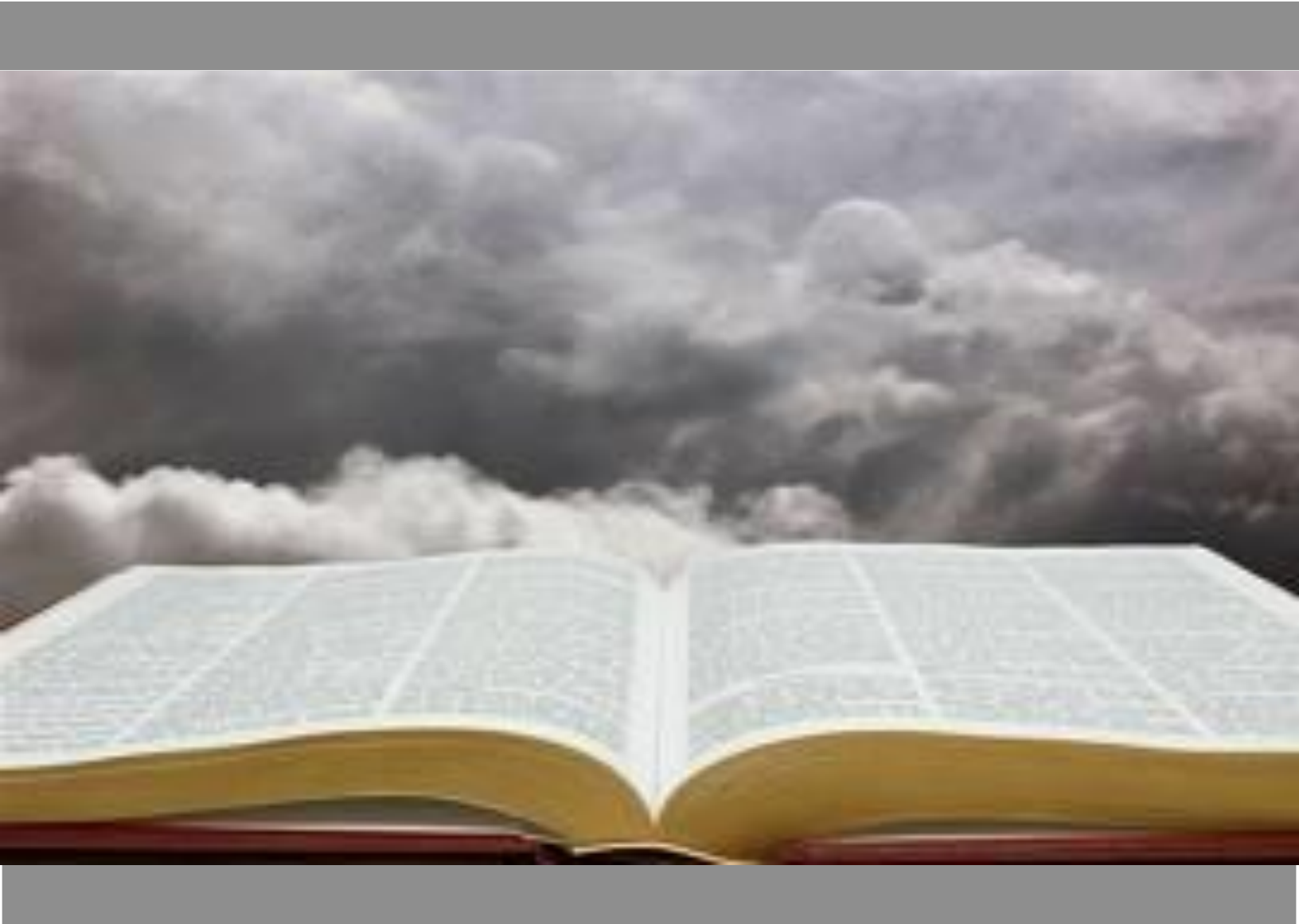


God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 1: The Beginning



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 1: The Beginning

Learn about God, the creation, sin, and the fall of man

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW17

Written by Eric Krieg

About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 1:

The Beginning

This first lesson will discuss God, the creation of the heavens and the earth, the fall of mankind, and the spread of sin.

In The Beginning, God...

