

God's Plan — An Overview

God "made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it—the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in Heaven and things on earth, to find their one Head in Him." Ephesians 1:9, 10 (Weymouth First Edition translation)

This wonderful text says so many things about the plan of God for us. Among other things it shows that His plan is secret, yet revealed to some. It shows His purpose is merciful, not vindictive. It shows that it involves two kinds of salvation—in heaven, and on earth as well. These words above also show that God, though he "cherished" what He wants to do, is willing to wait until "the times are ripe for it." Clearly He intends to govern the whole world at that time through Christ. Clearly, also, this government intends to restore everyone lost in the centuries that have passed since the perfections of the Garden of Eden. Is it possible to find two verses which say more than this?

God's plans and purposes, though simple in concept, are so detailed in the Bible that hundreds of thousands of pages of commentary on it are only a beginning. Thus it is so refreshing to find such short and simple summaries as Paul wrote to the Ephesians in the words above.

* * * * *

This little "kernel" commentary on God's Plan will be very brief and to the point. To inquire more into the depths and beauties, we recommend *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (Volume 1 of *Studies in the Scriptures*), available through this website.

* * * * *

We will restrict our consideration to God's Plan for mankind since that is the subject of the Bible.

God intended to have a perfect earth populated with a perfect race of people living forever in health, peace, and plenty. Despite how things look, those plans have not changed. He also planned to have an intimate family of His own—beings possessing life within themselves and sharing the very nature of God. This plan, though invisible in its progress, is being accomplished as part of how God is utilizing and arranging the affairs of earth.

When God created man, He wanted beings capable of choice and free will. Yet, He wanted also to ensure peace in His universe. These two objectives seem almost

impossibly contradictory. How can free-will beings not violate the very principles which ensure peace? The ONLY way is for their well-educated free wills to WANT to and to be able to cooperate. This was God's challenge in creating man.

We can learn in three ways: information, observation, and experience. We could, of course, like computers, learn by being mechanically programmed. But this would make us robots, not free-will creatures. We would not be able to give, receive, or appreciate LOVE—a quality which in great measure defines God.

God chose to use all three teaching methods for mankind. He knew, in the long run, it would work—even though it would be painful in the short term.

When our original parents were created, they could not learn from observation since there were no lessons to observe. So, God's first lesson for them was instruction. He told them the rules and that if they disobeyed those rules, they would die. (Genesis 2:17, marginal translation) He knew this would be insufficient because He understands free will.

Three things are important to note:

(1) The death penalty was not extreme. God was making the point which all intelligent beings must eventually know and accept: He insists on peace and perfection in the universe. The presence of anyone violating that peace will not be acceptable. The elimination of violators is imperative to success, and it will forever be the rule.

(2) The test was purposely clear but not necessarily comprehensible. If Adam had been told, "You cannot kill your wife," the penalty would have made sense, and the principle would have been obvious. But the test was subtle: "Of all of the fruit around, don't eat that one." The test was not clear because, in the end, God will want all to obey NOT because they understand, but because they will believe in His wisdom whether or not they understand it. Only with that kind of trust in their Creator will men maintain free-will peace in the universe. This was a test of OBEDIENCE, not of comprehension.

(3) The third point, and one of great import, is that God allowed this test before Adam had offspring. Because God counts there to have been ONLY ONE DISOBEDIENCE, His justice requires ONLY ONE OFFSET for that disobedience. Adam's children INHERITED death. We do not die because of our own sins; we die because genetically we did not inherit life. (I Corinthians 15:21, 22; Romans 5:12)

Man disobeyed. The sentence was pronounced and is yet being felt by Adam's offspring: "Dying thou shalt die." Man now is learning by observation and experience. The lesson is hard! But it will not be forgotten. Mankind, after the lesson is learned, will WANT to obey and to reap the benefits. He will UNDERSTAND what is

good and why it is good. He will be enthusiastic for life, and will, from the heart, obey God because he understands, respects, and loves His principles and attributes.

