adam was formed and placed in the garden. There, humanity experienced the fellowship for which it had been created.

But Adam disobeyed. The original communion was fractured. Humanity lost its covering and found itself on the other side of a veil it could not lift.

Yet the purpose of God remained.

Love continued its pursuit.

The Tower and the Veil

Generations passed. Humanity multiplied, and once again mankind attempted to establish its destiny independently of God.

On the plains of Shinar, people gathered to build a city and a tower whose top would reach into the heavens.

They declared, *Let us make a name for ourselves.*

Here was the ancient temptation appearing once again.

In Eden, humanity had sought independence from its Creator. At Babel, mankind sought greatness and security through its own collective power.

In the imagery of the veil, I see Babel as humanity attempting to cross the great divide without the One who alone could open the way.

They could gather their strength. They could organize their labor. They could stack brick upon brick toward heaven.

But no tower could restore the communion lost in Eden.

No human construction could recover the glory that had departed.

And God came down to see what mankind had built.

What a remarkable moment.

They intended to reach heaven, yet Scripture tells us that God came down to see their city and tower.

He could have destroyed them.

Instead, He confused their language and scattered them across the earth.

I see mercy in that interruption.

God restrained their rebellion rather than allowing their collective ambition to continue unchecked. Their languages were confounded, their great undertaking interrupted, and the nations scattered.

But God had not abandoned humanity.

The scattering was not the end of the Love Story.

The eternal purpose remained in His hand.

The veil was still beyond humanity's power to remove, but the One who could remove it had already purposed to come.

The heartbeat continued.

The Man Who Heard

Following Babel, Scripture traces the generations toward a man named Abram.

Humanity had attempted to make a name for itself.

Now God spoke to one man and promised:

I will make your name great.

What mankind attempted to seize through its own power, God would accomplish according to His purpose.

Abram was called to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's household.

He could not see the full destination. He did not know all that would unfold through his descendants.

But he heard the call of God.

And he responded.

There would be no tower to construct, no heavenly gate to force open, no human invention capable of accomplishing what God intended.

Only a man called into relationship with his Creator.

Abram listened.

And God made a promise that would carry the Love Story across generations.

Through Abram, God would establish a great nation.

Through that nation, He would preserve His covenant and prepare the family through which the eternal Son would enter the world.

But the promise did not end with one nation.

God declared that through Abram **all the families of the earth would be blessed.**

All the families.

The people scattered across the earth had not been forgotten.

The purpose of God was reaching toward them.

The Family of the Promise

The family God intended before creation was not limited to a single earthly household.

The promise would move through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the people of Israel.

God would establish a covenant, reveal His character, and demonstrate His faithfulness through generations of imperfect human beings.

They would stumble. They would rebel. They would experience judgment and mercy.

Yet His purpose would continue.

The recurring story would not ultimately be about how often humanity failed.

It would be about how faithfully God loved.

And within that family, God was preparing something extraordinary.

The eternal Son, through whom the universe had been created, would enter the creation as one of us.

The One who already possessed the eternal purpose of redemption would become our Kinsman.

He would take upon Himself our humanity, sharing our flesh and blood, so that the redemption purposed before creation could be accomplished within human history.

And the family through which He would come would itself contain a remarkable picture of redemption.

The Heartbeat Reaches Bethlehem

Generations after Abraham, a woman would return to Bethlehem having lost nearly everything.

Her name was Naomi.

She would call herself empty.

With her would come Ruth, a foreign woman who had surrendered her former life to follow Naomi and seek refuge beneath the wings of Israel's God.

And in a field near Bethlehem, Ruth would encounter a man named Boaz.

A man who could redeem.

A man who was willing to redeem.

A man who would extend his covering over a woman seeking refuge and restore the future of a family that had suffered devastating loss.

Their marriage would produce a son named Obed.

From Obed would come Jesse.

From Jesse would come David.

And from David's royal line, generations later, would come Jesus Christ.

The eternal Redeemer would enter the human family through descendants of a man who had already given us a picture of the Kinsman-Redeemer.