As we begin this Bible study series, let's go back to the beginning – and learn about some essential things!

In the beginning, God was

In the beginning, God was. In fact, God is eternal. As the book of God opens and begins to discuss the creation of this universe, you should notice something very specific and important: God already existed! Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Consider some characteristics of this God who existed in the beginning.

(1) God is eternal. In Revelation 4:8, God is proclaimed to be holy – and the one who was, is, and is to come. Genesis 21:33 identifies God as the "Everlasting God." Deuteronomy 33:27 calls God the "eternal God." Psalm 90:2 simply states, "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." So, God has always existed, He exists today, and will always exist! He had no creator and there was no time when He did not exist.

(2) God is all-powerful. The omnipotence of God (the nature of being all-powerful) is also a very prominent subject in Genesis 1. For, in this chapter, God creates all things in the heavens and on the earth! One of the essential elements to "Godhood" (Deity, the nature of being God) is omnipotence (without limitations to His power). This attribute is clearly demonstrated repeatedly in the Scriptures. Revelation 19:6 identifies God as "the Lord God Omnipotent" and Genesis 17:1 identifies God as almighty!

(3) God is all-knowing. Throughout the Scriptures you also see very clear evidence of God's omniscience (the nature of being all-knowing). That

The Bible is composed of 66 individual books. These books were written over a period of about 1,600 years by around 40 different authors. These books range from books of history, to books of poetry, to books of prophecy, to letters. These books discuss a period of time from the creation of the world to around the end of the first century A.D.

The Bible is no ordinary book! The book, itself, claims to be from God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Its claim to be from God can be validated in numerous ways (which we cannot go into in this lesson). And, this book that was written over a period of about 1,600 years by around 40 different human authors contains *no contradictions* – consistently telling one unified story! This fact demonstrates that the Bible is no ordinary book (for man could not accomplish this task without the guidance of God)!

The story of the Bible is the story of God's eternal plan! The story begins in Genesis 1 and comes to a climax in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts! Best of all – you and I are part of the story of the Bible (even though our names are not found in its pages)!

How do you fit into this Bible story? What does the story of the Bible mean for your life? We will investigate this question as we consider the "big picture" of the Bible by focusing on "God's Eternal Plan" during the course of this study!

is, there is nothing that God does not know! This, too, is one of the essential elements to “Godhood.” Isaiah 46:9-10 states that God is able to declare the “end from the beginning” and knows “from ancient times things that are not yet done.” In Romans 11:33-36, Paul praises God for His wisdom and knowledge: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

(4) God is ever-present. There is nothing that escapes God’s attention – anywhere! This is another attribute of God that is essential to being God – and one that is well documented in the Scriptures! Consider what is said in Proverbs 15:3: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.” Furthermore, Psalm 139:3-12 is poetic demonstration that God sees us every place we go and that nothing escapes His attention.

(5) God is manifested in 3 persons. In order to properly understand the truths about God and God’s plan, you must recognize that three Persons compose the Godhead. That is, there are 3 separate Persons who each possess the nature of being God! These three are: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three have the same nature of being God and are fully united as one God; yet, they are individual Persons. Both Matthew 3:16-17 and Matthew 28:19-20 identify these three together. Also notice John 1:1-3 to see specific proof of Jesus Christ possessing the attributes of being God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” The plurality of Persons in the Godhead can also be observed from Genesis 1 (notice verses 2 and 26-27 to see the plural pronouns used in reference to God and the reference to the Spirit of God).

In the beginning, God had a plan

It is important to begin with the firm understanding that there is a God – and what it means

for God to be God! If an individual starts from a different point besides accepting the reality of God, he/she is led into great error from the beginning (see Romans 1:18-32)! It is essential to accept the fact that God exists – and that God has a plan to reward those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6)!

But, God did not have just any plan – He had an eternal plan! This eternal, all-powerful, all-wise, and ever-present God had a plan in place that reflects these qualities! His plan was eternally in His mind (in place well before the foundation of the world). His plan reflects His supreme knowledge, power, and presence in the fact that God had a plan in place to redeem mankind from sin – before He created mankind and even before mankind existed! Take some time to consider the following passages that speak of God’s plan to redeem mankind.