God's justice is inviolate. It does not compromise. For all eternity it will require the forfeited life of one human being and of the potential race within him. Therefore, there was only ONE way to release Adam and his race from death. A SUBSTITUTE must be provided. That substitute would be "the MAN Christ Jesus, who gave himself A RANSOM (substitute) FOR ALL, to be testified IN DUE TIME." (I Timothy 2:5, 6)

How can this work? Jesus existed as the second highest being in the universe long before man was made. He volunteered to become a MAN (with a potential race in him) in order to become the substitute payment to justice in Adam's place. But he had to be perfect—an exact equivalent of Adam BEFORE Adam disobeyed. No descendant of Adam could do this because no descendant of Adam had inherited any life to sacrifice. Jesus, while having a human nature provided by his mother, had LIFE provided by God, his perfect father (as did Adam—Luke 3:38). He voluntarily sacrificed this human nature for Adam's (and the race's) release from death.

This leaves two pressing questions.

- (1) If Jesus "gave his flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:51), how is it that he was released from the grave?
- (2) If Jesus' sacrifice releases Adam and the human race from death, why are we all yet dead or dying?

We mentioned earlier that one of God's creative objectives was to have a personal, intimate "family" of His own—beings just like Himself, beings possessing immortality (life within themselves [John 5:26]—death-proofness). Clearly He would not give this destruction-proof nature to any individual who had not been proven to be eternally worthy of such a nature. To give immortality to an untested being would be to insure chaos in the universe for an eternity.

God decided to use some of the years of disaster on earth to develop what he calls His "new creation." In the midst of earth's sin, chaos, deceptions, death, and other horrors, God saw the perfect "proving ground" for those He would ultimately make into His own personal Divine family. Jesus would be the first of these "new creatures." While he would, indeed, die as man's ransom, a human being never again to live, God arranged a miraculous way to preserve Jesus' identity and to give it a resurrection on the Divine plane where Jesus has become "the express image of His (God's) person." (Hebrews 1:3)

Three and a half years before the crucifixion which supplied our ransom, God "begat" Jesus with the Holy spirit. In other words, He began in him a "new creature"—a new mind with spirit rather than human desires, inclinations, and objectives. If that new mind grew and remained perfectly faithful to God during the 3-1/2 years of sufferings which

[Return to Doctrinal Kernels Index](#)

Jesus tolerated at the hands of ignorant men, God would, upon the death of the man, give this new creature a divine body. Jesus would be "born of the spirit"—the first of God's personal family of Divine Sons. Jesus was faithful. He was raised a divine being of incredible power and glory, far above the nature he had enjoyed prior to becoming a man.

Our second question is closely allied to this making of "new creatures." Even though the ransom sacrifice has been provided to redeem Adam and his race from the grave, it has not yet been applied to that end. Instead, God determined to allow about 2000 years for the race to increase to the population size God desires for the earth. During this 2000 years He determined to call from among men those who have a faith structure like Jesus had — those whose confidence in the ransom makes them possessed with a zealous desire to want to be like Jesus and to help him restore the race "when the times are ripe for it." God calls this His "church." The Greek word for church is EKKLESIA; it means "called out." God, as He did with Jesus, "begets" these disciples with the Holy spirit, thus beginning in them "new creatures" with spiritual aspirations, motives, and ideals. Once this church is complete and all raised to be spirit beings like their Lord (I John 3:2), THEN it will be time for the resurrection of Adam and all of the rest of his descendants to be perfected for an eternal idyllic life on a perfected earth. It is this which Jesus refers to when he suggests to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

Thus will be fulfilled the words of Ephesians 1:9, 10 with which we began this article. The glorified spiritual church, along with Jesus, will reign to put away all traces of disobedience. (I Corinthians 15:21-28) The Kingdom, perfected, will be returned to God, and all the pain of the past will be gone (Revelation 20:4) — except that it will have served to make man intelligently free-will recipients of joys forevermore.

God's work of "restoring the whole creation" has been promised by His prophets since the world began. Peter makes this point in Acts 3:19-21 where he shows that this restoring period is the very purpose of Jesus' second advent. Once the Millennial Kingdom is finished, it will clearly be seen that "God is the savior of all men (the whole world), specially of those that believe (the church which believes ahead of the world and receives the incredibly 'special' salvation)." I Timothy 4:10

* * * * *

The other little "Doctrinal Kernels" on this website help to bring into focus how the details of the Bible enhance and support this wonderful plan of God for His intelligent creatures.