What a remarkable expression of God's eternal purpose.

The pattern of redemption was appearing within the very ancestry of the One who would fulfill it.

And the woman who had come from outside Israel would become part of the family line through which blessing would ultimately reach the nations.

The eternal Love Story was becoming visible in human flesh, human relationships, and human history.

At Babel, humanity had attempted to reach heaven.

In Abraham, God called humanity into covenant.

In Ruth and Boaz, the pattern of redemption became a living story.

And in Christ, heaven would come to humanity.

The heartbeat had never ceased.

It was the same Love that existed before the first star appeared.

The same Love that clothed Adam and Eve.

The same Love that pursued humanity beyond Eden.

The same Love that called Abraham and welcomed Ruth.

And the same Love that would one day be revealed in the flesh and blood of the eternal Son.

Bump … Bump … Bump …

The Bridegroom was coming.

The Woman Who Returned Empty

Naomi left Bethlehem with her husband and two sons.

She returned without them.

Her husband had died. Her sons had died. The fullness she remembered was gone.

She told the women of Bethlehem that she had gone away full and returned empty.

In her story, I see an image of fallen humanity.

The human family was created for fullness: communion with God, responsibility within His creation, and a glorious inheritance.

Yet humanity had lost what it could not recover through its own strength.

Naomi knew the land of her fathers, but she could not bring back her husband or her sons.

She could return to Bethlehem.

She could not restore the life she had lost.

But someone returned with her.

A Moabite woman named Ruth.

And the story began to turn.

The Woman Who Chose

Ruth had also suffered loss.

Her husband was dead. Her future was uncertain. She was a foreigner, born outside Israel.

She could have returned to her own people.

Instead, she attached herself to Naomi and made a remarkable declaration:

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

She surrendered the security of the world she knew and sought refuge beneath the wings of Israel's God.

Here I see a picture of the person who responds to the call of the Creator.

Ruth could not restore Naomi's losses. She could not purchase an inheritance. She could not create a future by her own power.

But she could trust.

She could follow.

She could surrender.

And when Ruth entered a field in Bethlehem to gather grain, she encountered a man named Boaz.

He knew something about her.

He had heard of her faithfulness to Naomi, her departure from her homeland, and her willingness to take refuge beneath God's wings.

Before Ruth asked him to become her redeemer, Boaz had already shown her kindness.

He welcomed her into his field. He provided for her. He protected her.

She was a foreigner.

Yet he treated her with extraordinary favor.

The redeemer's kindness preceded the bride's request for redemption.

The Covering of the Redeemer

Boaz was a relative of Naomi's deceased husband.

He was a man of standing, a man capable of acting as a family redeemer.

But there was another relative whose claim came before his.

The way of redemption was not without its obligations.

When Ruth approached Boaz at the threshing floor, she asked him to spread the corner of his garment over her, because he was a redeemer.

How extraordinary.

Earlier, Boaz had spoken of Ruth taking refuge beneath the wings of God.

Now she asked Boaz to spread his own covering over her.

God's wings of refuge and the covering of the kinsman-redeemer meet in the same beautiful Hebrew imagery.

And I see Eden.

The first man and woman lost their covering and became ashamed.

Now a woman seeking redemption asks to come under the covering of the one who can restore her future.

I see the covenant imagery of Ezekiel, where God speaks of spreading His garment over His bride and entering into covenant with her.

And I see the greater covering of the eternal Bridegroom, who will clothe His people in righteousness.

It is here that the image of the Ketubah becomes especially powerful to me.

The Bridegroom does not merely cover shame. He gives Himself in covenant.

The covering speaks of belonging.

The Kinsman Who Was Willing

The nearer relative had the opportunity to redeem, but when he understood the obligations involving Ruth and the family inheritance, he declined.

He feared damage to his own inheritance.

Boaz did not refuse.

He accepted the obligation publicly, redeemed the property, and took Ruth as his wife.

The record does not give us the price in money.

But it tells us what matters to this story.

Boaz was qualified.

Boaz was willing.

Boaz acted.