Matthew 25:34 says, “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

Acts 2:23 says, “Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.”

Acts 3:18 says, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

Romans 16:25 says, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.”

1 Corinthians 2:7 says, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.”

Ephesians 1:4 says, “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.”

Ephesians 3:8-11 says, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who

created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2 Timothy 1:8-9 says, “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

1 Peter 1:18-21 says, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

These passages may simply be summarized by saying: God had a plan in place to redeem mankind from His sins *from eternity* (an eternal plan of salvation)! God already had prepared this plan that would offer eternal salvation in Heaven to those who were in Christ Jesus – even before He created the world! Now, this does not mean that mankind did not or does not have free will! God did *not* individually determine for anyone to be lost or to be saved (this kind of teaching perverts passages like Ephesians 1:4)! Instead, God chose and predestined that those who would be “in Christ” would be saved eternally! Still, it remains the responsibility of each individual to be “in Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27)!

As we study the unfolding of God’s eternal plan, we should understand that it was once a “mystery.” Those who lived in Old Testament times did not fully understand this plan of God as we can understand it today. Consider.... Did Adam and Eve fully understand the promise God made in Genesis 3:15 – when God promised Satan that Satan would bruise the heel of woman’s Seed but that the Seed

would bruise Satan’s head? Did Abraham fully understand the promise God made in Genesis 12:3 – when God promised to bless all nations of the world through the Seed of Abraham? Did the prophets fully understand the prophecies they made concerning the Messiah, the gospel, or the church?

I believe that we can conclude that none of these fully understood the mystery of God (hence, why it was called a “mystery”). Look at 1 Peter 1:10-12: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.” This passage clearly indicates that the prophets wanted to know about and made inquiry concerning this eternal plan of God; but, they were not given the information that they desired to have – because it wasn’t for their time. Even the angels are said to “desire to look into” the things concerning the gospel!

Therefore, please appreciate the fact that as you read the story of the Bible, you can understand the “mystery” that has now been revealed! Consider Ephesians 3:3-5: “how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” ***Please, do not take the fact for granted that you have access to the revelation of this mystery – and have the opportunity to partake of its great blessings!***

In the beginning, God created the world

In the beginning, God created the world. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” As the Bible story begins in Genesis 1, God is in existence and is beginning His great creation of the universe! Let’s watch as we

learn some very powerful and transformative facts about God's creation of the heavens and the earth!

God Created The Heavens And The Earth

Genesis 1

Genesis 1 records God's 6-day creation of the heavens and the earth. Day 1: God created light (1:3-5). Day 2: God created the firmament (expanse) to divide the waters from the waters (i.e. the sky) (1:6-8). Day 3: God created the earth and the seas by gathering the land and the waters together (1:9-10). He also created the plants (the grasses, the herbs, and the trees) (1:11-13). Day 4: God created the sun, moon, and stars (1:14-19). Day 5: God created the sea animals and birds (1:20-23). Day 6: God created the land animals and mankind (1:24-31).

How God created the heavens and the earth

After God created the heavens and the earth, He declared that everything was "very good" (Genesis 1:31-2:3). Now, it is important to observe, at this point, that there was no evil or any defect in God's creation! God is entirely good – and cannot be involved in anything that is evil (1 John 1:5; James 1:13; Revelation 4:8)! Therefore, God created a world that was free from sin – and one that was entirely in His favor!

God also created mankind in a very special way. Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

God created mankind in His own image. Since John 4:23-24 identifies that "God is Spirit," we can conclude that God created mankind with a spiritual element to his existence (a soul)! This

spiritual element to mankind's existence allows mankind to have a relationship with his Creator and seek to serve and worship Him! This spiritual element to man's existence is also what would survive physical death (which would later enter the world).

After God created man, He placed man in the Garden of Eden. What a tremendous sight this must have been – a garden planted by God Himself! Truly this was a paradise on earth! Listen to Genesis 2:8-14: "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates."

After placing man in the Garden of Eden, God determined to create a suitable companion for man. This God did by creating woman – and joining the man and the woman together in marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). At this point, everything was perfect! Mankind lived in a paradise and had access to the Tree of Life! Even though mankind had been created with free will, there was no sin yet to enter the world. So, there was no death, sickness, suffering, etc. In addition, the Bible paints the picture that Adam and Eve took part in a relationship with God that was one of full fellowship with their Creator!