In the nearer relative, I see a picture of the limitation of human ability. Humanity cannot purchase its own restoration to communion with God.

In Boaz, I see the willing Redeemer.

But there is something even greater here.

Boaz was already a kinsman. He belonged to the family whose inheritance he was able to redeem.

The eternal Son was already the Redeemer in God's purpose before the foundation of the world.

Yet to accomplish our redemption as our Kinsman, He would enter our humanity.

He would become flesh.

He would share our human nature without sharing our sin.

And He would pay the price with His own blood.

Boaz redeemed a family inheritance and received a bride.

Christ would accomplish an eternal redemption and gather a Bride for Himself.

Not because the Bride earned His love, but because the Bridegroom loved and willingly gave Himself.

And here comes one of the most remarkable turns in the story.

Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed.

Obed became the father of Jesse.

Jesse became the father of David.

And generations later, from that royal family line, Jesus Christ entered the world.

The human kinsman-redeemer became an ancestor of the eternal Kinsman-Redeemer.

The redeemed Gentile bride became an ancestor in the recorded family line of the One who would bring Gentiles near.

The picture had become part of the history through which its fulfillment would come.

The eternal plan was moving through ordinary human lives.

The heartbeat was growing louder.

The Last Adam

The eternal Word became flesh.

The One who created the first Adam entered humanity as the Last Adam.

He came into the world He had made, through the family line in which God had preserved the promise.

He was not discovering a plan.

He was accomplishing the purpose of Love that preceded creation.

Throughout His ministry, He showed what the restoration of humanity would mean.

The sick were healed. The oppressed were delivered. The lost were sought. The excluded were welcomed.

He demonstrated the authority of the kingdom of God in the very creation that had suffered under the Fall.

Then came Jerusalem.

The cross.

The sacrifice.

The blood of the covenant.

The eternal Son, now truly human, offered Himself for those He had come to redeem.

The powers of darkness did not understand the wisdom of God expressed through the crucifixion.

What appeared to be defeat became the occasion of victory.

The veil of the temple was torn.

The grave could not hold Him.

And the risen Christ emerged, not as a disembodied spirit, but as the glorified Last Adam.

The first Adam had been formed from dust.

The Last Adam rose in the glory of resurrection life.

And as Adam's bride had been brought forth following his deep sleep and the opening of his side, so the death and pierced side of Christ invite us to contemplate the greater mystery of the Last Adam and His Bride.

The first was a shadow.

Christ is the fulfillment.

The Bride and the Heartbeat

The story has never been merely about escaping death.

It is about communion.

It is about the restoration of what humanity was created to be.

It is about the Creator's desire to share His love and glory with those He has redeemed.

The Bridegroom has paid the price.

And the Bride is being made ready.

Holy Spirit is given as the guarantee of our inheritance, bearing witness that we belong to God.

The creation groans. Humanity waits. The children of God await the redemption of their bodies.

The story that began before creation moves toward the new heaven and new earth.

The dwelling place of God is with humanity.

The Bride is adorned for her Husband.

What was broken in Eden is not merely repaired. God's purpose is brought to its intended fullness through Christ.

And now I return to the image of the scroll in Revelation 5.

A scroll in the hand of the One seated on the throne.

No one worthy to open it.

John weeps.

But then comes the announcement: the Lion of Judah has conquered.

And John sees a Lamb standing, as though slain.

The Lamb takes the scroll.

In my meditation, I see that scroll as the eternal Ketubah, the covenant of Love whose purpose stretches from before creation to its consummation.

I picture its parchment as Lambskin, the living metaphor of a Love willing to give everything for its Bride.

The scroll is opened by the One who is worthy.

The Bridegroom has accomplished redemption.

And the invitation still echoes:

Come.

The heartbeat that preceded creation continues to call.

Not merely to receive forgiveness.

Not merely to receive an inheritance.

But to know the One who loved us, gave Himself for us, and desires that we be with Him.

The beginning was Love.

The redemption was Love.

The consummation will be Love.

And throughout it all, the Heartbeat of Heaven has never ceased.

Bump … Bump … Bump …