Why God created the heavens and the earth

We have seen that God did create the heavens and the earth. But, why? Why did the almighty and eternal God create the universe? Why did He create the universe in the way that He created it (i.e. why is

it so large)? Why did He create mankind in His own image? Why did He give mankind free will?

This question of “why?” is central to understanding God’s eternal plan! This question is one that addresses the fundamental purpose of it all. For, in order to properly understand God’s plan, you need to understand the purpose for which God created the universe – and, specifically, mankind!

Fortunately, God has given us the answers as to why He has created the heavens and the earth! Consider the following passages.

Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”

Psalm 57:5 says, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let Your glory be above all the earth.”

Psalm 57:11 says, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let Your glory be above all the earth.”

Isaiah 43:7 says, “Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”

Acts 17:26-27 says, “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.”

The summary of these passages is simply this: All of creation glorifies God! Particularly, God expects those who have been created in His own image (mankind) to choose to glorify Him while they live on the earth! He wants mankind to choose to seek Him!

The Fall Of Man

The law

Man was created with free will. I have already made this point, but, it is certainly worth emphasizing again. God did not create mankind as robots to mindlessly follow Him. Rather, He created mankind with the ability to choose to serve and worship God – or not to do so!

As a result, one law was given to man in the Garden of Eden (in Genesis 2:15-17). The passage says, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

He was not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (not even to touch it) – or he would die. This law that God gave in the Garden was not too difficult for them to understand. This law was not outside of their ability to obey. And, the consequence of breaking the law was understood (not that they would have fully understood what death was; but, they did understand that it was a consequence that would be given to them).

The temptation

Satan enters the Bible story in Genesis 3:1. He is seen as working through a serpent to tempt Eve. This temptation is recorded in Genesis 3:1-5: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.”’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

In this temptation, Satan contradicts what God had told Adam and Eve, promising that they would *not* die if they ate of the forbidden fruit! In fact, Satan tells Eve that God just does not want her to experience the “benefit” that comes from eating the forbidden fruit!

The sin

Tragically, Eve was convinced by Satan. Even though she knew what God had told them concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (evident from Genesis 3:2-3), she determined to listen to the serpent instead.

After being tempted by the serpent, Eve looked at the tree differently. Genesis 3:6 sadly states: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

She was now intrigued by what the serpent had said – no longer viewing the tree as a threat and source of great consequence; but, as something that would produce pleasure! Then, Eve sinned. She violated the law that God had given, thereby committing sin (sin is the transgression/violation of God’s law – 1 John 3:4). She also gave to her husband, Adam – who also committed sin when he violated God’s law!

The consequences

Was God bluffing? Satan had, clearly, convinced Eve that God really did not mean what He said when He spoke of the consequences of taking the forbidden fruit. However, God demonstrated to Adam and Eve that He meant exactly what He said!

Consequently, spiritual death occurred that day. God had promised that they would die the day they took of the fruit. And, spiritual death (spiritual separation from God) occurred as the result of their sin that day – as their wonderful relationship with God changed that day!

Physical death and suffering also entered the world at that time. Read Genesis 3:16-24 to see the other consequences that came into the world because of their sin (including being cast out of the Garden

and separated from the Tree of Life)! This world drastically changed at that time – going from a true paradise to a world that was decaying and full of sorrow! Furthermore, as Genesis 5:5 records, Adam died! Thus, physical death entered the world as the result of being separated from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24).

The promise

God also punished the serpent and Satan. Genesis 3:14-15 records the first glimpse into God’s eternal plan: “So the Lord God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.’” God would defeat Satan – even though Satan would inflict a temporary blow to God! Surely, those early readers of the book of Genesis during the Old Testament time would have had difficulty to fully understand the significance of this passage. However, we can look back – having the mystery revealed – and understand that this passage foreshadows all that would be accomplished according to God’s plan that He had in His mind from eternity, pertaining to the eternal salvation of mankind! So, we watch as this promise from God becomes reality as we read and study His word – and see His eternal plan being revealed!

The Spread Of Sin

Cain and Abel

Sin did not stop with Adam and Eve. Instead, this was only the beginning point for man’s sinning. We watch as the next several chapters of the book of Genesis details how sin increased quickly upon the earth.

Cain and Abel (sons of Adam and Eve) both offered a sacrifice to God. However, God was only pleased with the sacrifice of Abel (Genesis 4:1-5). As a result, Cain became angry with his brother Abel

and killed him (Genesis 4:6-8). This sin was also known by God and carried consequences (see Genesis 4:9-15).

The flood

Wickedness had filled the earth in the days of Noah. Read Genesis 6:1-5, 11-12. Particularly notice verse 5: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

God determined to destroy this wickedness by means of a flood. Read Genesis 6:5-7; Genesis 7:4, 17-24. The wickedness upon the earth was so great that God was sorry that He had even created mankind on the earth – and determined to kill all of mankind (except Noah and Noah’s family – who found grace in the eyes of the Lord)! How quickly God’s perfect creation had fallen into a complete state of wickedness – so much so that He desired to destroy it!

Throughout the Bible

Still, the flood did not stop sin. Even after this major “reset” in the world, sin still continued. The world would be repopulated from Noah and Noah’s family (8 people in total). Still, it would not take long for wickedness to fill the earth again.

The story of the spread of sin continues throughout the pages of Scripture! The Bible begins to focus on the people God chose to tell the story of salvation through (the nation of Israel). Yet, even these chosen people of God would often be guilty of sin – as well as the pagan nations around them!

The problem of sin

But, why is sin such a problem that God needed to have a plan in place to provide the remedy for sin?

(1) Sin is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Therefore, sin occurs whenever God’s creation (mankind) violates His laws while exercising their own free will! Sadly, all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). That is, every single person who has reached an accountable age has lived his/her life in a way that has not pleased God! Therefore, they have fallen

short of their purpose of bringing glory to God at all times – and have failed to live life entirely according to His instructions.

(2) Since God is entirely holy and pure, sin separates mankind from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” This spiritual separation from God is due to the fact that sin is contrary to God’s nature (see 1 John 1:5-7).

(3) Sin results in the punishment of eternal death in Hell fire. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Revelation 21:8 says, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” So, eternal spiritual death (separation from God) in Hell fire is what we all *deserve* for sinning!

(4) Since those who commit sin deserve to spend eternity in Hell (Romans 6:23), it follows that mankind could not do anything to earn his own salvation. Thus, salvation is said to be not of ourselves in Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Clearly, then, there was a need for a Savior to come into the world to redeem mankind from his sin! This opportunity to be saved from sin is the opportunity none of us deserve! It is truly the gift of God! Notice Romans 6:23 again, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We will watch closely as we study God’s eternal plan to see how God brings about the gift of salvation – and the requirements that He places upon such.

Conclusion

With the foundational elements involved in the book of Genesis established, the stage is set for the unfolding of God's eternal plan. How would God respond to the problem of sin in the world? We have seen that God had a plan in place. But, how would God bring about the solution?

In the next lesson, we will focus on how God used the nation of Israel to accomplish His eternal plan of redemption!

Study Questions

Discuss some basic facts about the Bible.

What is the story of the Bible – and how do you fit into this story?

1. In The Beginning, God...

Explain who God is and discuss His existence prior to the creation of the world.

Did this eternal, all-powerful, all-wise, and ever-present God have a plan? List some passages that prove your answer. What was this plan about? Has this plan been revealed?

2. God Created The Heavens And The Earth

Briefly summarize each day of creation.

1. Day 1 –

2. Day 2 –

3. Day 3 –

4. Day 4 –

5. Day 5 –

6. Day 6 –

How did God create the heavens and the earth? How did God create mankind – and what did He do with man?

Why did God create the heavens and the earth?

3. The Fall Of Man

What law did God give to man in the Garden of Eden?

How was Eve tempted?

Why did Adam and Eve sin?

What were the consequences of this sin?

What promise did God make in Genesis 3:14-15?
How does this promise connect with God's eternal plan?

4. The Spread Of Sin

Discuss how sin spread with Cain and Abel, the time preceding the flood, and throughout the Bible.

Why is sin such a problem that God would need to have a plan in place to provide the remedy for sin?